

SWITCHBACK MENTOR BACKGROUND

Switchback was established in 2008 to support young men leaving prison to live life differently: not just to stop crime, but to change the way they think about and participate in society. We are proud to have supported over 260 Switchback Trainees to make that change and lead stable, rewarding lives.

This job is all about supporting the emotional journey of our Trainees, which shapes the fundamental change they want in their own lives. It is in supporting this battle for real change that the huge excitement and the frequent frustrations of this job will come. It is both much more complex and much more rewarding than just box ticking or fixing. We need committed people who recognise the problems that are bound to arise for Switchback Trainees and who can be trusted allies during a difficult time of change. To do this effectively you need to bring both professionalism and **commitment to learning** to this serious enterprise. Critically, you also need to have great personal resilience to deal with setbacks, as well as endless patience and perseverance – it is not a job for the faint hearted!

JOB DESCRIPTION

The Switchback Mentor will build positive, motivational relationships with young adult prisoners and maintain them through the prison gate. As a reliable role model, the post holder will combine consistency and efficiency with being flexible around chaotic lives. This person will provide intensive one-to-one support for Trainees, focussing on their personal development as well as job and emotional-readiness, encouraging them to negotiate government systems and get the most from our training café partners and other agencies.

To do this job you need energy and a real interest in working with this group. This role would suit someone who relishes the idea of autonomy, dealing with unpredictability and getting out and about as well as the friendliness of working in a small team. We are seeking committed members of staff who have the confidence to motivate Trainees to change their own lives.

Switchback Mentor Learning

This role is perfect for someone who is keen to learn Switchback's unique style of working and to develop to become key in the future of the charity and the young men we work with.

Preferably having two years' experience working face to face with people with multiple needs you will also be someone who's excited by the prospect of putting your professional background aside to learn our experience-led way of working before re-integrating your previous knowledge. Your probation period will be an intensive three months and this time will be a chance for both you and Switchback to explore if this is the right job for you.

Switchback Mentor's Key Responsibility: Build and look after your own caseload – meeting up to 100 prisoners a year and working intensively with 10-12 of them through the gate.

Offering your commitment to Trainees in return for their commitment to their own change, you will help them make choices that reinforce the decision they made to change the way they live. This is usually a lengthy process of supporting - not doing, 'going the slow way round' to achieve the long term changes and positive outcomes that the Trainee is wanting. This involves a wide variety of tasks: some mundane and repetitive, always reprioritised, many out of the office, often frustrating, sometimes rewarding.

It's impossible to describe what it's like to be a Switchback Mentor in a document like this. These notes cannot convey the true essence of doing the job but do give an idea of the breakdown of the workload and responsibilities.

Face-to-face Mentoring

- Maintain regular contact with Trainees
- Spend regular one-to-one time with Trainees to:

- Help Trainees set goals in their Action Plans
- Offer advice and support on practical matters
- Review Action Plans, issues and achievements
- Offer informal counseling, ongoing motivation and encouragement
- Be in ad-hoc contact as necessary/requested to help Trainees deal with particular challenges
- Facilitate occasional group work and trips out on leisure and learning activities
- Keep clear paper records for each Trainee
- Update Trainee Database and Contacts Database on a regular basis.

Advocacy

- Advocate, negotiate, visit and/or liaise with all people connected to Trainees, including probation, family, external agencies and statutory services (such as housing), and employers
- Liaise between training cafés and Trainees
- Support Trainees and employer through work placements and into permanent employment
- Refer Trainees on to other projects, professionals and specialist provision where appropriate
- Manage timing of Trainees café shifts, one-to-one time and appointments with other agencies.

Outreach

- Build and maintain relationships with prison staff. Motivate them to make referrals to Switchback. Ensure they have a good understanding of what we do
- Gather and record information about the situation of each potential Trainee from Prison Service, the prisoner himself and other people connected to him
- Maintain regular contact with potential Trainees. Build Switchback Mentor relationships and start planning for release with potential Trainees
- Arrange regular prison visits and make good preparations to ensure efficient use of time.

Other

- Support fundraising and marketing activities
- Contribute to building institutional knowledge through team meetings and debriefings
- Involvement in away days and camping trips to introduce Trainees to new experiences
- Involvement in developing and delivering training of other groups in Switchback methodology
- Carry out other duties as required.