vineyard churches®

Youth Mentoring Guidelines

Contents

1. Introduction 2

2. Why Mentoring Matters 2

3. Who Is Involved 3

4. What Mentoring Looks Like 3

5. Safeguarding Compliance Checklist (VCUKI Standards) 4

6. Evaluation and Support 5

7. Conclusion 5

Appendix 1. Sample mentoring flow 6

Appendix 2a. Sample Mentoring Information for Parents/Carers 7

Appendix 2b. Sample Mentoring Information for Youth 8

Appendix 2c. Sample Mentoring Information for Mentors 9

Appendix 3. Sample mentoring agreement 11

Appendix 4. Sample mentor review 12

Appendix 5. Sample structures for a mentoring session 12

Appendix 6. Sample questions to start and develop conversations 13

1. Introduction

Mentoring is a valuable aspect of discipleship within the local church. It can provide a safe, relational context for young people to grow personally and spiritually through intentional relationships with mature Christians.

VCUKI has produced this guidance to support local churches in the development of mentoring young people within the local church setting. Each local church will need to produce its own mentoring policy in conjunction with other relevant policies such as Safeguarding Policy, Communication with Young People Policy and Code of Conduct.

This document offers guidance on the **purpose, principles, structure, and safeguarding requirements** of mentoring young people in the local church, ensuring that all interactions are safe, accountable, and nurturing. It also provides sample documents and suggested questions and structures for a mentoring meeting.

2. Why Mentoring Matters

1. Spiritual Growth

Mentoring gives young people the opportunity to explore the Scriptures, develop spiritual rhythms, and learn how to live out their faith in daily life. It's a relational setting where discipleship becomes personal and transformational.

2. Personal Support

Growing up can bring challenges around identity, belonging, and purpose. A mentor provides a steady and prayerful presence, offering encouragement, listening, and biblical wisdom.

3. Community and Belonging

Mentoring strengthens intergenerational bonds within the church family. It helps young people experience inclusion, value, and connection.

4. Outworking the Great Commission

Jesus commanded His followers to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19–20). Mentoring is one way we live out this Great Commission in a local and personal way. Through mentoring, mature believers invest in the next generation, teaching them to obey Jesus' commands and to live out His kingdom values wherever they go.

5. Accountability and Discipleship

Following the biblical model of Paul and Timothy, mentoring encourages both accountability and spiritual growth. It fosters a discipleship culture where young people learn to follow Jesus and, in turn, to disciple others.

3. Who Is Involved

3.1 Mentors

Mentors are mature Christians who model a consistent and authentic walk with Jesus.

They should:

- Be known and recommended by leaders within your church.
- Be safer recruited as per the local church's safeguarding policy, e.g. include references, **a valid enhanced DBS check / NI Access / PVG**, disclosure form, application form, job description and possible interview about the role.
- Be compliant with the safeguarding policies of your local church and have completed any safeguarding training and mentoring induction provided by the local church.
- Be committed to ongoing supervision and support within the local church's mentoring framework.

Mentors are expected to:

- Build trust and encourage growth while maintaining appropriate boundaries.
- Respect confidentiality within safeguarding limits.
- Demonstrate humility, accountability, and a prayerful and servant-hearted approach.

3.2 Mentees

- Young people aged 11–18 years who are part of the church or youth ministry.
- Participation is voluntary, and written parental/guardian consent is required.
- Young people are encouraged to take ownership of their spiritual journey and to contribute to the mentoring relationship through openness, reflection, and participation.

3.3 Shared Partnership and Oversight

Mentoring is a **partnership** between:

- The mentor, who offers guidance, wisdom, and prayerful support.
- The mentee, who actively engages in their own growth and discipleship.
- Church leadership, including the Youth Pastor/Coordinator or Mentor Coordinator and Safeguarding Lead, who provide oversight, training, and accountability for both parties.

4. What Mentoring Looks Like

4.1 Purpose

- To help young people grow as followers of Jesus.
- To support them in developing confidence, character, and calling.
- To provide a safe space for prayer, reflection, and honest questions and conversations.

4.2 Format

- Usually one-to-one or groups of 2-3.
- Frequency: Every 2–6 weeks, depending on the needs of the mentee and availability of the mentor. This is usually reviewed every 6-12 months.
- Duration: around 45–60 minutes.
- Activities may include: reading Scripture, discussion, prayer, journaling, goal setting, or serving together in ministry.

4.3 Safeguarding in Practice

Mentoring must be in line with the local church's safeguarding policy. We would suggest this includes but doesn't need to be limited to the following:

- Meetings should **always take place in visible, accountable environments** — such as open church areas, public cafés, or rooms with clear visibility.
- **No meetings in private locations.**
- Online or digital mentoring must use **church-approved communication channels** with parental awareness for under-18s, for example mentor/mentee and silent adult groups. The mentor should be in an open and public space with their screen visible.
- Mentors should record the **date, time, and location** of each session (submitted to the Youth Pastor/Coordinator or Mentoring coordinator in line with local church policy).
- Subject to local safeguarding advice, the best practice on travel is for the young person to make their own way to the venue or be brought by a parent/carer.
- Any **safeguarding concern** must be immediately reported to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** in line with your local church safeguarding policy.

5. Safeguarding Compliance Checklist (VCUKI Standards)

Requirement	Responsibility	Notes
Enhanced DBS / PVG / AccessNI check	Church Safeguarding Officer	Renewed in line with local church policy
Safeguarding Training	Church Safeguarding Officer	Must be current and in line with local church policy
Parental Consent for Under-18s	Youth Coordinator	Written consent required
Record Keeping	Mentor & Youth Coordinator	Securely stored and reviewed regularly
Reporting Concerns	All	Immediate report to DSL

6. Evaluation and Support

- Regular supervision for mentors and opportunities for reflection, prayer and training. (see appendix)
- Periodic feedback from mentees to ensure the process is healthy and effective.
- Annual review of the mentoring programme by the Youth Team and Safeguarding Officer.

7. Conclusion

Mentoring is a **privilege and a responsibility.** It is a key expression of our call to **make disciples** and to equip the next generation to live out the Kingdom of God in every area of life. By combining intentional relationships, spiritual formation, and strong safeguarding practices, we can create a safe and Spirit-filled environment for young people to grow in faith, identity, and purpose.

Appendix 1. Sample mentoring flow

1. Young person expresses an interest in having a mentor.

2. Chat through the following with the young person:
    a. What a mentor is for
    b. What commitment is expected of them
    c. Are there specific things you want help with/ to chat through?
    d. We can't promise, but is there anyone you had in mind?
    e. We'll have a think and a pray about who might be a good fit for you

3. Send Parent/Carer a copy of the Mentoring Agreement for Parents
    a. Get written confirmation that they are happy with these arrangements
    b. Save a screenshot of the message to appropriate location

4. Send the Young person a copy of Mentoring Agreement for Youth
    a. Get written confirmation that they are happy with these arrangements
    b. Save a screenshot of the message to appropriate location

5. Identify somebody who would be a good mentor for them.

6. Approach their suggested mentor to see if they would be up for it. You need to:
    a. That they will be free outside of school hours once a month for at least 1 year
    b. Send them a copy of the Mentoring Agreement
    c. Get written confirmation that they are happy with these arrangements
    d. Save a screenshot of the message to appropriate location

7. If needed: check if the young person is happy to have that person as their mentor.

8. Ensure mentor is safer recruited in line with local church policy, and has completed any safeguarding and mentor training available.

9. Message both the young person and their parents to let them know that they have a mentor and should expect a message soon. Include:
    a. That mentoring overseer is happy to be a point person for any questions or concerns about the mentoring relationship (and provide a way to communicate with them e.g. a phone number)
    b. The mentor's phone number

10. Give the mentor the young person's number.

Appendix 2a. Sample Mentoring Information for Parents/ Carers

Hello!

As you know, your young person has asked us for a mentor. We're really excited about that as a decision. Mentoring can be such a great opportunity to grow in faith and we can't wait for what God will do through it. We will be choosing a specific mentor for your young person that we trust and respect, and that we think will get on really well together. They will also be DBS checked by XXX Vineyard.

Our vision for mentoring is to create spaces for our young people to chat regularly with someone who has been following Jesus for a while. Mentors will be someone to check-in with how your young person is doing in faith, family, friendships and life in general. They'll also be someone your young person can bring their questions to (they won't always know the answers but they'll help to work through things).

Mentoring looks different for each person, but we always encourage mentors to meet with their mentee at least once per month. They might grab a coffee, go for a walk, play sport together or something else. They might choose to do a bible study together, read a Christian book that they feel would be helpful, or just have a general chat over a hot chocolate!

This is what we ask of our mentors:

- That they will arrange to meet up with your young person at least once a month, for a minimum of one year.
- That the mentor will take a lead in organising these meetings.
- That they will keep everything that they are told confidential unless:
    - They are worried about the young person's safety or the safety of others. In this case they will either chat to XXX (Youth Pastors) or a member of our safeguarding team.
    - They need advice on how to help with a situation. XXX are always available for advice. We will keep what they tell us confidential unless we're worried about the young person's safety or the safety of others.
- They will never meet anywhere that they will be alone with the young person. We advise them to meet in a public place, for example a cafe.

You are always welcome to chat to us if you have any questions or concerns about mentoring. You can get in touch with us on xxxxx xxxxxx.

Appendix 2b. Sample Mentoring Information for Youth

Hello!

We're so excited that you've asked for a mentor. It's a great opportunity to grow in faith and we can't wait for what God will do through it. Our vision for mentoring is to create space for you to chat regularly with someone who has been following Jesus for a while. They'll be someone to check-in with how you're doing in faith, family, friendships and life in general. They'll also be someone you can bring your questions to (they won't always know the answers but they'll help you to work through things).

Mentoring looks different for each person, but we always encourage you to meet at least once per month with your mentor. You might grab a coffee, go for a walk, play sport together or something else entirely. If you have ideas, you can definitely suggest them to your mentor.

To start off with, we just wanted to explain a little of what mentoring looks like:

- Your mentor will meet with you at least once a month.
- They will mentor you for at least a year.
- Your mentor will keep everything you tell them confidential unless:
    - They are worried about your safety or the safety of others - in this case they will either chat to xxx or someone from the safeguarding team about how to keep you or others safe.
    - They are not sure how to help - in this case they might ask for advice from xxx. We will keep what they tell us confidential unless we're worried about your safety or the safety of others.
- You don't have to answer a question that you don't want to answer, but we would encourage you to chat to them about what is really going on with your life. They don't want to know the 'right answer' they want to know about you!

You can talk with xxx at any time about how you're finding mentoring. We'd love to hear how it's going, and we're especially here if you have any questions, concerns or worries. You can either catch us in person at youth or drop the Youth Phone a message (xxxxx xxxxxx). We will keep what you tell us confidential unless we are worried about your safety or the safety of others.

We hope that you love having a mentor, we're praying for you.

Appendix 2c. Sample Mentoring Information for Mentors

Hello!

Firstly, thank you so much for mentoring a young person at XXX. The time that you will spend investing in them will be so valuable and formative.

Our vision for mentoring is that it would create space for our young people to chat regularly with someone who has been following Jesus for a while. You'll be someone to check-in with on how they're doing in faith, family, friendships and life in general. You'll also be someone they can bring their questions to (you're not expected to know all the answers but please do help them to work through). Creating that space will look different for each pair, but we always encourage you to meet at least once per month. You might grab a coffee, go for a walk, play sport together or something else entirely. If you're struggling for ideas, please do talk with us! We'd love to help you as you figure out how best to encourage your mentee.

As a mentor these are our expectations of you:

- **Regularity:** We expect you to meet with the young person you are mentoring no less than once a month. You are welcome to meet more regularly than this and there may be times where meeting weekly is helpful for your mentee, depending on what is going on for them. If you decide that you will only meet monthly we expect you to think ahead to book this in, e.g. if you are on holiday in four weeks time schedule to meet them in three weeks instead. Every four weeks is a minimum.
- **Organisation:** It is down to you as the adult in the relationship to schedule in your meetings and to remind the young person that it is happening.
- **Commitment:** We ask that you commit to at least one year (12 months) of mentoring. It is often more damaging than it is helpful to only meet for a few months.
- **Confidentiality:** It is important that you keep what is said to you confidential, unless you are concerned about the young person's safety or the safety of others.
- If you are concerned about someone's safety contact your DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead). You can ring thirtyone:eight on 0303 003 1111 if you can't contact the DSL urgently. If a young person's life is at risk contact the police directly on 999 and then speak to your DSL.
- If you need advice about how to handle a pastoral situation, get in touch with XXX (XXXXX XXXXXX) or XXX (XXXXX XXXXXX).
- **Vehicles:** We do not advise that you give the young person you are mentoring a lift. In an emergency, contact the parents immediately before you offer them a lift and speak to your mentor coordinator afterwards.
- **Location:** Never meet anywhere that you will be totally alone with the young person. We would advise meeting in a public place, for example a cafe.
- **Ending the mentoring relationship:** Your mentoring relationship can continue for as long as you/we feel is appropriate, beyond the minimum commitment of 12 months. If you feel that it is appropriate to bring it to an end please talk to us before you talk to the young person. We will then make a plan with you to communicate this to them, a number of months in advance of your end date. For the young person this will make it feel more intentional and will avoid possible hurt. This will also allow us time to arrange a new mentoring relationship for them, if appropriate.

What can you expect from us?

- **Resources:** We will provide you with anything that you would find helpful. We have provided a list of questions below to help develop conversation. You could also use a tool like a discipleship deck or similar. This is a pack of cards with discipleship questions on, to get your conversations started. Let us know if there are any other resources that you would find helpful.
- **Support:** We will check in with you every xxx weeks/months to see if you are getting on OK but do feel free to get in touch with us at any time for advice or support.

Thank you so much for all that you do. Don't underestimate how valuable the time and energy that you are giving to this is. We think you're amazing!

Appendix 3. Sample mentoring agreement

Mentoring Agreement

Fill this in together during your first meet-up, and again at the review point if you decide to continue.

<table>
<tr><td>Mentor's name</td><td>Mentee's name</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Within the general umbrella of life and faith, here are some areas we will focus on (circle about three, cross out what doesn't apply, add more if you wish, now or later):
• School – friends, studies and exams
• Life at home
• Following Jesus and connecting with God
• Thinking about faith, school, culture
• Getting on with other people
• Mood and mental health
• Who I am and what I'm for
• Establishing and changing habits and dealing with temptations.
• Leadership (in church, with friends)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Start date:</td><td rowspan="4">Month in which we will review and stop, change or continue:
(No more than 12 sessions or 1 year at a time. Either may stop at any time by contacting the mentoring coordinator or a church leader)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Approx how often we will meet (circle): Fort-nightly / Monthly / 6-weekly / Other</td></tr>
<tr><td>How long will meet-ups usually be?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Who will set up the meet-ups?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Earliest time of day we will message:</td><td>Latest time of day we will message:</td></tr>
<tr><td>As a mentor I agree to:
• Offer times to meet up
• Listen, ask questions and discuss
• Maintain the confidentiality of our conversations, unless I have a legal obligation to disclose something
• Cover my costs if we do activities together
• Stay within XXX Vineyard mentoring program guidance and safeguarding policy</td><td>As a mentee I agree to:
• Confirm meeting arrangements and meet as planned, avoid cancelling and say promptly if it needs to change
• Outside the meetings, communicate in the agreed way
• Cover my costs if we do activities together
• Stay within XXX Vineyard mentoring program guidance and safeguarding policy</td></tr>
<tr><td>Signed (mentor)</td><td>Signed (mentee)</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix 4. Sample mentor review

To be conducted every 6-12 months, between the mentor and Youth Pastor and/or DSL.

1. What about the mentoring relationship is going well?
2. What about the mentoring relationship is harder?
3. Does the mentoring relationship still feel safe and appropriate?
4. Do you have any concerns about anything that has been discussed?
5. Do you feel you need any additional support or training?
6. Over the next 6-12 months do:
    a. You both want to carry on?
    b. You both want to stop?
    c. You want to carry on but the young person wants to stop?
    d. The young person wants to carry on but you want to stop?

Appendix 5. Sample structures for a mentoring session

1. **Free conversation** - this is where you meet without any agenda or structure. You might ask a few general questions to start, e.g. how are you getting on? Is there anything specific you want to talk about today? And then you will see where the conversation leads. This is usually used when the mentor and mentee have a longstanding relationship and the mentee is relatively mature.
2. **Set questions** - this is where you have pre-agreed a set of questions that will be asked. You can get sample lists online, and they should be worked through and personalised with the mentee. You then work through each question, giving time to listen and respond to anything that comes up.
3. **Discussion** - this is where you will have pre-prepared questions to lead discussion on a particular topic. This could be a bible or theme study, a book you're reading together or a specific question the mentee has asked previously.

Appendix 6. Sample questions to start and develop conversations

Topics	Questions
Feelings	How did you feel when X happened? Name a positive feeling and a negative feeling that happened to you recently. What are your main struggles or worries in life? How do you tend to express your feelings? Which types of feelings do you find trickiest when they happen? How does God relate to your feelings?
Following Jesus	Who influences you? Where do you feel you are in your discipleship to Jesus right now? What is your story of coming to faith? What are the recent highlights of your faith journey? What are the strong bits of you following Jesus and which are less well-developed?
Prayer	What do you pray about, mostly? When do you pray? Have you found a habit of prayer that works for you? Have you tried fasting? What helps you pray? (apps like Examen, Lectio 365, books, lists) What do you sense God is speaking to you about? How confident are you in praying out loud for someone?
Bible	Which bits of the Bible have you read for yourself? What Bible reading plans, apps, videos, books etc have you found helpful? What are the areas of the Bible you want to know more about?
Relating to others well	How is it going with your family/household? Who are your main circles of people at school/work? How is that going? If you were to pray for one of them, who would it be? Which of your friends know you follow Jesus? How do they know? What do you think they see and hear? What have you explained about church or your faith to someone outside that context? What could you talk about? Who else your age is following Jesus? Is there someone who is a friend also following Jesus? How could you support each others faith? Are you in a relationship with a boyfriend/girlfriend? In what ways does that help or hinder your relationship with Jesus?
Topics	What questions or topics puzzle you about the Christian faith? What do you wish others didn't say or think about the Christian faith?

Identity	What do you think God thinks about you? How would He describe you? What three words would you use to describe yourself? What do you most value about people you admire and want to be like? What words do others use about you: both nice and nasty words? How does your ethnic culture, family history and personal history lead to who you are? Have you done any personality tests (or would you like to)? What did they show? What labels or groupings would you accept for yourself, and which would you reject? In what ways are you different to the people around you? In what ways are you the same? Who are you becoming? Do you like the person you are becoming? Why/why not?
Purpose in life	What activities do you enjoy? What are you good at? What themes of God's Kingdom are significant for you? (e.g. justice, creativity, truth, mercy etc.) What are you passionate about? What's "on your heart"? What might God be calling you to do in your life?
Habits	What habits do you use to help you sleep well? How is your relationship with food? What do you enjoy doing that helps other people, or contributes to the family/household? What do you find yourself doing a lot? Is that a strength, a weakness, a discipline, a burden or an addiction? What things do you have choices about? What guides your choices? What do you spend your money on? What do you save up for? Where do you give money to?
Temptations	What's the culture with alcohol, drugs, vaping, smoking in your friendship groups? What's your stance? How does that go down? What do you do too much of on your phone or computer? How do you deal with sexual images or porn coming at you? What aspects of sex could sometimes be a temptation or pressure for you?
Leadership	Who have you ever helped, guided or led in doing something? How did it go? In what ways are you leading yourself? What ways of serving and leading have you tried in a church context? What about outside of church? What feels challenging about becoming a leader, or leading more? What leadership things would you like to have a go at some time? In what situations do you find yourself wanting to make things change? If you are God's secret agent, bringing about change, where is that?