

Volunteering with the Young Lives Foundation



In this pack you will find the following:

About YLF

Volunteering with us

Introduction to the role and responsibilities

Training and support

Qualities, experience, attributes and expectations

Frequently asked questions



Young Lives Foundation

01622 693459 | enquiries@ylf.org.uk | www.ylf.org.uk | facebook.com/ylf.org.uk | twitter.com/ylfcharity

The Young Lives Foundation is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Registered in England & Wales Company No 5999166. Registered Charity No 1119528

YLF | About Us

The Young Lives Foundation is an independent children's charity dedicated to delivering quality services. These are tailored to ensure we achieve effective outcomes in the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people.

Our mission is to be alongside children and young people in need in ways that:

- **Affirm their identity and worth**
- **Champion their rights, needs and interests**
- **Promote their wellbeing and development**

Our vision is that every young person in need shall have access to the resources and opportunities needed for them to achieve their potential and lead fulfilled lives.



What we do:

- Support young people through times of difficulty and distress
- Enable young people's voices to be heard
- Assist young people to achieve their potential

Who we support:

- Looked after children/care leavers
- Children on the edge of care/children in need
- Young offenders/young people at risk of offending
- NEET young people/young people disengaged in education
- Young people with mental health difficulties
- Families in need of support
- Young parents

How we do it:

- Mentoring & Befriending
- Positive Activities
- Advocacy & Children's Rights

YLF | Volunteering With Us

Volunteering for YLF gives you an opportunity to use your skills, experience and enthusiasm to make a difference to children and young people locally across Kent and Medway. You will also have the chance to build on your skills, receive free training while making new friends and having fun.

YLF volunteers are an asset to the team and we rely on them to deliver over 10,000 hours of frontline activity each year. We are proud of our volunteers and know that YLF would not exist without their commitment and dedication.

YLF offer volunteers a full package of informal and formal support with named staff, direct communication with our CEO, ongoing training and full reimbursement of all authorised expenses. We offer support groups, an award giving event each year and the opportunity to take part in other activities like our annual bbq. We also update our team regularly via email, web, social networks and newsletters.

Our volunteering roles are offered across Kent and in Medway, allowing you to help locally to where you live. Volunteer opportunities with YLF include independent visitors, mentors and appropriate adults. A full description of each of these roles can be found on our website - yfl.org.uk/get-involved/volunteers.

Being a Volunteer Mentor with the Young Lives Foundation

Mentoring | Introduction to the Role

Being a mentor for a young person is a rewarding role with the opportunity to make a real difference to the life of a young person. As a mentor you will be working with young people who have been referred to us by various different sources because they are considered to be at risk of offending, socially excluded or in need of support. The young person will be aged between 8 and 17 years old. There are a number of reasons why a young person and their family may benefit from having a mentor. These could be:

- Troubled home life
- Peer group pressure
- Poor attainment at school, truancy, exclusion
- Personal issues – such as drug misuse, alcohol, mental illness
- Poverty and deprivation

A mentor can help to combat these risk factors by:

- Building a relationship of trust and mutual respect
- Being a positive role model
- Offering encouragement, guidance and support
- Helping the young person identify and achieve positive goals

Mentoring | Responsibilities

Your responsibilities as a mentor are to:

- Guide and support the young person towards the achievement of agreed positive goals
- Encourage the pursuit of positive pastimes and leisure opportunities
- Assist the development of personal and social responsibility

You can do this by:

- Listening, questioning and understanding without judging
- Meeting once a week with the young person
- Offering advice and guidance
- Taking time to assist with any problems, issues and concerns and empower the young person to problem solve themselves

Mentoring | Training and Support

Training and on-going support is provided to help you in the role and the service prides itself on the welcoming and friendly style in which it operates.

YLF delivers a two day training course to all applicants. Session one will focus on what the role of a mentor is, the young people and where they come from and communication skills.

Session two will focus more on motivation, boundaries and the service's key points of policy and practice.

Formal and informal supervision is made available to all volunteers. Additionally, we also provide an open door policy to volunteers.

YLF reimburses all authorised expenses.

Mentoring | Qualities, Experience and Attributes

Empathy, patience and a friendly non judgemental approach are qualities we seek in our volunteers. YLF believes that volunteers should have a genuine interest in the wellbeing of young people and that they have good communication and motivational skills.

We especially welcome people who bring experience of supporting young people and troubled families or from other mentoring projects that have focused on supporting young people and families within the local communities. However, we acknowledge the importance of diversity and our male and female volunteers have a wealth of knowledge that stretches from finance to construction or from retail to education. All these life skills are an enormous benefit to the young people we support as it helps them to increase their confidence and self esteem.

Mentoring | Expectations

Once appointed you will be expected to commit to at least twelve months' mentoring with YLF. When matched with a young person you will be required, whilst meeting the individual needs of the young person, to follow YLF policies and procedures, provide monthly updates of how the goals that have been set are progressing and report any concerns or written reports to enable YLF to support the development of the mentoring arrangement.

Mentoring | What People Say

'HE LOVED HAVING DEN AS SHE SPOKE TO HIM LIKE THE YOUNG MAN HE IS AND HE FOUND IT EASY TO SPEAK TO DEN AND LIKED HER LOADS, SO THANK YOU, SHAME IT WASN'T FOR LONGER.'

Pat | Parent

'SEEING SUCH POSITITVE CHANGES IN THE CHILDREN I'VE MENTORED IS SO REWARDING. BEING A PART OF THE REASON WHY THESE CHANGES HAPPEN IS SUCH A FEEL GOOD FACTOR BUT ALSO LETS YOU KNOW YOU HAVE MADE A DIFFERNCE TO THAT PERSON'S FUTURE.'

Tracie | Mentor

'I REALLY ENJOYED SPENDING TIME WITH MY MENTOR. SHE WAS FUN TO BE WITH, WE DID SOME REALLY GOOD THINGS TOGETHER AND SHE HELPED ME GET BETTER AT SCHOOL.'

Emma | Young Person

Mentoring | Case Studies

Megan had many issues that were affecting her schooling. Her mentor supported her and was always there to talk to her about how she was feeling. The mentor encouraged her to sing as she enjoyed this and it also helped to build her confidence as she was self-conscious about her speech. M even sang in front of her class. Her mentor supported her through a court appearance to give evidence which M was very worried about. They also did cooking together and talked about her father who had passed away, school and her changing schools.

Victoria received extra help with her school work with her mentor and spent some time revising for her 11 plus. They would talk about her aspirations to go to a grammar school and her potential to do well and go on to bigger and better things. The young person passed her 11 plus and has a place at a grammar school!

Dave lived in a very small home with his four young boys. As a single parent he often struggled with discipline. By providing three of his boys with a mentor this enabled him to spend more time with his children individually. One of the boys wanted to learn to swim but Dave couldn't take all the children swimming at the same time so the mentor took the young person and gave him more confidence when swimming. One of the other boys would make models with his mentor and then take them home to show his dad. Each of the boys also got extra help with school work from their mentors.

Mentoring | Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is a mentor?**

A mentor is an adult volunteer who motivates, guides and supports disadvantaged young people towards the achievement of positive goals.

- **What is the purpose and why are mentors needed?**

Some young people are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and are in need of extra support and guidance from a positive and trustworthy adult role model; our mentors provide help and support to these young people. The one thing that all the young people we work with have in common is low self esteem; by helping young people to discover activities and new skills, we can really help them to improve and achieve in many areas of their lives.

- **What does a mentor do?**

Each mentor is matched with a young person that s/he has something in common with. The first couple of weeks of the arrangement are about developing a trusting relationship with the young person; this might involve encouraging him / her to do fun activities such as playing tennis, football etc. This gives the mentor an opportunity to find out more about the young person and the type of goals that the young person might like to achieve over the six month mentoring period. Each young person has individual needs so the support needed may vary. It could include encouraging the young person to attend school on a full time basis, join a club, supporting him/her with reading skills or helping him/her to fill in applications for training or employment.

- **What sort of young people do we help?**

The young people we help are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds; this may mean they struggle at school, are at risk of offending or they are neither in education or employment. They are all aged between 8 and 17 years of age and live within the Medway area. They are referred to us by various agencies such as the Young Offending Team, IPS, schools or Action for Families. They have all volunteered to be mentored.

- **How much time do I need to give and when will I be required?**

The minimum requirement is a weekly meeting of 2 – 3 hours over a period of 4 – 6 months. Telephone calls, letters and e-mails are all contact methods that can be used to supplement the weekly meetings. You may need to meet during the day or evening but always at a convenient time for yourself and the young person.

- **How much will it cost me?**

Nothing other than your time. All authorised expenses are reimbursed, including travel.

- **What if I need help?**

The mentoring handbook provides you with a vast amount of information and is a useful tool and point of reference for all our active volunteers. The content covers the role of a mentor, policies and procedure, YLF safeguarding policy, as well as useful information about how to carry out your role productively. All volunteers receive formal supervision halfway through each mentoring programme. We also offer informal support via phone and email on a regular basis.

- **How do you match me to a young person and what is the process?**

We discuss with all volunteers during their accreditation interview any preferences they may have regarding a young person. We also take into consideration your hobbies and interests, geography and the young person's wishes as well.

- **What if I don't get on with the young person?**

Don't worry, this rarely happens. You will be carefully matched with the young person you are mentoring so that you will have at least one shared common interest. However, if it really does not work out on either side we would organise a new pairing.

- **Do I need to have a DBS check or any other references or background checks?**

All volunteers are required to complete an enhanced DBS form; we also seek a reference from your doctor, your current employer and two others (whom you have known for over 5 years).

- **How do I apply?**

To apply you will need to complete an application form, safeguarding form and doctor's check (there is also an optional equal opportunities form) and return these by post to YLF Volunteering, 71 College Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6SX or by email to volunteering@ylf.org.uk. These forms are all available to download from our website. If you require hard copies, these are available on request.

the young
lives
foundation