LEARNING MENTOR

**Learning mentors offer support and guidance to children, young people, and sometimes adults, who experience difficulties with their learning**

As a learning mentor, you'll work closely with individuals who are struggling with social, emotional or behavioural problems that affect their ability to learn. You'll work alongside teachers and other staff, figuring out the needs of learners who require help and how to overcome barriers that are preventing them from achieving their full potential.

You'll 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'll be based predominantly in education settings (primary and secondary schools and further education colleges) 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, 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 caseload and plan, deliver and measure interventions to support the young people you work with.

Other posts will require GCSEs in English and maths and you'll be expected to work in a supporting role.

As a learning mentor you'll typically need to:

* liaise with staff to identify learners who would benefit from mentoring
* discuss and help decide how identified needs will be addressed
* implement strategies and support learners in self-esteem and confidence-building activities
* help learners who are underperforming in their subjects, either on a one-to-one basis outside the classroom or within lessons
* listen to learners and help them resolve a range of issues that are creating barriers to their learning
* draw up agreed action plans with learners, outlining the aims of the mentoring, and monitor their progress
* monitor attendance and punctuality of learners
* visit parents at home to discuss issues, and run group sessions and workshops for parents at school
* advise parents on behaviour strategies and parenting skills
* network with other learning mentors, teachers and relevant external agencies and professionals, such as educational psychologists, the police and social services
* set up breakfast and after-school clubs and run extracurricular activities, such as homework clubs, reading clubs, sports, music and discos, during lunchtimes or as out-of-school activities
* organise drop-in 'offload' sessions, where learners can discuss particular issues
* provide group activities such as anger management classes
* maintain accurate records and prepare written reports and evaluations
* help to secure funding to support learners' additional educational needs
* manage your own professional development through undertaking relevant training and sharing best practice with other learning mentors
* help with transition activities for learners moving to secondary schools or on to further education.

Salary

* Typical starting salaries are in the region of £14,500 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, your skills and experience, and location.

If you work part time or only in term time, you'll be paid pro-rata (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 work is necessary for extracurricular activities, staff meetings 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.

What to expect

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

Qualifications

This area of work is open to all graduates and those with an HND. 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'll need to demonstrate a good standard of general education, particularly in English and maths.

It's also possible to enter the role via a Level 3 learning mentor advanced apprenticeship, combining paid work with part-time study. Search [Find an apprenticeship](https://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch?_ga=2.102071809.1650681876.1603187492-1895822869.1578581375) for opportunities.

A postgraduate degree isn't necessary for entry, but some learning mentors have professional qualifications.

You'll also need to obtain an enhanced [Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service) check if you're working with young people.

Skills

You'll need to have:

* 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
* organisation and time management skills
* the ability to relate to young people and adults and to build trust so that they can achieve their full potential
* 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
* knowledge of, and a commitment to, safeguarding in schools.

Work experience

You'll find experience of working with young people is essential (either paid or voluntary) and it's 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. In order to gain relevant experience of working with children, you'll 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'll 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:

* [Guardian Education Jobs](https://jobs.theguardian.com/landingpage/2867357/jobs-education-html/)
* [Local Government Jobs](http://www.lgjobs.com/)
* [Teaching Vacancies](https://teaching-vacancies.service.gov.uk/) - job-listing service from the DfE.
* [Tes Jobs](https://www.tes.com/jobs/)

You can also check individual school websites, local council vacancy bulletins and local council websites for opportunities.

Specialist recruitment agencies such as [EduStaff](http://www.edustaff.co.uk/) and [eTeach](https://www.eteach.com/) handle vacancies.

Vacancies are also advertised on LinkedIn.

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.

Courses are also available in areas such as safeguarding and positive behaviour management strategies, which may be paid for by your employer.

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's 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
* counselling
* 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.