

What does being a volunteer mentor involve?

This outline explains why volunteering with Lifespace Trust may be an attractive option, what we do, where and with whom. It also explains the process for becoming a volunteer mentor.

Why volunteer with Lifespace Trust?

1. What you do matters

- Volunteers are the eyes, ears, hands and voice of Lifespace with young people facing disadvantage and distress. We are there to help you - as a volunteer - make a positive lasting difference in their lives
- We make sure you have the support, advice, resources and processes you need to do your role safely, effectively and enjoyably

2. You matter

- Our Mentor Training is excellent. It is a tried and tested means for helping volunteers to understand the purpose, practice and processes involved in mentoring. We don't just provide training at the start of your Mentor journey, but regularly throughout the year. Developing your knowledge and skills is an ongoing process of discovery
- Becoming a mentor may well change your own life too!

3. What you're part of matters

- Lifespace Trust has received **The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service** for "an outstanding contribution" to the lives of young people
- We have also carried the **Approved Provider Standard** continually since 2005 as evidence of safe and effective mentoring practice, awarded by The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

What mentoring is and isn't...

- **Mentoring ISN'T** about being a therapist, an expert, a careers advisor, a psychologist or a surrogate parent! It isn't about having all the answers...
- **Mentoring definitely IS** about careful listening, asking, empathising, encouraging, valuing, challenging, accepting, checking, strategy finding, role modelling, praising, persisting, trusting, supporting, journeying. It is about trusting the answer is in the room with you

"A mentor is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a nudge in the right direction"
John C. Crosby

Where and with whom do we mentor?

We work with young people aged 9 to 19 years old, across South Warwickshire. Most of our mentoring takes place in primary and secondary schools, in colleges and in community settings.

How does someone become a mentor?

- Come to a **Taster Evening** and find out more about who we are, what we do, why and how – see our social media for latest news on this, or call the office: 01789 297400
- Complete a **2-page application** form and send it to us
- Attend an **interview** with 2 members of the Lifespace team
- If accepted - attend a **3-day Mentor Training** course hosted by Lifespace, plus follow on Safeguarding training (usually half a day)
- Comply with an **Enhanced DBS safeguarding check** (Disclosure and Barring Service), which is done at our expense

What commitment does being a volunteer mentor involve?

- We request 1-2 hours per week (depending on travel time) during the school year
- As a 'novice mentor' some extra time will be needed to learn the ropes in terms of policy, taking notes etc. But that comes easily with time and support
- We usually match a volunteer mentor to 2 young people in the same school/location to start with
- Our staff team do all the initial paperwork and matching up
- Your commitment as a mentor also involves a 1.5 hour personal supervision meeting with one of our team each half-term. This is not about 'performance', but a positive and supportive chance for you as a mentor to gather your thoughts, talk through how things are going and find out what else you need that will help you in your role

Do volunteers get paid?

No. Mentoring is voluntary. This includes training and supervision time. It is a significant commitment! We do usually cover modest travel expenses at £0.40 per mile.

The Mentor Training course costs £195 per person which is payable up front. When someone completes the course and continues as a volunteer with us, this cost is 100% refundable once 24 hours of mentoring have been successfully delivered.

From time to time we may invite certain mentors to be paid as 'Sessional workers'. This usually lasts for 1-2 school terms at a time. These mentors will usually have been a volunteer with us for over a year, and will be given a higher and more complex caseload than volunteers (e.g. 8 young people or more). These short-term paid arrangements help us secure extra capacity when demand is especially high and also makes sure we can meet requests for helping young people promptly, effectively and safely. Volunteers retain the right to finish at any time, but paid sessional workers have a contract with restrictions.

How are volunteers matched to working with young people?

1. We consider which mentors are **available**
2. We look at the **geographical** proximity of the mentors and requests being made
3. We ascertain which mentor has the **appropriate skills set and capacity** to respond to the specific issues being presented
4. We usually stick to matching the **same gender** mentors to same gender young people, male to male and female to female. (This is for reasons of safeguarding and role modelling as many boys we work with have absent fathers and often poor relationships with male staff in schools. There are some exceptions to same gender matching, usually prompted at the point of request from a school/parent. NB. In 2014-15, 1 in 14 boys we mentored had a female mentor which represented less than 2% of our total mentoring work - so it is exceptional)

What is expected of our volunteers?

- Be **honest** about what time and energy commitment you can give. Volunteering may have an impact on your leisure time and current lifestyle
- **Trust** us to give you the support - practically and emotionally - that you need for the role
- Be **willing to learn** and develop in your knowledge and skills
- Expect to **encounter some difficulties** and frustrations. Although mentoring has a positive purpose it's not easy or straight forward
- Be **aware** of what experience, strengths and ideas you bring with you into mentoring - our volunteers know more than they think they know, and enjoy finding out there's even more to learn!

