



BECOMING A MENTOR INFORMATION

The Island
St Columba's Foundation
Priory Street
York
YO1 6EX

01904 628449

www.theislandn1.org.uk
theislandn1@gmail.com

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What is The Island?

The Island is a registered charity that offers support to vulnerable 8 - 13 year-olds in York. It links these young people with volunteer mentors who provide them with support and encouragement as they encounter difficult transitions in their lives.

The Island's philosophy is based on the following principles:

- Focus on **positive solutions**; we are more interested in the future than the problems of the past.
- We offer young people **islands** of time and space.
- Relationships need **time, trust and investment**.
- We need to **collaborate** with young people by engaging with them and **encouraging their aspirations**.
- **Structure and boundaries** that are clearly communicated will **empower** young people.
- **Young people are valued for themselves**.

Young people are referred to us from various agencies around the city because they are vulnerable in some way. This could be because they are experiencing problems at school, with their family or are involved in anti-social behaviour. Each young person is assessed for their need of a positive adult role model and is then matched with a suitable mentor if it is thought that they are in need of this support.

Why do we ask for a commitment of a year?

We offer each young person a minimum of one year on the scheme to enable them to engage with a positive adult role model, giving them space and time to build a relationship in order to move forward in their lives – providing structure, continuity and boundaries for the young person. Often a young person has multiple agencies providing short-term support, and they therefore find it difficult to sustain and invest in a trusting relationship. The Island's mentoring service, however, can provide a long-term solution for a vulnerable young person.

What training is offered?

We will provide you with a full package of training which will include;

- Rights and responsibilities
- Interpersonal relationships
- Boundaries and professional relationships
- Working with young people – activities and support
- Child protection and confidentiality
- Risky behaviour (sexual health and substance misuse)
- Youth offending and stereotypes
- Administration

Training is free of charge, participatory and inclusive, and you have not committed yourself to our service until you have completed the training – giving you time to decide whether this is the right volunteering opportunity for you. Once you have undergone the training programme, the process of linking you with a young person can begin. This can take some time as it is important for us to match the interests and needs of the mentee with the interests and skills of the mentor effectively.

Supervision is also an essential aspect of being an Island mentor. You will meet with the Mentoring Co-ordinator once every 4-6 weeks for support, but they will also be available to talk to you between supervisions if any issues arise. There is also a duty phone system in operation in case you need to talk with a worker outside of office hours when your supervisor may not be available. In addition, you will be invited to regular mentor 'get2gethers', giving you the opportunity to socialise with other volunteer mentors and participate in extra training activities.

What does mentoring involve?

As a volunteer mentor, you will be a positive adult role model, someone to talk to and have fun with. You may act as an advocate on behalf of the young person, or link them with other organisations for additional support if needed.

You will meet up with your mentee once a week for a couple of hours (this can be flexible to suit the activity) and take part in a range of activities that you and your young person choose to do. There is a £10 weekly budget to cover the costs of each activity and we have access to discounts at various venues around York. We also reimburse local travel expenses.

Working with young people is both challenging and rewarding. The key to maintaining an effective relationship is investment and consistency, which is why we ask volunteers to commit to a year of mentoring. This provides enough time for you to get to know the young person and to develop a meaningful relationship. It is important to be patient and resilient in your approach as forming relationships can often be hard work that takes place gradually, rather than straight away.

The role of a mentor:

A mentor's main role is to support a young person on a one-to-one basis in exploring and developing new leisure time activities and accessing local facilities. However, as the relationship between a mentor and young person develops, the mentor will be expected to respond appropriately to the individual needs of the young person. This could involve support in managing their anger, providing advocacy, or referral to another agency etc. Each mentoring relationship is different, and the particular path it follows is dependent on the needs of the young person.

Mentors are not expected to spend more than 4 hours a week working with their young person, or to take on work that they are not comfortable with. There is an expectation that mentors will attend all supervisions, mentor 'get2gethers' and supplementary training sessions where possible.

What The Island expects from each mentor:

- Successful completion of the mentor training programme
- CRB clearance
- 2-4 hours a week mentoring.
- Commitment to the project for 12 months
- Recording of mentoring sessions and feedback to the Mentoring Co-ordinator
- Commitment to supervision and additional training
- Good professional practice within The Island's guidelines and policies

What a mentor can expect from The Island:

- Comprehensive training
- A handbook of policies and procedures
- Reimbursement of all mentoring expenses (including travel)
- Regular supervision and support
- Further training opportunities
- Treatment as a professional and valuable member of The Island.

What is needed:

There are no formal qualifications required to be a mentor, and you need not have any previous experience working with children or young people. A non-judgemental attitude is the most important quality you require.

You must be at least 18 years of age, but there is no upper age-limit for those wishing to become a mentor. For safeguarding reasons, we also require that you have successful police clearance and two references.

The training will allow you to acquire:

- An understanding of the needs of young people
- An understanding of equal opportunities
- The ability to build and maintain relationships with young people
- An understanding of confidentiality issues
- The ability to communicate well with others
- An understanding of the importance of professional boundaries
- The ability to work within guidelines and with written policies and procedures.

What to do if you have a problem:

The Island is committed to reviewing and improving its mentoring scheme. If you are dissatisfied with the service provided for whatever reason, please do not hesitate to contact the Mentoring Co-ordinator, Nigel Poulton, in the first instance, either through writing or by telephone. If you are unhappy with his response, then you may complain in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, Keith Blanshard, for further investigation.