ACTIVE LISTENING

Listening to your mentees is a very important part of the scheme. It allows you to understand the situation and help guide the student towards resolving it. There are a number of techniques that you can use when talking to your mentees, which will help build their confidence and feel that you are interested in what they have to say.

‘Yes’ ‘Right’ ‘Ok’

These short interjections confirm to your mentee that you are listening, and understand, while not interrupting their train of thought.

Verbal

Ask your mentees questions to clarify something further. Be sure not to disrupt your mentee’s train of thought, but used well, this is a more active listening technique.

Clarification

Reflect back on words, thoughts or feelings of your mentee, for example ‘So you say you want to make some big changes?’... ‘You sound really excited about that’.

Reflecting

Every now and again, provide a brief summary of what has been said. This will serve as a useful check that you have heard and understood the mentee correctly.

Summarising

Using positive responses such as ‘It sounds like you handled that well’ will help to boost your mentees confidence, and send them away with a positive frame of mind.

Affirmation

Sometimes it is appropriate to remain completely quiet and let your mentee speak freely. In these instances, appropriate (open) body language can demonstrate that you are engaging.

Non-verbal

While you don’t want to stare out your mentee, having eye contact is a great indication that you are interested in and listening. If you are taking notes, ensure this doesn’t prevent you from making eye contact during the session.

Eye Contact

Leaning slightly towards your mentee with an open body posture (arms open, rather than closed), demonstrates that you are open to, and interested in what your mentee is saying.

Body posture

Smiling, looks of empathy and understanding, are all natural responses that will indicate to your mentee that you are listening. Avoid expressions that might indicate disagreement or judgement such as raised eyebrows, or shaking your head. A subtle nod of the head is a great way to show you have heard and understand your mentee.

Positive facial expressions

Many of these techniques will come naturally when you listen to your mentees, but they should not be overused.

While this leaflet has been put together to offer tips regarding listening techniques, if you employ these techniques whilst not listening, your mentee will not be fooled.