

What is mentor for the social worker degree apprenticeship?

Mentoring, in a work-based setting such as an apprenticeship, is a professional relationship where a more experienced individual (the mentor) uses their experience and expertise in an area of work, in this case social work, to advise, guide and support another individual (mentee) to achieve their goals. Mentors play an important part in the apprentice's training and development and help them embed learning from university into their usual workplace. Mentors support the apprentice to identify new learning opportunities within their job role, and help them balance work and life, alongside study. Mentors are ideally social work qualified.

Do I need to be a practice educator?

No. Mentors do not formally assess apprentices in the way a practice educator assesses a student social worker on practice placements. Some mentors are practice educators, and these additional skills are transferrable to the mentor role.

You will take a step back as mentor during practice placements, and just check in with the apprentice at least once, to offer any additional support they may need. You will not become practice educator for your apprentice at any time, as these roles are distinct.

What is the time commitment for me as mentor?

Mentors are required to attend 3-way tripartite reviews with their apprentice and a university representative 4 times per year (approximately every 12 weeks). Tripartite reviews are compulsory for apprentices to meet their requirements to complete the programme in line with funding rules. These usually take place online for around 45 minutes. The apprentice completes a tripartite review form on a computer system called Aptem, which the mentor will read in preparation, and there is a short, written comment to be completed by the mentor, either before or after the meeting too. The mentor will electronically sign the completed document, alongside the apprentice and the university representative, as the employer representative. Support is given to set up an Aptem account by the university.

There are no specific rules for how often a mentor meets an apprentice between tripartite reviews, but we advise approximately 4-6 weekly, on a one-to-one basis. This can be online or in person and is dependent on the learning and development needs of the apprentice. If you are based in the same team, you may offer informal support too. You and the apprentice will complete an 'apprentice mentoring agreement' at the start of your working relationship, to set out expectations (template provided). The programme is usually 3 academic years for apprentices, and mentors support the apprentice for the duration of the programme, where possible.

What support will I receive as mentor?

The university offers an online workshop for mentors and line managers at the start of each academic year to explore the role, answer any questions and provide support. **It is advised new mentors attend if possible.** Mentor guidance is also provided, with more detailed information about the apprenticeship requirements. The employer lead within your organisation and university representatives are contactable for advice and support, as required. Contact details will be provided when you commence the role.