An Introduction to Mentoring

This document outlines the policy and process for mentoring within an organisation.

**Purpose of mentoring**

The mentoring scheme provides a framework to encourage those involved to engage with a mentor who, acting independently of their line management chain, will provide support, advice and guidance in personal and professional development. In particular, mentors will help and encourage individuals to assess their own personal and professional needs, and to plan the development of skills that will support them in their career.

A mentor is a trusted and experienced individual who has direct interest in and responsibility for the development and education of another individual. Mentoring is a partnership between two people and a process of ongoing support and development, which tackles issues and blockages identified by the mentee. The mentor offers guidance, counselling and support in the form of pragmatic and objective assistance.

Mentees, who understand and are committed to a mentoring relationship, can expect to gain in some of the following ways:

* Be challenged
* Learn from mistakes
* Receive wise counsel and learn from examples
* Become more self-aware
* Be supported and encouraged
* Listen and be listened to
* Share critical knowledge
* Be assisted in developing their careers

A successful mentoring relationship can lead the Mentee to a greater knowledge base and deeper self-awareness. However, whilst guidance and support for the mentee is important, it is important that the Mentee understands that they are ultimately responsible for their own goals and career.

**Roles in the mentoring scheme**

* **Mentor:** To provide support, guidance and encouragement to the Mentee. This may be in support of a recent change of role, or support in responding to work challenges. The Mentor’s role is to respond to the Mentee’s developmental needs and agenda through open discussion, identifying and developing realistic goals and planning how to achieve these.
* **Mentee**: The Mentee is responsible for leading their personal development through considering what they can gain from the mentoring relationship and fully participating in the process.
* **Mentee’s Line Manager**: The Mentee’s Line Manager will support the individual’s participation in the scheme. They abide by the confidentiality requirements of the programme. Line Managers must allow and allocate sufficient time and adjust workload priorities accordingly to take into consideration Mentoring Meetings, relevant learning events and general participation in the programme.
* **Learning and Development team**: The L&D team will provide the Mentor with skills development preceding their participation in the scheme. They will provide support, advice and guidance to prospective Mentors and Mentees. The team will brief Mentees, coordinate the matching process and update the Mentoring Database with the skills, knowledge and expectations of both parties

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| **Mentoring principles**  We ask for the following principles to be adhered to during the mentoring process:   * Mentors and Mentees meet each other every 4 to 6 weeks and the relationship typically runs for 12 months or, as long as is beneficial to both parties * Both parties demonstrate a duty of care towards each other, respecting confidentiality and respecting the time commitment that each party is making to this process * Mentor and mentee should respect the position of third parties, including line managers, and keeping them informed of important progress where appropriate * Both Mentor and Mentee must enter into the scheme voluntarily. Both parties may choose to end the relationship at any point but should discuss the matter together as part of mutual learning * Whilst the Mentee is not obligated to follow the Mentor’s guidance and advice, they have a responsibility to consider this in an open manner * The mentoring is work-related and is not intended for counselling or advice in relation to personal issues. If this does become a need, the individual should approach their line manager or HR team who will be able to provide further support and guidance * Mentor and mentee share responsibility for the smooth winding down of the relationship, thus avoiding dependency |

‘[My mentor] has already guided me towards strategic and analytical thinking and also prioritising work. This has made both my personal and professional life less stressful and in fact life more enjoyable. With her support I have been able to come up with new concepts in my work and really been able to shine in my professional sphere’

‘[I enjoyed] working with such a bright committed individual and seeing her grow in confidence as a leader’

**Who should be Mentors?**

. A mentor should be someone with the following skills:

* **Experience** of self-development and experience of developing others
* **Motivation** and commitment to being a mentor
* **Enthusiasm** and genuine interest in the development of others
* **Openness** and being prepared to share personal experience
* **Energising** and able to motivate others as well as have the ability to see opportunities in potentially challenging situations
* **Empathic** and able to appreciate how the Mentee thinks and feels
* **A good listener** and able to listen to, and consider, what the Mentee is saying before offering a viewpoint or your own experience

All potential mentors should complete an introduction to mentoring training, following this Mentors should then be matched with a Mentee. A Mentee should be paired with a Mentor best suited to his or her mentoring requirements, and this person will typically be one or two grades above them. Mentors can take up to three mentees each but there should expectation to do so. Whilst we are keen to bring the benefits of mentoring to as many people as possible, we do not want to overburden Mentors.

**The initial meeting between Mentee and Mentor**

The only commitment at the first meeting is mutual confidentiality. The purpose of this meeting is to get to know each other and to understand each party’s expectations of mentoring. The success of any mentoring relationship depends on strong rapport between the Mentor and Mentee. If either party feels they would not work well with the other, they are encouraged to be open about this and to contact their Learning and Development team to seek another Mentor/Mentee. This option should exist to both individuals and should not be regarded as anyone’s fault.

At the first meeting, it is important to establish the nature of the partnership. This will be unique to each situation, as it will depend on factors such as learning styles, experience, and the personalities of both parties. Issues to consider might include the following:

We would suggest the following format for this conversation:

* Explore each other’s background, experience and interests
* Explore expectations: What expectations does the Mentee have and why did they seek mentoring? Is the mentor there to guide, support, challenge, listen?
* Explore the purpose of the relationship: What is the main purpose of this particular relationship? e.g. Is the focus one of support, challenge, problem solving or something different?
* Explore desired outcomes: Is it possible to set success factors and expected outcomes? Some keep written records, whilst others see the opportunity for discussion as the main outcome.
* Discuss arrangements for review and feedback
* Explore commitment to participate: Time and availability should be discussed at this stage

**Logistics for on-going meetings**

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| **Area** | **Guidelines** |
| **Confidentiality** | The content of meetings should remain confidential between the Mentor and Mentee. Exceptions would arise if the Mentor has serious concerns about the health or safety of the Mentee or their professional conduct. |
| **Preparation** | It is important that both parties undertake due preparation before each mentoring session. The Mentee should draft and send objectives to the Mentor before each session. |
| **Structure and timings** | Mentoring meetings should have an agreed agenda. An hour is the minimum useful duration, and anywhere between 90 minutes and two hours is ideal. The mentee is normally responsible for ensuring that meetings are booked and it may be necessary to meet outside of normal work hours if both parties agree. |
| **Location** | The location should be comfortable, quiet and private. The location of the meeting should ideally be on ‘neutral’ ground and away from the workplace. It is possible to mentor via telephone or email, however this is best kept for ad hoc sessions that might arise between meetings. |
| **Ending the relationship** | Typically, the relationship begins to draw to a close after 12 months.  Both Mentor and Mentee should be required to complete a final review form and to send this to their learning and development team. |

“My mentor has provided an impartial yet experienced view on the career decisions that I have had over the past six months, which has really helped me to be better informed and more confident in making them.”

“This initiative is highly valuable and positively impacts and builds capacity of more junior staff (the mentee), as well as refreshing the skills and knowledge of senior staff (the mentor)”.

**Process overview**

**Forms**

Mentoring Application Form 

Mentoring Partnership Agreement Form 

Record of Mentoring Agreement 

Mentoring Partnership Review for Mentor and Mentee 

Mentoring Scheme Final Review 