



in partnership
with



Learning Mentor

Acorn Exeter

Job Description and Person Specification



Introducing Acorn Alternative Provision

Acorn Alternative Provision is a Christian charity, working in partnership with local churches, to deliver trauma-informed educational programmes and wrap-around support to young people who are facing exclusion or disengagement from mainstream school. Our Education Centres are small, therapeutic learning environments, where the Christian values of love, grace, compassion, forgiveness and hope underpin our holistic approach and the needs-led curriculum we deliver during the school day. Running alongside this is the wider practical and pastoral support that the church can bring to the young people and their families, connecting them into missional activities that already exist to help overcome poverty, loneliness and social injustice.

Our young people are aged 11-16, and are typically not engaging in, or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream education. This may be due to social, emotional, or learning needs that are not being met at school; mental health difficulties; or school refusal or phobia.

Acorn currently operates four Centres across England, each with a small local team of three or four staff along with several volunteers. The Acorn Centres are led and supported by a small central management team and overseen by an experienced trustee board. Our Centres are run in partnership with local churches, who share our vision and mission.

In the education sector, our Centres are known as 'non-school alternative provision' settings, which means we are able to work with most of our young people on a part-time basis and a small number, with some restrictions, on a full-time basis. Not being a registered school gives us greater freedom and flexibility to meet the needs of our young people, which are often complex, and are not being met in a mainstream setting. We choose to adopt many of the same high standards as is required in registered schools, particularly in the areas of safeguarding, welfare, and safety, although we do not come under direct scrutiny by Ofsted. We are quality assured by local authorities and schools who refer their pupils to us, and we regularly carry out and commission internal and external audits to help us maintain high standards. Our centres are largely funded by placement fees which are paid to us by the referring schools or local authorities for young people placed with us.

Our commitment to safeguarding

Acorn Alternative Provision is committed to ensuring good practices are in place and followed to safeguard children and young people and to that end, our recruitment process follows safer recruitment guidance. We will be doing our due diligence and independently carrying out checks and taking up references to confirm your suitability to work with children. You can view our Safeguarding Policy [here](#).

Our mission and vision

Inspired by Isaiah Chapter 61, at Acorn we are '*rebuilding foundations and restoring hope*'. Our vision is for every young person to achieve a secure identity and a positive future – academically and economically, as well as socially, emotionally, mentally, relationally and spiritually.

Our foundational Christian values of love, grace, compassion, forgiveness and hope underpin our holistic approach and are woven through everything we do.

Acorn Centres are places where some of the most disadvantaged young people in our communities are loved, nurtured, and enabled to grow and succeed. Our settings are small, with an approach and curriculum that is needs-led and supports basic skills – engaging individuals at their points of need and interest, leading to improved opportunities in education and life beyond their time with us.

In partnering with the local church, we make the most of 'beyond the school-day' opportunities for pastoral and practical support for our young people and their families.

Introducing Belmont Church, Exeter

Belmont are a lively, diverse, and active Christian church that meets in the centre of Exeter. They exist to help people experience, explain, and demonstrate the good news that in following Jesus Christ we know peace and life with God. All that the church stands for is summed up in their strapline: "*Sharing the Story, Living the Life.*" Equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit, folk at Belmont share the Good News of Jesus Christ in their conversations and by living out their faith in acts of love and good deeds. Acorn Exeter will be hosted at Belmont Exeter and is an expression of the wider work of churches across the city of Exeter.



Job Description

Job Title:	Learning Mentor
Location:	Acorn Alternative Provision Exeter Based at Belmont Chapel, Western Way, Exeter EX1 2DB
Salary:	£25,045 – £27,045 depending on experience
Hours:	Full-time – 37.5 hours per week during term time. 13 weeks paid holiday.
Contract type:	Permanent, with a 3-month probation
Start date:	1 st September 2026, or as soon as possible afterwards
Reporting to:	Head of Centre

Organisation and Role Context

- Acorn Centres serve young people on the margins of education through a close partnership with the local church.
- Young people that come to Acorn are experiencing barriers that prevent them from succeeding in mainstream education, which often include complex educational, social, emotional, and mental health needs. These sometimes present themselves through challenging behaviour.
- Our Centres deliver innovative and tailored social and educational interventions for young people. We utilise imaginative curricula and resources, passionate staff, and creative methods of engagement to educate young people and bring about holistic change.
- The Learning Mentor role blends relational skills and the ability to work one-to-one and in small groups with young people, with the values of a living and active Christian faith, to deliver excellent alternative education.
- This role would suit an existing youth worker or someone currently working in education in a learning support or behaviour support role.
- You will be part of a small local staff team consisting of 2-3 staff, supported by volunteers from the church. You will also be part of a wider network of Acorn staff from other Centres across the country, who meet online together regularly to pray, share ideas, and receive training and development.
- You will report to the local Head of Centre at Acorn, will receive pastoral support from the church-based Centre Support Team and have access to specialist advisors, trained counsellors and therapists through an employee assistance programme.
- This role requires that you will be in the classroom setting throughout the day (the exact times to be agreed with your manager) from Monday to Friday.

Job Tasks

- Work with the Head of Centre and other team members to plan, resource, and deliver programmes for the young people.
- Plan and deliver personal development sessions and areas of the curriculum as agreed with your manager, and provide small group and 1-1 support as appropriate to enhance the young people's learning experience.
- Assist in team teaching and supporting in lessons led by other staff.
- Take a lead with the planning, resourcing, and delivery of occasional after-school activities.
- Support the development and innovation of a curriculum that meets the needs of the young people and is underpinned by the Christian values of love, grace, compassion, forgiveness, and hope.
- Be willing to share your personal journey of faith and your understanding of the gospel with the young people, advocating opportunities for exploring the Christian faith. This may include after-school courses (such as Youth Alpha), leading Thought for the Day/Assembly with a faith-led focus, and other opportunities.
- Be prepared to pray for, and under appropriate guidance, with, young people, parents/carers and other stakeholders.
- Promote and utilise trauma informed and therapeutic approaches.
- Develop positive and supportive relationships with the young people at the Centre, getting to know their individual personalities, circumstances, and interests.
- Be proactive in supporting the Head of Centre to implement a culture of high expectations for behaviour and engagement from the young people.
- Lead on identifying young people's individual personal development needs and feeding this information into Individual Learning Plans.
- Promote and safeguard the welfare of children and young persons who use the Centre.
- Work with the team in tackling issues such as child protection, substance abuse and other social issues that prevent whole person development.
- Foster and develop relationships with parents or carers, encouraging active involvement with their child's programme, and linking them with the support the church can offer.
- Support the Head of Centre ensuring the suitability of the environment, facilities, and premises, in line with Health and Safety Policy.
- Be willing to be trained to act as First Aider and/or a Fire Marshal.
- Support the effective operation of Centre systems and processes and implementation of policies.
- Along with other members of the team, administer and maintain records relating to young people's attendance, behaviour, concerns, progress, basic information, contact records and any other information required, in line with Acorn's policies, procedures and with appropriate levels of confidentiality and data protection.
- Participate fully in all Acorn developmental and networking opportunities, such as staff events (including occasional overnight travel), training and online staff meetings.
- Attend, fully participate in and, on occasions, lead daily Christian devotionals and times of prayer and worship for the staff team.
- Represent Acorn appropriately when dealing with external agencies.

- Take on reasonable additional responsibilities and other tasks as your role develops as directed by the Head of Centre.
- Be aware of the opportunity to participate in residential trips.

Person Specification

Qualifications	
Essential	Desirable
• Good general standard of education including as a minimum English and Mathematics GCSE at grade A*-C or equivalent.	• First Aid qualification • Counselling or therapeutic practice training/qualification
Skills and knowledge	
Essential	Desirable
• Able to engage young people on a one-to-one and small-group basis. • Possess proven skills and strategies for engaging effectively with challenging young people in achieving recognisable outcomes. • Some understanding of special educational needs including social, emotional, and mental health needs, how they might present in young people and helpful approaches. • Positive and therapeutic approach to managing young people's behaviour. • Understand broad issues impacting a young person's ability to participate in learning and self-improvement. • Ability to work as part of a team and deliver outcomes as directed by a senior member of staff. • Highly effective personal leadership and ability to act as a role model for young people. • Possess good communication, effective verbal and listening skills.	• Possess proven skills and strategies for engaging with parents and carers to achieve improved outcomes in young people. • Understanding of trauma, attachment, and therapeutic practice. • Some knowledge of the issues facing the community in which the centre is based.

• Ability to relate to people from a variety of backgrounds and put them at ease. • Effective time management and ability to organise and prioritise own workload and keep to deadlines. • Effective ICT skills.	
Experience	
<i>Essential</i>	<i>Desirable</i>
• Engaging effectively with challenging young people in an education or youth work setting. • Proven track record of working with young people aged 11-16 years. • Delivery of group and individual learning activities in inventive and creative ways. • Involvement in the planning of learning activities and programmes for young people. • Building positive collaborative relationships with young people and adults in a range of circumstances and contexts.	• Working with young people with special educational needs or social, emotional, mental health difficulties. • Implementing a trauma informed approach. • Setting and reviewing personal development targets or goals with young people. • Supporting young people in learning. • Responding to safeguarding concerns or disclosures.
Christian lifestyle	
<i>Essential</i>	<i>Desirable</i>
• Commitment to actively pursue their personal spiritual development, including through regular prayer and reading of scripture. • Attend and participate fully in devotions, prayer meetings and staff events to enhance the spiritual relationships within the team. • Willingness to bring their Christian faith into all aspects of work, including speaking	• Part of the Belmont, Exeter church community.

about it with young people and their parents or carers. • Able to work sensitively with those of different cultures and faiths whilst having their own strong, living, and active Christian faith and a firm commitment to Equal Opportunities. • To be an active part of a church community. • Willing to occasionally attend Belmont Church services to share the work of the Centre.	
Additional	
Essential	Desirable
• Commitment to promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children and young people. • Complete an enhanced DBS check prior to employment, which reveals no reason for the applicant being unsuitable to work with young people. • Provide 3 referees – at least one referee needs to represent Christian commitment. References will be taken up after shortlisting. • Provide evidence of eligibility to work in the UK and appropriate qualifications.	• Full Driving Licence and willingness to use car for occasional travel in relation to work.

For further information about this role, please contact HR@acornap.org.uk

Apply online [here](#).