

## GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS

While the appointment and supervision of mentors for young people is a matter for the individual Church, NISCU can offer some helpful guidelines.

The aim of these is threefold:

- Safeguarding of the young person, which is of primary importance
- Safeguarding of the mentor
- Protecting the Church, by ensuring it is positioned with robust policies and procedures to minimise risk and to deal with issues, should they arise, in appropriate and transparent ways.

What are mentoring sessions about?

As part of the Deep and Leap programmes, the young person is asked to complete regular devotions on a daily/weekly basis, and from time to time to undertake tasks, often in their school context, that apply what they are learning. The overall aim is to for them to develop in their understanding of the Bible; to apply their understanding in a missional way; and to begin to unlock their leadership potential.

The purpose of the mentor is to provide support in these aims, by discussing the devotions and tasks and probing their responses to them, making suitable suggestions and offering affirmation and encouragement. We recommend making prayer a significant part of your time together

### Appointment of Mentors

We recommend the following:

- That an Enhanced DBS certificate be obtained for the mentor, if not already in place, for Children's Workforce. Bear in mind that these provide a snapshot of the individuals record at the time they applied for, and do not provide a guarantee of suitability. They should therefore be part, not the whole, of a safeguarding strategy
- Where a new DBS is applied for, we recommend that the individual registers for Online Updating Service (free for those in voluntary positions) which allows up to date records to be accessed online at any time with their permission
- A potential mentor should be well known to the Church leadership for at least three years with a consistent faith and proven reliability in their dealings with children and young people
- Where possible obtain references from outside the immediate church setting
- Ensure the young person who is to be mentored is comfortable with your choice of mentor
- Obtain written Parental Consent.

Once a suitable mentor is in place, give some thought to how they will operate.

A mentor needs to be thoroughly conversant with the Church's own Safeguarding Policy, and preferably had some training in this area. You may have the expertise in house to provide this, or you may want to access outside training. NISCU recommends the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) which can provide DBS certificates; offer training; and has a useful Helpline.

This may be a good time to review your Church Safeguarding Policy if you have not done so recently. In particular with respect to mentoring, what does it say about best practice in one to one situations; about confidentiality; procedures in the event of concerns about a young persons safety and well being; and use of technology eg mobile phones, email, social media. A mentor needs to be clear about each of these, and be committed to operating in accordance with them.

### Operating as a Mentor

We recommend the following:

- Put in place clear accountability, eg a regular (once termly) supervisory meeting of the mentor with a responsible person. The Pastor or church leader, or head of youth/children's work, or Church child protection officer would all be suitable responsible persons. This allows progress to be assessed, and any issues of concern dealt with in a timely way. Parents and the young person should use this as their first port of call should they have any concerns
- The mentor should agree with the young person some guidelines for how to conduct their mentoring relationship. This includes: place of meeting; duration and frequency of sessions eg one hour fortnightly; agreement about note taking and access to records; a statement about confidentiality, which needs to accord with safeguarding policy.

Recommended meeting places: quiet corner of a cafe; the church meeting place eg before or after a youth session when there are still other people about; or a communal room in the young persons home. Regular sessions in the Mentors home are not recommended, however if the Mentor is married or in a shared house it is appropriate from time to time to invite the young person to a meal with the family, The aim is to maintain privacy but in a setting where other people are about.