



# SUPPORTING ENGINEERS OF THE FUTURE



## OVERVIEW

The Smallpeice Trust is an educational charity that inspires young people to pursue careers in science and engineering through events and workshops. For over 50 years the trust has been supporting young people to fuel their passion for engineering. The Smallpeice Trust runs three programmes. Firstly, they visit schools to promote education and awareness of engineering. Secondly, they run residential courses and thirdly, the Arkwright Scholarship supports A-level students who wish to pursue a career in Science, Technology and Engineering (STEM).

## SOLUTION OVERVIEW

- Online mentoring system, sfG MentorNet

## CHALLENGES

- Unable to ensure safeguarding without an online system
- Inability to gain insights into the programme
- Unstructured process for running mentoring programme

## BENEFITS

- Able to enable safeguarding through the system - ensuring the mentoring scheme can run
- Improved response to communications regarding events and interviews
- Reduced time spent on administrative tasks

## MENTORNET BENEFITS

- A flexible, responsive and knowledgeable team that provide a tailored service
- Easy to use and administer the scheme
- Extensive reporting that gives invaluable insights

The scholarship provides mentoring, financial assistance and contact with sponsor engineering companies for about 400 students a year. Simon Wilson is the Programme Manager for the scholarship programme and explains, "Mentoring is the key part that makes the difference for students, as it helps them navigate their path. Initially, about 5 years ago, organising the mentoring was less

structured, with emails being exchanged and not much ability to gain insight into different elements of the scheme. We started using a chat tool, but that didn't work - as it wasn't built for mentoring. You couldn't monitor chats and there were no reporting functions. So we started down a route to select an online mentoring system."

*"sfG MentorNet is very hands-on. They quickly come back to queries and provide us with all the support we need. I cannot sing their praises enough."*

*Simon Wilson, AES Programme Manager, The Smallpeice Trust*



## THE SOLUTION - sfG MENTORNET

Simon had conversations with the team at sfG MentorNet, who then put him in touch with an sfG MentorNet customer as a reference. "The first question I asked them was, 'When you have a problem, what do you do?' Their reference for sfG MentorNet was glowing and I heard how quickly they responded and provided support, which was what we needed. So we chose to work with them and still, over 3 years in, we get the same level of support. They are very attentive and supportive - and we're absolutely loving the platform. We enjoy the safeguarding aspect and visibility into the engagement between mentors and mentees."

Mentors are of course DBS checked and trained, but because of the age of the students, it is important to ensure safeguarding and that no personal information is given out. sfG MentorNet enables them to do this, as all communication takes place on the platform, where it can also be monitored. Simon explains that not only are no personal contact details shared, but that it is also beneficial to be able to see the amount of communication between students and mentors - and for example, quickly see if conversations tend to be less than 10 words each, making them less meaningful, or more in depth. They can also have

a list of banned words, which can include email addresses and phone numbers. If one of these are shared by a user through the messaging feature then this is highlighted to administrators. This helps ensure users are unable to share personal contact information.

Scholars can also communicate with sponsors through the online mentoring system. Scholars are expected to send reports to their sponsors 5 times over the 2 years. The Trust wants to minimise contact between both parties and sfG MentorNet helps them monitor how much communication happened in the relationship.

"We have just started implementing surveys," Simon explains. "They are absolutely fantastic. What I really like is that they are straight into the system, but also that you can target specific mentors and sponsors. I also like the broadcast nature of sfG MentorNet. We have found that it can supplement our communications with schools and scholars - highlighting events, or seeking interviewers for example. We can put these as a broadcast announcement and find that it gets picked up more frequently than when we send through email. We get a much better response - and can fill our event days by doing so, for example."



## SECURE MENTORING AND REDUCED ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Simon explains the key benefits. "Primarily, it ensures a safe environment in which users can communicate. This gives peace of mind for parents, scholars and mentors. It's much safer doing this through sfG MentorNet - and that's priceless. sfG MentorNet ultimately ensures that the most valuable part of the scholarship - the mentoring - can take place and add value to hundreds of students' lives a year. It allows us to support people in the way we should be doing so. No other system that we found was suitable and without it, the mentoring programme would be dead in the water."

Simon says he also values the reduction in time spent doing certain tasks. It used to take 5 days for example, to check communications - which is a fraction of the time now. That time can now be spent doing other things. Additionally, "sfG MentorNet is very hands-on. They quickly come back to queries and provide us with all the support we need. I cannot sing their praises enough."



## FORUMS AND SCALING THE PROGRAMME

When asked about future plans, Simon says, "Going forward, we will focus on forums and scaling the programme. Forums in the platform have already been very useful. We set some up for mentors to communicate and learn from one another. It is a good way for them to jump in, bounce ideas around and talk amongst themselves, which is particularly helpful for new or younger mentors. So we would like to create additional different forums around the top disciplines in engineering, as well as a general mentoring forum."

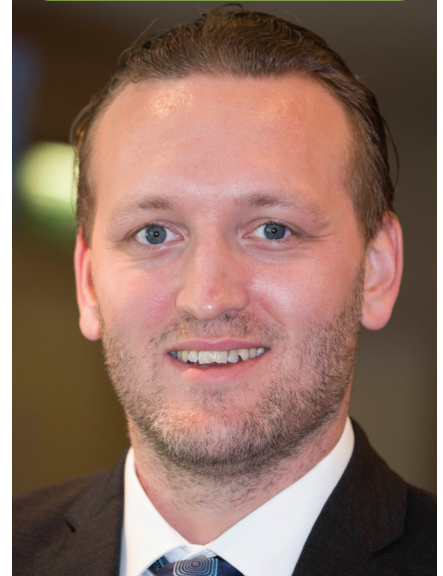
The Smallpeice Trust also plan to grow the programme and to start getting more scholars. "With sfG MentorNet, it is easy to scale, to increase the number of mentors and mentees coming through. We won't notice any difference and it feels easy."

Simon summarises that, "We want to keep the programme moving forward, while giving that peace of mind for parents and teachers, that we are doing as much as we possibly can to provide a safe environment for some of our engineers of the future."



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*Simon Wilson, AES  
Programme Manager,  
The Smallpeice Trust*



To find out more about how sfG Software's MentorNet can streamline your mentoring process, phone us on **01463 630200** or email **info@sfgmentornet.com**



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