

Volunteer Management Policy

Policy Statement:

This is a formal acknowledgement that the Trustee board is committed to maintaining a strong and safe environment for any person who volunteers to work as a mentor for the charity, and for those that they mentor.

Guiding principles:

The Trustee board:

* acknowledges that mentor volunteers are a vital resource, ensuring that the charity’s mentoring scheme is a useful and successful service;
* recognises that volunteer mentors require ongoing support and advice from the charity; and
* does not use mentor volunteers to replace paid employees.

Criteria

* All mentors must have experience of working in a profession, including but not limited to law, accountancy, consultancy, HR, IT, sales, compliance or regulatory work.
* All mentors must be in current employment in a relevant profession, or if they are retired, have maintained an active role with professional bodies, voluntary organisations or alumni networks.
* All mentors must have a disability or long-term health condition or have significant and demonstrable experience of enabling those who do.
* It is sufficient for mentors to self-identify as having a disability, and medical proof will not be sought.

Recruitment

There are a variety of ways that mentors may be recruited. The charity may advertise for mentors, or they may hear about the charity from their employer or other source and approach the charity directly with an offer of help.

Mentors will be recruited independently of their employer, and their role as a mentor, their disability, and any other information they chose to give to the charity about themselves will be confidential. The charity recognises that many mentors have not disclosed their disability to their employer and is mindful of the need for discretion at all times.

Interviews

Potential mentors will be interviewed by either a Trustee, or by a designated employee of the charity, to ensure that they are suitable. The interview should establish matters such as length of employment, type of disability, previous experience of mentoring, attitudes to disability in the work place and general demeanour and temperament.

It is accepted that individuals deal with their disability at work in different ways and so not all mentors will suit all mentees. A variety of potential mentors is sought, but the charity reserves the right not to take on a mentor if it feels that their values and attitude do not align with that of the charity.

If the designated employee or any Trustee has concerns about a potential mentor, they will raise this immediately with the Trustee board before any final decision is made.

Accepting a mentor

Once an interview is successfully completed, the mentor will be accepted by the charity as a volunteer. If a suitable mentee is waiting for a mentor, the two will be introduced as soon as is reasonably practical. If a suitable mentee is not yet available, the mentor will remain “on the books” until one is identified.

Introducing the mentor and mentee

Once a mentee is identified, the mentor will be contacted and asked to give permission for a designated employee to discuss the mentor with the potential mentee. Matters such as their name, employment and disability are likely to be discussed.

If permission is given, the designated employee will discuss the mentor with the potential mentee. If the mentee is in agreement, and thinks the mentor will be suitable, then the mentee’s permission will be sought for the designated employee to discuss the mentee with the mentor.

If the mentor is happy with the potential mentee, the two will be introduced. Depending on the circumstances, this could be in person, on the telephone or via email. No personal contact details of either the mentee or mentor will be disclosed without permission.

Role and duties of a mentor

The mentor/mentee relationship is highly personal, and the charity does not prescribe how it should be undertaken. However, it does provide the following guidelines to all mentors:

* Mentors should not over-commit themselves. They are encouraged to provide clear boundaries so that mentees know exactly how much time their mentor has available.
* Mentors are not expected to provide any free service on behalf of the charity other than mentoring. For example, they are not expected to provide free professional advice, internships or work experience.
* Mentors are not expected to speak for mentees, either to the mentees employer or place of learning. Mentors should be invisible to all but the mentee and the charity.
* Mentors are not trained therapists. Mentors should make clear to their mentees, should the need arise, that their assistance and advice cannot replace or be a substitute for any counselling or therapy that a mentee may require.
* If a Mentor feels that a mentee should engage in therapy or counselling or requires more support in this area than they are able to give, the Mentor should immediately contact Liz Dawes for advice and support.
* The Mentor’s role is to facilitate issues that the mentee has raised and explore various options and approaches with them. They are a sounding board and a source of similar experiences. The mentoring relationship should aim to ensure that the mentee makes better decisions for themselves and reduces their feelings of isolation where possible. A mentor is not expected to make decisions for a mentee.
* Mentors commit to providing honest, thoughtful advice in the best interests of the mentee.

Support and supervision

* Mentors are able, at any time, to contact the charity if they required support or advice about any particular part of their mentoring.
* Mentors are able, at any time, to contact the charity if they feel that the mentoring relationship is not working, or is not useful, or if they no longer have the time to commit to it.