

Mentoring a Young Person – a guide for employers

So.....why mentor ?

What we can offer as a mentor:

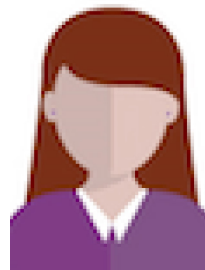
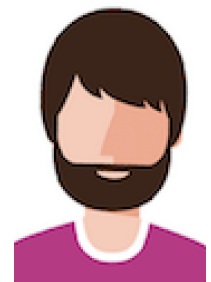
- an independent, non-judgemental sounding board
- an opportunity to influence potential employees of the future
- help to shape young people's beliefs and values about employment
- the opportunity to make a difference and give something back
- guidance about the benefits of a positive behaviour and attitude



Employers

What we want from being mentored:

- a chance to talk and be listened to
- an honest relationship with someone independent
- to realise my potential and become more confident
- a chance to ask questions about how it really is in work and life
- valuable contacts and networking opportunities



Young People

What is mentoring ?

The mentoring process

- provides a chance to talk and be listened to
- appreciates positive attributes and potential
- improves confidence
- develops awareness of behaviour and attitude
- empowers and opens up future options

Through mentoring, young people are helped to:

feel better about themselves

overcome limitations

feel more positive about their future & the next steps

Mentoring skills

The 'skill' in mentoring lies in the ability to identify how your own experiences in life and work can provide guidance and support for a young person:

- think about what you might have done differently in your own career
- at difficult times, were things always as bad as they seemed ?
- did anyone give you valuable advice that you could pass on
- how did it feel when you achieved something ?

Reflecting on our life experience is the perfect foundation for being a good mentor. You need to want to find ways to help the young person develop life skills and confidence. Listening to what they say, as well as what they don't explicitly say, will provide clues as to what they are struggling with.

*Mentoring does not require any special skills –
everyone has life experience and this provides the basis for mentoring*

Possible outcomes from mentoring

Mentoring is about unlocking a person's potential to maximise their development. As a mentor, your role is to provide opportunities to learn and help them overcome obstacles.

Developing the relationship

Engaging with a young person

- Listen to them, be straight with them and always honest
- Advise, but never tell them what to do
- Acknowledge the overlap between their experience and yours, but also appreciate differences
- Manage expectations about what mentoring can achieve (see next section)
- Never judge, but challenge them to take responsibility for their actions

From a practical point of view

- use plain language and establish eye contact periodically
- ask them about themselves; what they enjoy and might aspire to
 - use this as the basis for developing discussion
- build rapport by showing interest and allowing them to get to know you
- establish an agreed action plan for the mentoring itself or their own development

Challenging their preconceptions

Many young people will come up with limiting statements about themselves and their prospects – use the following approaches to open discussion and explore real issues:

- Question why they think like they do
 - Do you realise how far you've come already ?
 - What feedback have you received about your progress or opportunities ?
- Explore the barriers that they perceive within their own life
 - Are you happy to be in this situation in a year's time ?
 - What is it that stops you from being where you want to be ?
- Where appropriate, empathize and share examples of where preconceptions about your own life turned out to be incorrect
 - I used to think like that, because it was easy....then I tried and succeeded
- Find out if they fear anything in life and challenge it
 - How do you know you would fail/get bored/fall short of expectations if you haven't tried ?
- Discuss that life is full of 'unknowns', and that these can be positive surprises!

Use the mentoring process as an opportunity to give constructive feedback. Let them know when you feel they are behaving in a positive way, but also provide feedback on the impact of any negative actions or attitudes they exhibit.

Managing expectations

Establishing boundaries

For a successful mentoring relationship, boundaries need to be established early on.

At all times there must be:

- mutual confidentiality* and impartiality
- respect for each others' opinions and experiences
- respect for each others' time
- appreciation that you
 - cannot make a mentees situation change
 - are not obliged to discuss anything you don't feel comfortable about
 - cannot legitimize or approve irresponsible behaviour

What if things don't work out?

- Remember, you do not need to have all the answers – you just need to help the young person consider how other people may be able to help your young person with specific requests or queries
- Confidentiality is essential, however *mentors should pass on confidential information if they feel the young person, or anyone else, is at risk
- If you feel that you are not able to develop a positive relationship with the young person, suggest they meet with another mentor
 - this does not mean that you or the young person are unsuitable for the mentoring process, but this may not be a good match

Tips for mentoring success !

- At the initial meeting establish ground rules on:
 - how frequently to meet – ideally every 2-3 weeks
 - how to maintain contact
- Establish an understanding of what the process of mentoring is, and what may/may not be achieved
- Always finish a meeting by scheduling the next
- Consider setting tasks that the young person can discuss at the next meeting
- Review progress throughout and allow for reflection
- Keep a confidential log of the meetings and actions discussed
- Enjoy watching the young person develop and shine