Finding Your Feet
Frequently asked questions

What is the role of a mentor?

Mentors provide work and career guidance to young people who are currently in care or those who have recently left care. They provide a sense of continuity and stability, which may be lacking in the lives of their young person, and draw from their personal and professional experience when providing advice and guidance. Where appropriate, mentors may also use their professional networks to provide an opportunity for a young person, such as work experience in a particular field.

What makes a good mentor?

The most effective mentors are:

- skilled listeners
- reliable and consistent
- able to encourage and motivate.

You also need to be able to relate to 14–21 year olds and strike a healthy balance of empathy and guidance.

How does a mentor benefit from the relationship?

Mentors can benefit from the scheme in the following ways:

- improved communication and relationship skills
- a sense of achievement in seeing the positive steps forward you have helped a young person to take
- an increased appreciation of diversity and life experience
- a sense of pride in your commitment.
How is a young person matched with a mentor?

In their applications, both mentors and young people are asked to highlight areas of specific interest or particular skills they either have or want to develop. We then do our best to match a young person with someone who has experience or interest in the areas they have highlighted.

We also bear in mind geographical distances between mentor and young person, and whether the young person has stated a preference for a male or female mentor.

What sort of time commitment is required from a mentor?

The success of the mentoring relationship is often measured by the length of time the young person and mentor have been meeting. Some mentoring relationships will successfully conclude after a few sessions, but for the majority it is the consistency of availability on the part of the mentor that makes the difference. For this reason we ideally like a mentor to be able to commit to see through the agreed objectives they have set with their young person.

In the early stages of mentoring, a mentor and young person may meet up to once a week for around an hour. As the relationship evolves and the needs of the young person change, meetings often become less frequent. The mentor is encouraged to be in regular contact with the young person between meetings.

What support can I expect as a mentor?

The Finding Your Feet training programme will give you fundamental preparation for this role. Your young person’s social worker or personal advisor and the social care/administration team who manage the scheme are also available to answer any questions or give guidance.

A peer support group meets on a quarterly basis to share progress, ups and downs, and best practice. One-to-one catch ups between the mentor and the administrator are also offered. The frequency of these depends on the stage of support you are at with your young person.

How can I apply to become a mentor?

Take a look at our mentor profile and email findingyourfeet@surreycc.gov.uk