

## Mentor M.E. peer support network case study

I applied to be a part of Mentor Me because I was looking to get involved in something bigger than myself – after lots of time spent focussing solely on my health and a lot of time spent alone, I was keen to be part of a group and to be able to contribute to a project. I wanted to be able to use what I had learnt about ME to help other people going through it.

I had to self-manage my health in order to attend the training and the mentoring sessions. I also learnt a lot about self-management through working with my mentee and helping her achieve her goals. Together we would identify what she was aiming for and what was standing in her way, and then we would break that down and work out ways around it. It showed me how sometimes the smallest obstacles can become huge blocks when you're not well, but also how very small changes in behaviour or approach can make a big difference.

Being part of Mentor ME was hugely beneficial for me – I had the chance to use my experience of illness for good and to help other people who were going through what I had which was very uplifting for me. It brought something positive out of the most challenging part of my life. I was able to gain new skills and confidence and feel like I was making a difference.

I think my mentee benefitted from having a regular scheduled time to reflect on how things were going and how she was coping and to have someone there to listen and encourage. Dealing with ME can be very lonely so I think it was positive for her to talk to someone who always understood. It was also helpful for her to have someone help her identify her goals and then work towards them – sometimes it's difficult to do that on your own.

Being part of this project has taught me that we all have a lot more to offer than we think we do. Illness can make you feel like you're not a valid member of society and you don't have anything to give, but we all do. Everyone has wisdom to share from their life experiences and support to offer to others. I got to work with all different people on the project and they all had something very valuable to share when they were given the opportunity.

The experience I had on the project has helped me feel more confident in myself and my abilities, and I'm really grateful that I was able to be a part of it, especially when I wasn't working. It gave me the chance to do something positive and useful which I think will help me in getting a job. When I need a confidence boost, I think back to the difference I made in my mentee's life and how I can use my life experience for good.