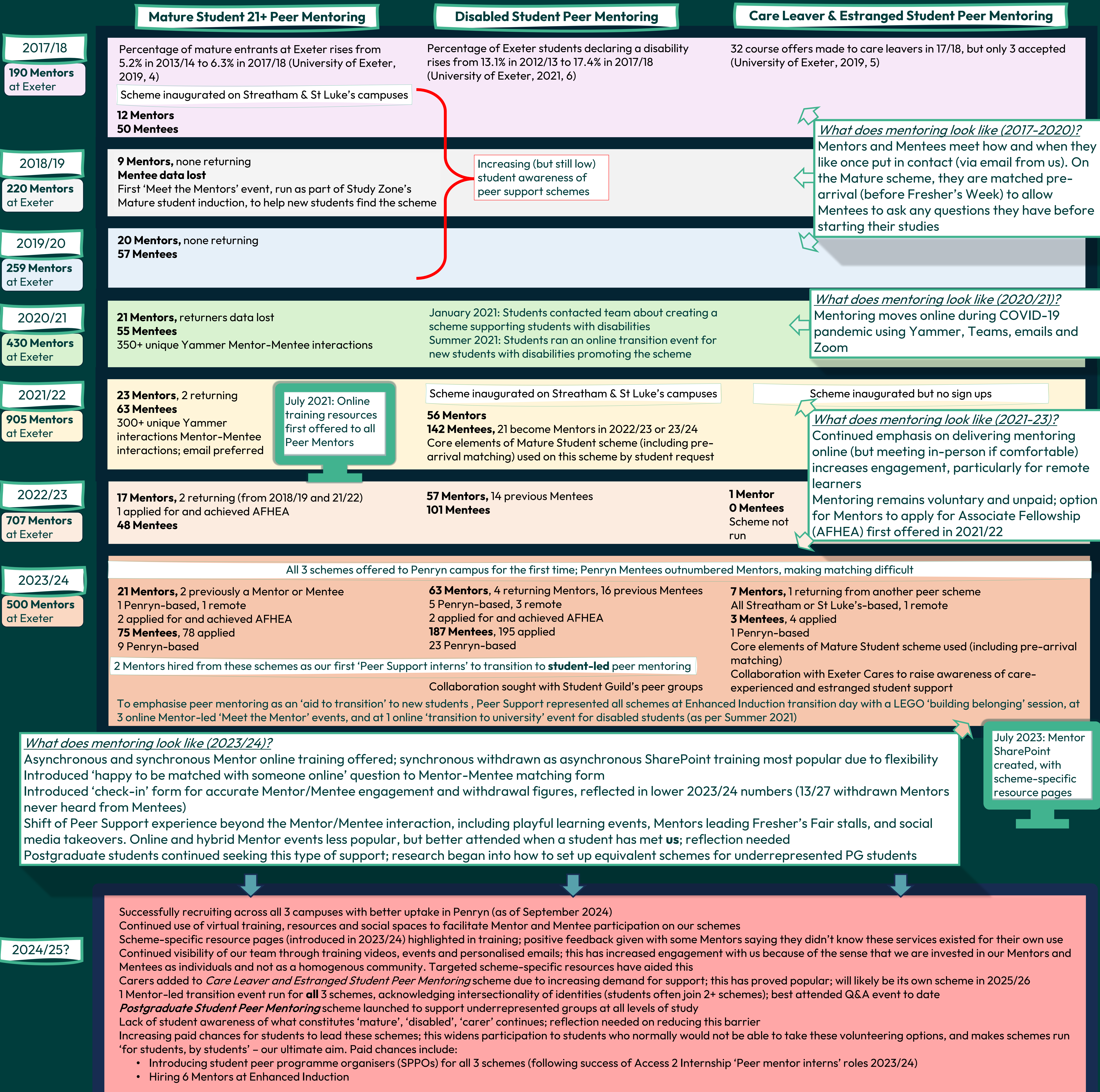




It can be hard to find people like you at university. Students who feel connected to their university and its community are more likely to stay (Pedler, Willis, and Nieuwoudt, 2021, 406). However, UK higher education remains predominantly designed for a traditional, 'ideal' student who fulfils certain academic and social expectations (Tett, 2004). Such notions of the 'ideal' student make groups like mature students and care leavers feel like outsiders (Gregersen and Nielsen, 2022; Marvell and Child, 2023), impacting their sense of belonging and retention at university.

In **peer-peer mentoring**, 'Peer Mentors' in their 2nd-final year use their lived experience to guide 1st year students ('Mentees') like them. Connecting with more experienced peers through such schemes can help new students adjust to HE both emotionally and academically (Andreasoff et al., 2024, 15).

Since 2017, our Peer Support team has offered schemes designed to specifically support underrepresented students with the transition to university and foster 'belonging'. We now provide **undergraduate** mentoring for: **mature students (aged 21+ on entry)**, **students with disabilities**, and **care-experienced and estranged students**. This poster summarises how these 3 **widening participation (WP)** schemes have adapted over time to meet these students' needs. *NB: Mentor/Mentee data from 2017/18-2021/22 is scarce but is included to help illustrate how the schemes have evolved.*



July 2023: Mentor SharePoint created, with scheme-specific resource pages

Supporting a sense of belonging: Exeter's journey of offering peer-peer mentoring for underrepresented students

Emma Norman

Visit our website: ex.ac.uk/peersupport
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