



# Implementing Boundaries

**Last Updated: April 2026**

## **Implementing Boundaries for Mentors**

### **Purpose of this policy**

This policy outlines the professional boundaries mentors must maintain when working with young people. It is designed to ensure safe, respectful and appropriate relationships, protecting both the young person and the mentor.

At MENT4, mentoring is built on trust, consistency and connection. However, strong relationships must always sit alongside clear professional boundaries. Boundaries protect young people, protect mentors, reduce the risk of burnout and help prevent situations that could lead to harm, confusion or accusations.

### **Why boundaries matter**

Mentors are in a position of trust and influence. Boundaries help define the limits and expectations within the mentor and mentee relationship. They allow mentors to maintain professionalism, uphold confidentiality and keep the focus on the young person's growth and development.

Without clear boundaries, there is a risk of:

- harm to the young person
- emotional dependency
- blurred roles and expectations
- mentor burnout
- safeguarding concerns
- reputational risk to MENT4
- personal risk to the mentor

### **The role of a mentor**

A mentor is a trusted adult who supports, guides and encourages a young person. Mentors are not:

- parents or carers
- therapists or counsellors, unless specifically qualified and appointed in that role
- friends in a personal or social sense
- available at all times
- responsible for solving every problem
- a replacement for other professionals involved in the young person's care

Mentors provide support within the structure and purpose of the MENT4 programme.

### **Core boundary expectations**

Mentors must establish and maintain clear boundaries in the following areas:

#### **Phone usage and communication**

Mentors should use agreed communication methods and keep contact within appropriate hours. Mentors should avoid becoming available at all times and should protect personal time, including evenings, weekends and rest periods. Mentors must not engage in private, excessive or secretive communication with young people.

#### **Transport and travel**

Mentors should avoid becoming a regular taxi service for young people. Lifts or transport should only be provided where there is an essential need, where it forms part of an agreed targeted activity, or where it has been approved by MENT4. Long journeys should be avoided unless there is a valid reason directly connected to the young person's needs, development or agreed programme activity.

#### **Focus on the young person**

Mentors should keep the focus on the young person's needs, growth and wellbeing. Mentors should avoid becoming overly involved in wider family issues unless those issues directly affect the young person's safety or wellbeing.

#### **Professional duties**

Mentors must not take on tasks that should be handled by other professionals. Where other services are involved, mentors should work collaboratively, share appropriate information through the correct channels and support accountability without stepping outside their role.

### **Financial assistance**

Mentors must not give money, loans or personal financial support to young people. This can create dependency, confusion or unfair expectations. Any financial support linked to MENT4 activity must be approved through the correct process.

### **Social boundaries**

Mentors must avoid social arrangements that blur the professional relationship. This includes avoiding unnecessary contact with a young person's friends, giving lifts to friends, engaging through personal social media or creating relationships that sit outside the agreed mentoring structure.

### **Family and personal information**

Mentors should keep personal and family information separate from the mentoring relationship. Personal experiences may be shared only when appropriate, purposeful and helpful to the young person's development. Mentors should not share private details such as home address, personal family matters, financial information or personal relationships.

### **Physical contact**

Mentors should avoid unnecessary physical contact. Any physical contact must be appropriate, respectful, non intrusive and suitable to the setting. Mentors should avoid physical displays of affection that could be misunderstood or blur boundaries.

### **Gifts, food and incentives**

Food and drink may be used occasionally as part of mentoring activity, encouragement or agreed incentives, but mentors should avoid creating patterns that lead to unrealistic expectations. Personal gifts should not be given or accepted unless agreed through MENT4's procedures.

### **Saying no and setting expectations**

One of the most important parts of boundary setting is being able to say no when necessary. Saying no does not mean being uncaring. It helps young people learn respect, accountability, resilience, problem solving and self sufficiency.

Mentors should communicate boundaries clearly and calmly. Where appropriate, mentors should provide a reason, offer an alternative or work with the young person to find a suitable solution.

Mentors should avoid prolonged negotiations that weaken boundaries or create confusion.

### **Questions to consider before setting or adjusting a boundary**

Before agreeing to a request or changing a boundary, mentors should ask themselves:

- Does this feel right to me?
- What is my instinct telling me?
- Am I doing this for them, or can they do it themselves?
- Am I finding it difficult to say no?
- Is this within my role as a mentor?
- Could this create dependency, confusion or risk?
- Would I be comfortable explaining this decision to my line manager or the DSL?

These questions can help mentors make safer and more professional decisions.

### **Manipulation and pressure**

Mentors should be alert to situations where they feel pressured, emotionally pulled, guilt tripped or manipulated into doing something outside their role. This does not mean assuming negative intent from a young person. Many young people may test boundaries because of previous experiences, unmet needs or lack of trusted adults. However, mentors must respond with consistency, care and firmness. If a mentor feels a young person is pushing boundaries or creating pressure, they should discuss this with their line manager or team leader.

### **Clarity in goals and expectations**

Mentors should clearly communicate the purpose of mentoring, agreed goals and what the young person can expect from the relationship. This includes being clear about:

- when sessions take place
- what support the mentor can offer
- what support the mentor cannot offer
- how communication will happen
- what happens if concerns arise

- what progress or goals are being worked towards

Clear expectations reduce confusion and help the young person understand the mentoring relationship.

### **Ending mentoring relationships**

Mentoring relationships should end in a planned and appropriate way where possible.

Mentors must not continue informal mentoring outside MENT4 structures after a programme or placement ends unless this has been formally agreed.

Endings should be handled carefully, with clear communication and appropriate closure.

### **Seeking support**

If a mentor finds it difficult to set boundaries, say no or manage a challenging situation, they should speak to their team leader, line manager or safeguarding lead for support. Support may include:

- supervision
- guidance on communication
- review of the mentoring plan
- additional training
- safeguarding advice
- adjustment to the mentoring arrangement

Mentors should never feel they have to manage difficult boundaries alone.

### **Equal treatment and inclusion**

MENT4's approach is to treat young people with fairness, dignity and open arms, regardless of differences in background, behaviour, belief or personal circumstances.

Boundaries should be applied consistently and fairly. This helps ensure that all young people receive safe, respectful and equal support.

### **Breaches of boundaries**

Any breach of professional boundaries must be taken seriously.

This may lead to:

- informal guidance or supervision
- further training
- review of role or responsibilities
- formal disciplinary action
- safeguarding investigation

Serious breaches may result in removal from mentoring duties and further action.

### **Final note**

Strong mentoring relationships are built on trust, care and consistency. Boundaries do not weaken relationships.

They protect them. By maintaining clear and professional boundaries, mentors create safe, supportive and effective spaces where young people can grow.

*This document has been approved by:*

**Luke Peters**  
**Executive Director**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "L. Peters", written over a light blue horizontal line.

*Helping young people discover what they are MENT4*

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# 1. APPENDIX A

## Safeguarding Form

All concerns should be recorded as soon as possible after the concern was raised in accordance with MENT4's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

Information should be provided on this form in a factual manner. Any concerns expressed by young people should be a reflection of what was actually said; do not try and interpret any of the information. Any views, opinions or observations should be recorded clearly identifying this.

Joanna Joseph (DSL) 07443917058  
[joanna.joseph@ment4.org](mailto:joanna.joseph@ment4.org)

### BASIC INFORMATION

|                             |  |       |  |
|-----------------------------|--|-------|--|
| Date:                       |  | Time: |  |
| Location:                   |  |       |  |
| Your full name:             |  |       |  |
| Your role:                  |  |       |  |
| Name of child/young person: |  |       |  |
| Age of child/young person:  |  |       |  |

### DETAILS OF CONCERN

Details of concerns/incident (do not interpret information – use the same language that was used by the child / young person). Are you reporting your own concerns or those reported from a third party?

|   |
|---|
| .....<br>.....<br>.....<br>.....<br>.....<br>.....<br>.....<br>.....<br>.....<br>.....<br><i>Continue on a separate page if needed.</i> |
|---|

Who else has the child/young person told? E.g. who else knows of these concerns?

|                                  |
|----------------------------------|
| .....<br>.....<br>.....<br>..... |
|----------------------------------|

Please tick to confirm that you have reinforced MENT4's Safeguarding Children and Young people policy and procedures

**ACTIONS TAKEN**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>What actions have you taken, if any?</b>              |  |
| <b>To whom in MENT4 have you reported your concerns?</b> |  |
| <b>Who and when was this information shared?</b>         | <b>Date:</b><br><b>Time:</b><br><b>Staff or Volunteer?</b> |
| <b>Staff or Volunteer?</b>                               |  |

**SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY A MENT4 SAFEGUARDING LEAD**

|                                      |  |                   |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| <b>MENT4 Safeguarding Lead name:</b> |  | <b>Signature:</b> |  |
| <b>Date:</b>                         |  | <b>Time:</b>      |  |
| <b>Outcome:</b>                      | <b>No further action report to be filed</b>    |                   |  |
|                                      | <b>Internal monitoring until...</b>            |                   |  |
|                                      | <b>External action and escalation to...</b>    |                   |  |
|                                      | <b>Urgent and immediate action to be taken</b> |                   |  |
| <b>Referred or Signposted to:</b>    |  |                   |  |

*This form should be shredded once all relevant information is stored on to MENT4's online safeguarding reporting systems. Please make sure you follow MENT4's Data Protection Policy, Confidentiality Policy and Safeguarding Policy.*