

# PROSPECTS

Job profile

## Learning mentor

**If you enjoy working with young people, their teachers and families to help them achieve their potential, you'd be a great learning mentor**

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As a learning mentor, you'll provide a complementary service to teachers and other staff, addressing the needs of learners who require help in overcoming barriers to learning in order to achieve their full potential.

You will work with a range of learners, but give priority to those who need the most help, especially those experiencing multiple disadvantages.

You could cover a variety of issues, ranging from punctuality, absence, challenging behaviour and abuse, to working with able and gifted learners who are experiencing difficulties.

You will be based predominantly in education settings (primary, secondary and further education schools) but will have a broader remit including families and the wider community. You might work with children or young adults on a one-to-one basis or in small or large groups.

Sometimes learning mentors work in offender learning and will also work with adult learners in the education system.

## Responsibilities

Your duties will vary depending on the nature of the job, for example the level of expertise required and complexity of the work expected.

Some posts require a degree and experience of working with vulnerable and challenging young people. You may be expected to manage your own case load and plan, deliver and measure interventions to support the young people you work with.

Other posts will require GCSEs in English and maths and will expect you to work in a supporting role.

Your tasks are likely to include:

- liaising with staff to identify learners who would benefit from mentoring;
- helping learners who are underperforming in their subjects, either on a one-to-one basis outside the classroom or within lessons;
- implementing strategies and supporting learners in self-esteem and confidence-building activities;
- listening to and helping learners resolve a range of issues that are creating barriers to learning;
- drawing up agreed action plans with learners, outlining the aims of the mentoring, and monitoring their progress;
- monitoring attendance and punctuality of learners;
- visiting parents at home to discuss issues and problems, and running group sessions and workshops for parents at school;
- advising parents on behaviour strategies and parenting skills;
- networking with other learning mentors, teachers and relevant external agencies;
- liaising with relevant professionals and individuals, e.g. educational psychologists, the police and social services;
- setting up breakfast and after-school clubs as well as running extracurricular activities, such as homework clubs, reading clubs, sports, music and discos, during lunchtimes or as out-of-school activities;
- organising drop-in 'offload' sessions for learners, where they can talk about a particular issue;
- providing group activities such as anger management classes;
- maintaining accurate records and preparing written reports and evaluations;
- helping to secure funding to support learners' additional educational needs;
- managing your own professional development through undertaking relevant training and sharing best practice with other

learning mentors;

- helping with transition activities for learners moving to secondary schools or on to further education.

## Salary

- Typical starting salaries are in the region of £15,000 to £18,000.
- With some experience, salaries can range from £20,000 to £25,000.
- Learning mentors with management responsibilities can earn up to £32,000.

Salaries will depend on the nature of the role and the recognition by the employer of the professionalism required to do the job. Some equate expertise and salary to that of a new teacher or social worker; others pay a support-role salary.

If you work part time or work term-time only, you will be paid pro-rata (i.e. a portion of full-time rates).

Income figures are intended as a guide only.

## Working hours

Working hours are usually 35 to 40 hours, Monday to Friday during term time. Some evening and occasional weekend work is necessary on, for example, extra-curricular activities or to visit parents.

In addition, preparation and administrative work is often done in the evening due to the time pressures of seeing clients during the day.

Part-time work and job sharing opportunities are available in some instances.

## What to expect

- Jobs are available throughout the country.
- Dress should usually be smart but practical.
- The job may be stressful due to the nature of the problems you're dealing with, but does not generally disrupt social or home life or require relocation.
- You will be based mainly with an educational provider such as a school or college and only travel within the catchment area to see parents or occasionally to other schools or settings to attend meetings.

## Qualifications

This area of work is open to all graduates and those with a HND, but you may find it helpful to have a degree or HND in a national curriculum subject or one covering some of the issues involved in learning mentoring.

In particular, the following subjects may improve your chances:

- early childhood years;
- education;
- English;
- maths;
- psychology;
- social science;
- social work.

Entry without a degree or HND is possible, although many entrants have a degree and some have training in a related field such as:

- education;
- guidance;
- psychology and health;
- youth, community or social work.

You will need to demonstrate a good standard of general education, particularly in English and maths.

A postgraduate degree is not necessary for entry, but some learning mentors have professional qualifications.

You will need to obtain police clearance via a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>) check if you are working with young people.

## Skills

You will need to show:

- excellent communication and listening skills;
- the ability to analyse problems and devise solutions;
- assertiveness in dealing with pupils and fellow professionals;
- determination to see problems and solutions through to the end;
- the ability to empathise;
- a non-judgemental approach;
- organisational and time management skills;
- the ability to relate to young people and adults;
- the capacity to motivate and act as a role model;
- negotiation skills;
- flexibility and adaptability, as well as the ability to work well under pressure;
- report writing skills and the ability to maintain accurate records;
- a commitment to equality and diversity;
- an understanding of confidentiality and the handling of sensitive information;
- a commitment to safeguarding.

## Work experience

You'll find experience of working with young people is essential (either paid or voluntary) and it is extremely useful to have some experience of mentoring, either as a mentor or mentee. Experience of working in an education setting is also valuable. Examples include youth work, working with a holiday scheme or in a school.

Competition for jobs can be fierce but your chances of entry will be greatly enhanced by relevant work experience. Any voluntary work that involves working with young people and helping them to solve problems or look at issues that are affecting them is helpful.

Some vacancies specifically ask for graduates with training in the field of education, psychology, health or social work.

Your university may run mentoring schemes, which provide an opportunity to gain experience. Local authorities may also run volunteer learning mentor schemes; learning mentors are generally open to offers of volunteer help. In order to gain relevant experience (working with children), you will need to obtain DBS clearance.

Experience of mentoring in a range of roles is useful, for example supporting people with disabilities or peer-to-peer mentoring. For information on joining a volunteer mentoring scheme see the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (<http://www.mandbf.org.uk/>).

## Employers

As a learning mentor, you will generally work with assigned individuals or as part of a team in primary and secondary schools, academies and colleges.

You could work in other areas, such as special schools, further education colleges and pupil referral units.

You will usually be employed directly by schools and colleges.

Look for job vacancies at:

- EduStaff (<http://www.edustaff.co.uk/>)
- Eteach (<http://www.eteach.com/>)

- Local Government Jobs (<http://www.lgjobs.com/>)
- Individual school websites.
- Weekly, bi-weekly or monthly local council vacancy bulletins.
- Local council websites.

## Professional development

Training is usually on the job from colleagues and senior staff. In the first year of employment, you should aim to build up a portfolio detailing your activities and attend several days of training.

As a newly appointed learning mentor, you'll undertake an induction programme, which aims to ensure all support staff are able to carry out their responsibilities competently and with confidence. It should help you to provide dependable support to learners while upholding school policies.

Internal and external training may be available in particular areas relevant to the needs of the school, for example:

- addressing cross-cultural issues;
- how to work on anger management with learners;
- supporting learners with special educational needs;
- working with parents;
- integrating your role in the school;
- networking;
- teambuilding.

You are responsible for your own career development and will need to seek out in-house and external opportunities relevant to your role.

## Career prospects

You could begin your career as an assistant learning mentor or learning mentor and then progress, through experience, to the role of lead learning mentor or learning mentor coordinator, coordinating the work of a group of learning mentors in a cluster of schools.

With experience it is possible to specialise in working with particular client groups, for example excluded students.

You could also undertake further training and qualifications to move into other related professions such as:

- careers and advice work;
- social and probation work;
- special or alternative education;
- speech and language therapy;
- teaching;
- the voluntary sector and charities;
- youth work, youth offending teams and education welfare.



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Written by AGCAS editors

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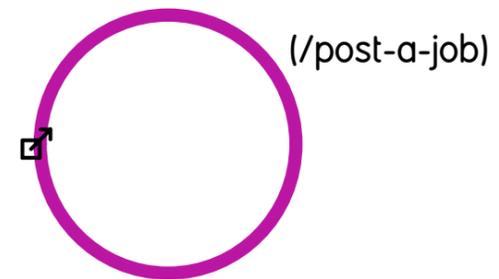


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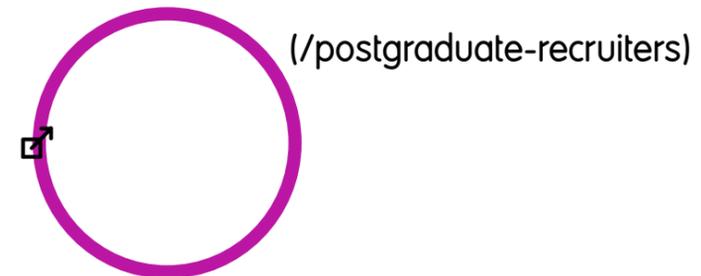
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