

Study Guide Transcript



Spring 2025

*This study guide transcript has been provided to support learners in following the **Way2Learn Volunteering & Mentoring** course.*

*While the guide serves as a useful resource, we highly recommend that learners watch the course episodes on the **Way2Learn channel** or via the **Video-on-Demand** service to gain a full understanding before completing the answer book.*

*For your convenience, episode times are listed on **page 4 of the answer book**, within the **Way2Learn prospectus** in your library, and in the **quick-glance guide**.*

Intro: The Pathway Through the Door - Foundations of Volunteering and Mentoring



Introduction

Welcome to the Way2Learn Foundation of Volunteering and Mentoring course.

Over the next 5 lessons, we are going to walk you through the practical steps required to step into a new role with confidence.

The environments you will work in are varied. You might find yourself peer mentoring inside a prison, running outreach programs at a local Community Centre, or taking calls on a telephone listening service. Let's look at the specific role of a mentor.

A mentor is an experienced and trusted advisor who supports the personal and professional development of another individual. As a mentor, you demonstrate professional behaviour and assist your mentees in identifying and setting realistic goals.

To fulfil those duties, you operate from a strict ethical baseline.

Respect means acknowledging others' rights.

Integrity requires you to be reliable. Empathy involves understanding and sharing the feelings of the person across from you.

These ethics translate directly into your legal responsibilities. The most important part of these is safeguarding.

Every volunteer working with children or vulnerable adults has a legal duty of care to protect them from harm and report any concerns regarding their well-being.

Importance of Ethical Boundaries

Roles involving regular one-on-one interaction with vulnerable groups legally require a Disclosure and Barring Service or DBS check.

It is a criminal offense to volunteer in a regulated activity.

If you are barred from doing so, there is a clear boundary regarding liability.

If you cause accidental damage while performing explicitly agreed upon duties, the organisation is vicariously liable but if you operate outside your role, like giving unauthorised medical advice, you can be held personally liable for negligence.

Good intentions are where you start, but they require structure to be effective.

Understanding these strict ethical values and legal rules is the bridge that turns those intentions into safe and protected impact.

Active Listening

Of all the skills you will carry across that bridge, one is particularly vital.

Active listening.

It is the foundational skill required in any volunteer or helpline role.

This document outlines active listening.

It involves fully concentrating on the mentee and trying to understand their feelings.

Your job is to listen and support, not provide untrained advice.

Always guide people toward professional help for complex crises.

There is one critical exception to this, absolute Confidentiality. Under UK GDPR rules, if a caller or mentee expresses immediate intent to harm themselves or others, you have a legal basis to break confidentiality to protect their vital interests.

In these moments, you must escalate the issue directly to your safeguarding officer.

Mastering active listening and holding firm boundaries makes you a more effective volunteer.

It also builds a permanent toolkit for navigating complex human interactions in your everyday life.

While the primary focus of volunteering is external, the experience generates significant internal growth.

The skills built through this course translate directly and turn you into a highly employable, real-world asset.

Employers look for the exact traits developed on the front lines of charity work.

Employment Opportunities

When you volunteer, you develop proven examples of clear communication, reliability, and the ability to coordinate effectively within a team.

If you are currently out of work, a volunteer placement provides verifiable experience.

It actively closes the gaps on a CV, showing hiring managers that you are driven and actively applying your skills. It also addresses the challenge of securing recent references.

By committing to a volunteering role, you earn a reference from an organisation that has seen your work ethic first hand.

You also gain a potential hiring advantage.

Organisations often prefer to hire candidates they already know.

Establishing trust as a volunteer frequently leads to paid roles within that same charity or sector.

This five-lesson course provides the orientation required before you step through that door.

It is the specific preparation that allows you to support others while building a path toward your own future.

Learn the skills needed to support others today and build the foundation for your own future success. All you have to do is take the first step.

Open the door, begin the course, and let's get started!

Episode 1: Foundations of Volunteering and Mentoring



Volunteering in Everyday Life

Think back to a time when you sat down next to someone who was completely stuck on a problem.

Maybe you shared a tip or walked them through it step by step until you saw that look of relief wash over their face.

That feeling of reward you get is entirely genuine, in any workshop or classroom. Those small, informal acts of helping someone grow are incredibly valuable. When you take that natural desire to help and turn it into a dedicated role, you step into the practice of volunteering. The voluntary sector is an entire community of people who choose to give their time without pay simply to lift others up. Recognising that shift from being a casual helper to a committed volunteer is where this work really begins. Operating in this space requires a shared set of guiding values.



Core Personal Skills

Good intentions are a great start, but they need a solid ethical foundation to work, we start with empathy and respect. This means taking the time to understand exactly how a learner is feeling and honouring their personal boundaries along the way. Next, are commitment and integrity.

You show up when you say you will, and you act as a reliable, consistent presence in that person's week. By practicing empathy, respect, commitment and integrity, a casual helper becomes a safe, reliable support system for a vulnerable learner.

Within the voluntary sector, one of the most rewarding roles you can take on is that of a mentor. Mentoring is a partnership.

It's two people working together to share skills at the same pace. You aren't in charge; you're on equal footing like 2 colleagues solving a problem together. You share practical knowledge to help the mentee identify achievable goals. All of this requires a foundation of strict confidentiality to build a trustful relationship. By combining active listening, shared knowledge, and trust, a mentor creates a safe environment where the learner feels empowered to drive their own growth.

Differences between a Teacher and a Mentor

To fully understand this dynamic, it helps to look at a typical classroom setting and clarify the boundaries between a mentor and a teacher. There are distinct similarities. Both want the learner to succeed and provide feedback, but their methods are distinct. A teacher holds a formal role directing curriculum and grading work. A mentor occupies an informal space, providing personal 1 to 1 guidance without any disciplinary authority.

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When a learner is being formally evaluated by a teacher, they naturally feel a level of pressure to perform perfectly. Because the mentor is completely removed from the grading process, that pressure disappears. The mentor provides a safe place for the learner to make mistakes and ask the questions they might be too intimidated to ask a teacher. If a teacher's job is to build a road, a mentor's job is to walk alongside the learner so they don't travel it alone. Let's review the main points. We covered the voluntary sector and the core values of empathy, respect and integrity required to participate in it. We established that mentoring is a collaborative, side by side partnership based on trust rather than a hierarchy. We outlined the clear boundaries between a teacher's formal assessment and a mentor's informal, supportive guidance. Deciding to step into this role is a powerful way to lift up the people around you.

In our next lesson, we will look closely at the specific skills and techniques that make a truly effective mentor.

Episode 2: The Role and Qualities of a Mentor



Introduction

In our last lesson, we defined a mentor as someone who guides alongside a learner, rather than standing at the front of the room instructing them. Let's take that idea out of the textbook picture of busy Tuesday morning in the workshop. What does that guidance look like when you sit down next to a student? To answer that, we split your job into two distinct halves. First, is your role, the specific tasks and actions you do every day. Second, are your personal qualities, who you are while you are doing them. You need both. If you go through the mechanical motions of helping someone but lack the right attitude, you will not build the trust necessary for a learner to succeed.

Role Modelling

supportive guidance means offering a quiet word of encouragement when a learner hits a wall on a math worksheet. Role modelling means keeping your behaviour calm and professional, even if the environment gets frustrating. Then you have knowledge sharing, passing on useful study techniques without doing the actual work for them. You pair this with goal setting, taking a massive overwhelming task and breaking it down into small daily targets they can achieve. As they progress, you apply challenge and stretch to gently encourage a quiet learner to speak up in a group setting. After they try, you use feedback and reflection to praise their effort while offering gentle corrections for next time.

Confidentiality and Trust

This is strict and non-negotiable, if you cannot keep a learner's struggles private, the entire relationship collapses. Together, these eight actions form a mechanical safety net. They provide the reliable structure a mentee needs to feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes. Checking boxes on a list isn't enough. Your effectiveness relies entirely on the personal character you bring into the room. You show respect by listening without interrupting. You use empathy to adjust a task when you notice your mentee is having a rough day, and you demonstrate integrity by having the honesty to admit when you simply don't know the answer to a question. You need patience and reliability to show up consistently week after week. By remaining non-judgmental and approachable when a mentee makes a mistake, you prove that you are a safe person to talk to.



Episode 3: Core Mentoring Skills

Introduction

We are going to master 4 core mentoring skills; the exact skills you're going to use every single time you sit down to help someone.

And hey, don't worry, we're not rushing through this.

We'll take our time, break each one down so you can take notes and really make sure you feel totally confident using them in the real world. Here is our road map for this lesson.

1. Active Listening,
2. Clear Communication
3. Asking open questions
4. Constructive feedback.

Before we jump into those new skills, let's just do a quick recap of lessons one and two.

Remember, your role as a mentor is all about offering supportive quick sharing your knowledge, and above all else, building trust.

You're stepping into this amazing position where you'll be a trusted advisor, really helping another person grow, set their goals, and reflect on their own personal journey.

Teacher vs Mentor

It's always a good idea to remind ourselves of the difference between a teacher and a mentor.

You know a teacher follows a formal curriculum, right?

They assess performance but you as a mentor, you're doing something totally different.

You aren't there to grade anyone or judge them.

You are there to provide personalized guidance and support their personal reflection.

You're literally walking right alongside them.

Let's start with core skill one, **active listening**.

This right here is the absolute foundation of everything else you'll do as a mentor.

But what exactly is active listening? It means fully paying attention and showing the other person that you truly hear them, not just sitting there waiting for your turn to talk.

Fun fact for you, most people only remember about 25 to 50% of what they hear.

Crazy, right?

Well, active listening bridges that gap.

It involves making solid eye contact, not in your head, and fully concentrating on what your mentee is saying without interrupting them.

It's all about making them feel like they are the only person in the room. Let's look at a not like this example. Imagine your mentee is trying to tell you about a difficult day, and you just cut in with a rushed yeah anyway, so then I went to the art while looking away or fidgeting. When you jump in like that, half listen or just change the subject entirely, the other person instantly feels ignored. It completely shatters that trust we talked about and honestly, they'll probably stop opening up to you. Now let's look at a like this instead example.

Imagine you listen fully; you nod and then you say calmly. "So, what you're saying is you felt really stuck in that situation." This is what we call reflecting. By just repeating a little bit of what you just heard, you prove that you value their voice. It helps the person feel genuinely understood and as we know from our sources, sometimes this can be the very first time in months someone has felt heard.

And here's a quick practical task for you to try out on your own.

The very next time someone talks to you, whether it's in a workshop, in a classroom, or even just chatting, pause and take one full breath before you reply.

Don't say a single word until you've taken that breath. It naturally stops you from rushing in and makes sure you are really listening.

Clear Communication

Once you've nailed listening, you need to be able to speak well. **Clear communication** means exactly what it sounds like; being clear, staying calm, and making yourself super easy to understand. It also means actively checking that the other person understood you. To pull this off, you really want to speak plainly. Skip the confusing jargon or those big, complicated words. You want to create a positive, relaxed environment where your mentee doesn't feel confused. OK, here's our not like this example.

Imagine rapidly telling someone you've got to maximize your developmental paradigms right now. If you speak in a rushed way, using confusing jargon like that, your mentee is going to feel lost, or worse, totally intimidated.

They might just nod and say yes because they're a bit embarrassed, but they haven't learned anything from the exchange, and this brilliantly illustrates the right way. Instead, try this calm, plain language.

You're speaking calmly, using totally simple words, and most importantly, you are checking in, asking. This gives them a perfectly safe chance to ask questions if they're unsure about anything at all. Practice explaining an everyday task to someone, like how to make a cup of tea or how to fill out a standard form, but do it using the absolute shortest, plainest words you can think of.

No big words, just concrete, simple steps. It's an awesome way to build up your communication confidence. All right, on to core skill three, **asking open questions**. This next skill is a fantastic tool to help your mentee think deeply. An open question is simply one that invites the person to say more.

It literally cannot be answered with just a simple yes or no; when you ask open-ended questions, you're encouraging your mentee to reflect on their own actions and have a much, much deeper conversation with you. Now, what's interesting here is seeing how the exact same topic can be handled in 2 completely different ways. First, look at the closed question. "Did you do your homework?"

Well, the answer is just yes or no, the conversation hits a brick wall right there but look at the open version, "what did you learn from your assignment?" this invites much deeper thinking. The mentee must explain their thoughts, which is exactly what you want as a mentor. So, here's your challenge for this skill; take a standard question you might ask every single day, like did you have a good morning and just change the start of

it. So instead, you might say tell me about your morning. Seriously, watch how much more the other person talks when you do this.

Constructive Feedback

Core skill 4, **constructive feedback**. Our final, and honestly perhaps our most important skill is constructive feedback. This is advice that is kind, clear, specific and fully focused on helping the person improve. It is never, ever about putting them down. Your whole goal as a mentor is to support their growth, build up their resilience and praise their effort. You aren't there to judge them or make them feel bad about making mistakes. Here's the not like this example. Imagine snapping at a mentee that was wrong. You messed it up. This is harsh. It's incredibly vague because it doesn't even tell them what they messed up and it's highly judgmental.

Criticism like this completely shuts down learning. The mentee will just feel defensive, and that trust you've worked so hard to build, Yeah, it'll be damaged instantly. Now here's the constructive version of that exact same feedback.

finally, you end with some warm encouragement. It's kind, and it's helpful. Here is a crucial mindset shift for you to try this week. Practice viewing feedback as a team effort. Think of it as something you give with someone, not something you do to them. You and the mentee are sitting on the same side of the table, working together to solve a problem. If you just keep that in your head, your feedback will always be respectful and kind. So, the crucial point here is that being a great mentor really comes down to practicing these four master skills. Listen actively and reflect back what you hear. Communicate clearly in plain words and check they understand. Ask open questions that start with how or what and give kind, specific feedback to help them grow. Remember, absolutely no one is perfect at this right away. These skills take practice and everyone improves with time and patience. You know you've done a fantastic job working through this highly practical explainer today. But before you go, I want you to ask yourself this, if you had someone actively listening to you and offering kind, clear feedback during the toughest moments of your own life, how much faster would you have grown?

Because that is the exact power you now have to offer someone else.

How to Tackle the Answer Book Task on Episode 3, Q5

Your Answer Book contains an exercise to help you use what you've learnt about positive feedback and what that might look like in a real-life scenario. This involves:

- **Exploring common phrases**
 - Think about how emotions are shown through negative comments made about their work and how you might respond to change their perspective.
- **Using personal experiences**
 - Consider people you have met or observed in real life.
 - What Feedback would you find particularly useful in their position?

By working through these tasks carefully, you will develop key skills as part of being an effective and supportive mentor.

Episode 4: The Guide and The Compass – Foundations of Trust



The Internal Compass: Building a Foundation of Trust

As a peer mentor, your job is to provide the solid ground a mentee needs to find their own way forward, rather than stepping in to solve the problem for them. To do this, you rely on an internal compass calibrated by core values.

The first direction on this compass requires meeting the mentee exactly where they are. You must approach them without the weight of authority or the shadow of their past

mistakes. By practicing non-judgment and respect, you accept them without criticism, acknowledge their boundaries, and treat them as an equal.

Empathy, Confidentiality, and Safety

To deepen your connection, you must utilise empathy and confidentiality.

- **Empathy:** This means actively listening to truly understand the other person's feelings, rather than just waiting for your turn to speak.
- **Confidentiality:** Keeping vulnerable disclosures private is a mandatory condition for any mentee considering sharing a personal truth.

There is one strict exception to confidentiality: if a mentee reveals they are in immediate physical danger, you must seek staff help to keep them safe.

Integrity and Relentless Consistency

Creating a secure space is only the first step; trust is incredibly fragile and requires relentless consistency to survive.

Many mentees navigate unpredictable or chaotic environments in their daily lives. By showing up consistently, you become a reliable constant they can count on. You must demonstrate integrity and commitment by being reliable and following through, even when it is inconvenient. Even a minor broken promise, like failing to call at the exact time you promised, can instantly shatter the solid ground you have worked hard to build.

Understanding Your Professional Boundaries

Every map has an edge, and in mentoring, that edge is defined by your boundaries. While a teacher assesses performance and follows a curriculum, a mentor occupies an informal space to support reflection and provide personalized guidance.

- You are not acting as their therapist or their lawyer.
- Trying to do the work for them or attempting to solve deep systemic personal problems yourself violates your role boundaries and hinders their personal growth.

Hitting the edge of your map is not a failure. It simply means it is time to guide the mentee to someone who is fully equipped to navigate that specific terrain. Values are

the tools you use to build trust, and boundaries are the fences that protect both the relationship and the individuals inside it.

Episode 5 Part 1: The Bridge Across

Bridging the Employment Gap

People often view volunteering simply as a one-way street or a gift of time. However, if you are facing a multi-year employment gap on your CV, giving away your time is a highly strategic investment. The moment you begin a volunteer role; you immediately stop the clock on your employment gap. Volunteering provides current, verifiable workplace experience, giving you hard proof of transferable skills like reliable time management and the ability to coordinate effectively with a team.

The "Inside Track" Advantage

Working within an organization gives you a distinct advantage. You get to learn their internal systems, navigate their hierarchy, and understand their daily operations firsthand. This proximity places you directly in front of decision-makers, giving you the chance to prove your work ethic and earn genuine trust long before a paid position officially opens. By removing the risk for the employer, you transition from an unknown outsider into a proven, undeniable asset to the team.

Developing Top-Tier Professional Skills

Roles in mentoring and listening services sit at the top tier of volunteering and demand highly advanced interpersonal abilities. These roles require an attitude of absolute commitment, strict confidentiality, and non-judgment. To empower mentees, volunteers must master specific techniques like active listening—which means fully concentrating without interrupting and reflecting back what you hear.

Perhaps most importantly, these roles require strict professional boundaries. A volunteer is not a therapist and must never attempt to fix a caller's acute problems or give unauthorized advice. Instead, they are trained to safely "signpost" individuals to the proper professional help. Mastering these firm emotional boundaries and communication techniques transforms a simple act of charity into a highly regulated, intensely prized skill that employers across all sectors are desperate to hire.

Episode 5 Part 2: The Bridge Across

Bringing It All Together

Successful mentoring combines strong practical skills with core values to create effective relationships. Your role relies on professionalism, firm boundaries, and role-modeling positive behaviours. You pair this with core skills like active listening and clear communication, all built upon a foundation of respect, empathy, unquestionable integrity, and total non-judgment.

Reflecting and Setting Next Steps

Before stepping into a role, you must establish a baseline for your skills using a personal development tracker, rating your confidence from 1 to 5. Scoring a 1 or 2 is completely normal; it simply provides a clear target for improvement. To progress, avoid vague goals like "I will be a better listener". Instead, set bite-sized, specific targets (e.g., "I will use open-ended questions in two conversations this week").

The Route to Paid Work

Volunteering provides tangible experience using IT systems, working to targets and KPIs, taking direction, and operating as part of a team. Treating your volunteer role like a real job eventually turns it into one. This requires strict professional boundaries—such as only claiming actual, receipted out-of-pocket expenses to avoid creating an "accidental contract" under HMRC rules.

Navigating Listening Services Safely

On a listening service, your primary role is to provide a safe space to be heard and to signpost callers to help. **The absolute golden rule is that you must never give advice.** Giving advice when you lack proper medical, legal, or financial qualifications leaves both you and the caller exposed to accidental but profound harm, and breaches strict UK GDPR data protection regulations.

The Vital Interests Gateway:

There is only one legal exception to confidentiality. If a caller expresses immediate intent to harm themselves or others, you have a legal basis to act. Even then, you do not

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intervene personally; you must always signpost the caller to emergency services and immediately escalate the situation to your safeguarding officer.

