

MentorMe

This document tells you a bit more about what you can expect from the mentor training, and outlines the sort of qualities we are looking for in our volunteer mentors.

The training course is...

Engaging, enjoyable and effective -

We have designed the course so that it is interactive, fun and friendly. The consistent feedback that we get from people who attend this course is that it is both highly enjoyable and of an extremely high quality. It does not carry any official qualification or accreditation but will cover all of the necessary areas to equip someone to mentor a person who has been involved in the criminal justice system. We sincerely hope that you will find it to be an insightful and worthwhile use of your time. At present, the course consists of two whole Saturdays and three evening sessions.

Free, but not cheap -

There is no charge for coming on the course (though any donations are welcome) but the MentorMe team have invested a great deal of time and resources into making the course as good as possible. These courses are MentorMe's sole way of recruiting volunteer mentors and so we want the 12 spaces on the course to be filled by people who are genuinely interested in exploring this role. Late arrivals can disrupt the whole group, and any missed sessions will mean that we need you to attend that session on a future course, so your cooperation in arriving promptly and notifying us well in advance (where possible) if you are unable to attend one of the sessions will be much appreciated.

A two-way experience -

We see the training course as both an opportunity for you to explore whether volunteering with us is the right thing for you but also as a chance for us to see whether you have the qualities and approach that we need our volunteers to show (see *"What we're looking for"* below). For this reason throughout the course there will be lots of chances for you to ask questions but also opportunities for you to practice the skills that we have taught you through various exercises (don't worry - there's no role play or examination!), with feedback being encouraged and given in a friendly way. We will never make anyone do or talk about anything that makes them feel uncomfortable, and recognise that people have different learning styles and confidence in different areas so hope you will feel able to talk to us about this if you feel the need. We will also give you "homework" to do in between sessions - consisting mostly of personal reflection, and continued skills practice. It is obviously up to you if you choose to do this work, but people tend to get a lot more out of the course the more that they engage with the content, and if you go on to apply as a volunteer then we will need to see evidence of you having taken this seriously.

Christian, but not a proselytising project -

We are an unashamedly Christian charity and endeavour to show the love of Jesus to those that we meet and go on to support. We pray during our training sessions and approach mentoring from a Biblical perspective. Due to this, we are only able to accept volunteers who are active members of a local church and will require a reference from a church leader should you go on to apply to be a mentor with us. However, we offer mentoring support to people regardless of whether they have a personal faith, different faith or none at all. We do not prevent our mentors from talking about their faith, if this is something that their mentee is comfortable with, but expect our volunteers to respect that this is not the (sole) purpose of our project and that they should be willing to support someone with their practical and emotional needs without feeling the need to proselytise.

The start of a process -

At the end of the course it is up to you whether you choose to apply to be a mentor with us (and if for any reason you don't then we very much hope that you will still have benefited from learning more about the challenges that people who've been in prison face, and will be able to pray more effectively for them as a result!). Anyone who submits an application will then be invited to an informal interview to discuss his or her application. Once that is complete, if the team feel you are suitable to proceed, we will contact your references and complete a DBS check. If you have any convictions, please do not let this put you off as we do have mentors who have previous convictions. We would simply advise you to let us know beforehand.

What we are looking for...

Please do not let the below list intimidate you - very few people who come on the training arrive on day one as the complete package, but there are certain skills that are essential, and others that we need you to at least have a willingness to grow in if you are going to volunteer with us. If you don't know what some of the below terms mean, don't worry - by the end of the training course we will have covered and taught them all.

A mentor, as part of MentorMe, needs to have excellent listening skills with the ability to demonstrate active listening and summarise/reflect back well to the person they're listening to. The use of open questions to appropriately explore a topic is important, whilst being able to empower and encourage others, allowing them to set the agenda and support them in doing things for themselves. It is important that you can adhere to boundaries set out by MentorMe, be non-judgmental, and reliable. We encourage those that we work with to set goals and work towards achieving these with the support of a mentor, so helping someone to identify and set realistic goals is key. Finally, being able to challenge someone appropriately and sensitively is important, as well as being reliable and punctual to meetings, and being accountable to MentorMe staff by keeping in regular contact when mentoring someone.

Time commitment

Before telling a volunteer about a potential mentee, we always ask whether they are currently in a position to mentor someone, because we recognise that commitments and seasons of life change - this also means that if a mentor's circumstances change during the course of a mentoring relationship then we will always seek to accommodate this and find the best solution for all involved. There will never be any pressure to mentor someone if you do not feel able to do so at that time. We also recognise that some volunteers have more availability and/or flexibility for when they could meet a mentee than others - we bear all of this in mind when matching you with someone. Every mentoring relationship is different but on average we expect mentors to meet with their mentee for an hour every 1-2 weeks, and expect mentoring relationships to last for a minimum of 6 months. We also require volunteers to complete a meeting report after each meeting (which takes approx 15 mins to fill in) and also to be in contact with their mentee via text/call once or twice in between meetings.

We hope that has given you an insight into the training and what it means to be part of the wonderful MentorMe volunteer team.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to be in touch, and we look forward to hearing from you.

MentorMe

a project of SixtyOne www.sixtyone.org

Offering welcome