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The Informatics Tutoring Network

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School of Informatics

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What is the Informatics Tutoring Network?

- A network of School of Informatics undergraduate and postgraduate students who tutor young people at exam level (National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher) in schools in deprived areas of Scotland
- The tutoring sessions are delivered online allowing any high school in Scotland to participate





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Key Objectives

- To support young people in deprived areas to achieve in their CS exam-level courses
- To encourage young people to aspire to university-level education
- To provide Informatics students with outreach opportunities that will allow them to gain transferrable skills. They can work towards an Edinburgh Award.
- To provide a number of Informatics students with a work opportunity that they can fit around their studies (particularly aimed at students from a WP background)

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Anticipated outcomes

- **Tutees:**

- Improved confidence in their computing skills
- Improved grades
- Increased interest in progressing to university

- **Tutors:**

- Confidence and skills development
- Improved understanding of the barriers to education



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Evaluation

- Crucial to project
- Theory of change co-produced with tutors: what change did they want to see in themselves and their tutees?
- Tutors and tutees surveyed at the beginning and end of tutoring
- Interviews with participants pending



Year 1 (AY 2020/21)



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Achievements

- Funding: PTAS award
- 50 students signed up
- Mandatory online tutors' training by Deborah Holt from Moray House
- Mandatory theory of change workshop
- PVG required (established a route through STEM Ambassadors)
- 20 students met the requirements
- Appointed one senior co-ordinator and 5 local coordinators
- Codes of conduct for all participants developed
- Formal network framework developed
- Local version of Edinburgh Award established





Challenges

- Delays due to the Disclosure Scotland application system moving online
- Recruiting students to paid posts is time-consuming
- Phased return to schools - no capacity to engage in other activities
- No exams
- Teams/Zoom fatigue
- No tutoring occurred!



Year 2 (AY 2021/22)



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Achievements

- 70 students signed up
- Mandatory online training as in Year 1, refreshed theory of change developed
- 15 interested schools, five identified as needing the scheme most
- 20 students did at least one session of tutoring
- Up to 10 hour-long sessions a week (2-to-2 or 2-to-1) between end of Feb and end of May
- Additional School of Informatics funding to employ three project coordinators on ad hoc basis from end of Feb (one still in place)
- MS Teams solutions for delivering sessions online established (by student coordinators)





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Challenges

- Engaging schools/teachers is time-consuming
- Delays in completing consent forms by parents
- Creating rotas is time-consuming (and occasionally impossible)
- Tutees' absences with a short/no notice
- Very low tutee participation in evaluation questionnaires
- Student tutors are bad at keeping in touch



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Lessons learnt



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- Continuous admin support required – project coordinators were helpful but did not solve the workload issues
- Timetabling during school hours seemed to lead to greater engagement than timetabling out of school
- Further research into poor attendance required (multiple reasons)
- Good relationship with a responsive teacher is a must
- Timing is of essence: start recruiting tutors and engaging schools early in semester 1
- Manage expectations: the scheme is likely to finish after the university exam diet!



Future plans



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- School of Informatics to decide whether to continue the project in the next academic year
- Admin support (UoE 05 outreach admin post PT on this project) might have to be sourced
- Happy to support other schools to develop similar schemes and use our experience to avoid some of the pitfalls



Thank you!

Any questions?



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