

Mentoring Skills Pack

Self Service Guide for Mentors and Mentees



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Introduction

This 'how to' pack is suitable for mentors and mentees with varying experience and is designed to be used to develop knowledge and skills. You can read through or dip into sections as and when needed. Please also see the learning zone for a variety of courses to support mentoring and some of its linked skills, such as coaching and giving feedback.

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What is mentoring?

“The purpose of mentoring is to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order to maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be” (Eric Parsloe)

A form of long-term tailored development for the individual, that brings benefits to the organisation (CIPD). The characteristics of mentoring are:

- It is a supportive form of development
- It is based around conversations
- The mentor and mentee develop a relationship of trust, support and challenge
- It focuses on helping an individual manage their career and improve skills.
- The emphasis is on performance at work, although relevant personal issues can be discussed.
- Mentoring activities have both organisational and individual goals

Types of mentoring

In our organisation we mainly use three types of mentoring, and all the techniques described in this pack apply to these;

- 1) **Developmental mentoring**, where a more senior and or experienced person shares their expertise with another
- 2) **Reverse mentoring**, which partners senior employees with a mentor who is in a more junior position, with the intention of feeding the experiences of junior staff upwards through one-to-one conversations. For more information, see our Reverse Mentoring SharePoint page <https://hants.sharepoint.com/sites/CR/SitePages/Reverse-Mentoring.aspx>
- 3) **Professional mentoring**, when a more senior person teaches professional skills to another

What is a mentor?

Someone who supports the development of another, helping them develop their knowledge and skills and be more self-aware of their thinking and their behaviours.

- An experienced advisor and role model
- Not normally the line manager of the mentee (the person being mentored)
- Willing to share their knowledge, experience
- Focused on helping the mentee to make transitions in their knowledge, thinking, and career

Benefits of mentoring

The list is long!

For the mentee: rapid learning and constructive challenge and feedback; availability of advice and a sounding board

For the mentor: an opportunity to practise development skills, to reflect on own practice

For the organisation: improved motivation, professional and personal skills, succession planning, retention and development of talent, self-sustaining form of development

What do mentors do?



"Mentoring involves primarily listening with empathy, sharing experience (usually mutually), professional friendship, developing insight through reflection, being a sounding board, encouraging" David Clutterbuck

Key activities of a mentor:

- Advising/ guiding
- Giving feedback
- Coaching
- Listening
- Questioning
- Being a sounding board

Note – mentoring can work virtually or face to face

An important aspect of the mentor's role is being able to draw on their own experience and knowledge to guide others.

Mentoring is not about making decisions for people.

Mentors should encourage the person being mentored to explore all possibilities and the consequences of alternative decisions.

Mentors reflect on their own experiences and feelings and use questioning to help others decide the right course for them.

They encourage the person to think; 'advising' all the time means that the mentor is doing all the thinking all the time!

How can mentors help?

- Acting as a 'critical friend'
- Acting as a role model for personal achievement and growth
- Helping the mentee to build confidence and improve their thinking and learning skills
- Being there to listen, being neutral and non-judgemental
- Helping the mentee to work out what they want to achieve and why
- Helping the mentee reflect on experiences and plan for change
- Offering advice and guidance from their own perspective to help the mentee in their development
- Respecting the fact that the mentee is not them, and will need to make their own decisions

What makes a good mentor?

To successfully mentor others, a mentor needs certain knowledge, skills and a particular attitude. This list is a starter for ten:

- Knowledge – the mentor needs to be experienced or an expert in what the mentee wants to develop
- Skills – listening, questioning, coaching, feedback, advising, explaining
- Attitude – self-aware, makes time, builds relationships, shares experiences openly where these will help the mentee, sees development as important, accepts feedback

What makes a good mentee?

As mentoring is a two-way relationship, a mentee also needs certain knowledge, skills and a particular attitude:

- Knowledge – the mentee needs to know what they want the mentor's support with
- Skills – listening, questioning, summarising what has been discussed
- Attitude – self-aware, makes time, builds relationships, is open about any challenges, sees development as important, accepts feedback, is well prepared for mentoring sessions and is self-directed, not expecting the mentor to do things for them

What you can focus on in mentoring meetings

We strongly recommend that the mentee prepares in advance what they want mentoring support with. Think about your development needs and aspirations, and how someone with more experience could advise and support you

Mentee's objective	Example Questions to ask your mentor
Managing workload (could come from you noticing you have had a busy week!)	Can you tell me about your work areas? I'm really interested in how you manage your workload How did you develop that system?
Confidence (be specific about when, where with who in particular)	I'd like to be more confident (in X situation). I wondered if you had any strategies or advice in that area? (have there been any times/ situations where you felt less confident? - <i>use with caution</i>)
Career progression	Could you tell me about the path you took to be in your current role? Did you have a conscious strategy? Do you think people make their own opportunities?
Leadership style	How would you describe your leadership style? How has your style evolved as you've progressed in your career/ the organisation?
Managing change	Have you lead a similar change previously? How did you approach it? Was there anything you would do differently?

The initial meeting



- Introductions, backgrounds, values
- Establish rapport
- Goals for the mentoring
- What do we expect from each other?
- Find out more about each other
- Any concerns? How will we manage these?
- Agree next meeting
- Complete a written mentoring agreement - whether this is a formal document (usually used in certain mentoring schemes), or an email summarising what you have both agreed

Avoiding pitfalls in mentoring relationships

Pitfall	How to avoid
Lack of time	Be realistic, be prepared, keep to time, book in advance
Lack of trust/breaking confidentiality	The agreement and the discussions you have about how you want to work and what you expect from each other must be clear
Mentor takes over	Mentees must think about what they want. Mentors must remind selves of benefits of developing mentee's ability to think for themselves and not become over reliant on you
Mentor out of depth	Ask for help, don't try to fix things for the mentee, they must take responsibility. Talk about boundaries – mentoring is not counselling
Conflict with mentee's line manager	The relationship should never undermine the mentee's relationship with their line manager. Mentees should keep line manager informed about mentoring (brief details)
Issues with relationship/ approach not dealt with	Be open, discuss how you will review how it's going and agree to be honest with each other. Feedback regularly on how it is going, raise any concerns early.
Unrealistic expectations	Again, clear agreement at the start will help. Take the 'small steps, big celebration' approach

Example Mentoring Agreement

Here is an example of a mentoring agreement. Think of it as roadmap that sets out how mentoring will progress. Research shows that most issues in mentoring relationships could have been avoided if contracting was done at the start so that the mentor and mentee are clear what is expected. You must establish how confidentiality will be maintained. It is strongly recommended that you discuss the areas listed below and reach mutual agreement which you then keep in writing. You can either use this template or send an email summary.

- Mentee name and contact details/ Mentor name and contact details
- Goals – agreed goals for the mentoring partnership: Mentee and Mentor
- How will we know when the goals have been met?
- How often shall we meet?
- Can we contact each other in between meetings?
- How much notice should we give if one of us needs to cancel?
- Roughly how long do we anticipate we will continue this mentoring relationship for? (number of sessions or duration)

- We agree to keep the content of sessions confidential, unless one of us divulges activities that may threaten individuals or the organisation, in that event either of us should raise with the other and then may speak to the appropriate authority
- We agree to review progress against goals and mutually agree when to start winding the relationship down
- We agree to raise any issues and concerns openly and constructively with each other as soon as possible

Signed:
Mentee / Mentor

Date



Mentoring Skills

Coaching

A technique that mentors use. Involves, listening, reading non-verbal signals, asking key questions, spotting where the mentee is making assumptions or generalisations, and challenging these by asking questions or giving feedback.

A key coaching model gives a framework for your conversations: GROW



Goal

A clear statement of what the mentee wants to achieve (or what needs to be achieved)

Reality

The current state

Options

Exploration of the various options available (and potential impact of each)

Will

What will you do? Which option provides the most appropriate and likely chance of achieving the goal – do you have the will to carry the actions out?

Do not fall into the trap of:

- Moving the person onto the next stage in the learning cycle before they are ready
- Jumping to solutions (you or them)
- Not using the full range of questions in the GROW model but bearing in mind the question you use must help build upon and 'connect' with the mentee's understanding of the situation.

GROW – example questions

GOAL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What specifically do you want? 2. How will you measure it? 3. How will you know when you have achieved it? 4. When do you want to achieve it by? 5. What is your intermediate goal/what will be your first step? 6. Is this enough of a stretch?
REALITY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the situation right now? 2. What have you done about it so far? 3. How do you compare with others on that point? (benchmark) 4. When did you notice things were not going so well? 5. What happened to cause the situation? 6. How do you feel about your challenge right now? (1-10)
OPTIONS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What could you do about the challenge? 2. What have you seen other people do in similar situations? 3. How have you solved similar challenges in the past? 4. How would you tackle the challenge if you were your role model? 5. What if you had more time/money/confidence etc?
WILL/WRAP UP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are you going to do about it? 2. When are you going to start? 3. Will this action meet your goal? 4. What obstacles might you meet? 5. What support do you need and how will you get it? 6. What else might affect your decision? 7. On a scale of 1-10 how committed are you to taking this action?

Listening skills

Five levels of listening

5: Intuitive listening

- *I really want to write my book but there's never any time*
- *Is this about not having the time or is something else getting in the way?*
- *I'm afraid my book won't be good enough."*

4: Listening and asking for more

- *I want to get the very best out of my team.*
- *tell me more about that.*

3: Giving advice

- *My manager is a bully.*
- *What you should do is complain to HR.*

2: Giving our own experience

- *I went on the Leadership course last week.*
- *I went on it last year. I learned a lot.*

1: Waiting for our turn to speak

- *I think we should arrange a meeting with the stakeholders first.*
- *Did you see the football last night?*

Do you know people who listen at **Levels 1, 2 and 3**? How does it make you feel?

In mentoring, aim to listen at **Levels 4 and 5**

Level 4 listening supports the mentee's development.

At **Level 5** you are putting yourself in the mentee's shoes, listening behind the words and between the words, listening to silences, tone and other signals.

The difference between giving advice in **Level 3** and offering a suggestion in **Level 5** is that the listener asked permission the second time. This is a good way of creating trust and rapport. There are times and places for Levels 2 and 3 – giving advice and sharing your own experience can be valuable - but these levels do not qualify as *listening*. Your own intuition is your best guide for knowing which technique will help in any given situation.

Hints and tips for listening more effectively

“*Bore*; a person who talks when you want them to listen”
Ambrose Bierce

Active listening is about communicating to the person that you are seeing the situation from his/her point of view.

- Choose an appropriate seating position
- Uncross your arms and legs, lean slightly forward
- Eliminate barriers (desks etc)
- Be prepared to sit out awkward silences
- Give the person time to find the right words
- Don't assume you know what they are going to say
- Keep clarifying and summarising
- Don't show boredom or irritation
- Beware of only hearing the good and filtering the bad (or vice versa)
- Maintain your concentration
- Paraphrase what the person has said, restate what you have heard in similar but fewer words.
- Clarify aspects you do not understand. Admit confusion and attempt to seek an illustration or example.
- Pull together principal themes and points in the form of summaries

Tip - Use Silence!

4.5 seconds is the average time we can stand a radio station being silent before we have to turn over! – fight our natural need to fill silence.

Observe the mentee and use your experience to work out when silence is better than asking yet another question – just because the mentee has stopped talking, doesn't mean they've stopped thinking.

What are your **BARRIERS** to listening?

Reflect on the following:

I'm quite happy to listen to somebody when...

I tend to concentrate on what someone is saying if...

If I can't put my views into a conversation I feel...

When listening to someone speaking, I usually find myself spending most of the time...

Subjects that bore me include...

To become a better listener I feel I ought to...

Questioning - types of questions

Open questions –

Tend to start with who, what, (why) and when. Encourage the mentee to talk.

Hypothetical questions

To paint a hypothetical picture- *what would you do if you were Chief Executive?*

Useful where a situation is new to a mentee, where mentee is mentally blocking (*I can't*)

Probing questions

Where more detail is sought - *Tell me more, and what else, what next?*

Useful for exploring particular events/possibilities

Checking questions

Logical questions to draw out a conclusion and to check and challenge assumptions - *why do you think I asked that question? If you get that outcome, is it what you really want? What do we already know about? What are you basing that on? And what will that get you?, and then what?*

Useful for getting mentee to identify own issues/possibilities. Purpose not to get 'the answer' but to develop critical thinking.

Reflective questions

So you think? 5 projects?

Useful for presenting back their own thoughts, buying you time, checking/demonstrating you've heard. Useful when all a mentee needs is for you to be a sounding board- which is more often than you would think.

Leading questions

Don't you think you should?. Not recommended as pushing your agenda

Better to make clear suggestions instead "*you might want to think about...*" "*can I make a suggestion?*"

Multiple questions

What was your best ever role and when was that and how did you get it and what skills did you develop?

Avoid!



Example helpful questions

- I don't know what to do about it – what do you think?
- If our roles were reversed, what would you be asking me right now?
- Are there any emotions you are trying to avoid here?
- Could you treat this as an experiment and see what happens between now and our next meeting?
- So you dread your conversation with X? What's causing that feeling? How might that emotion affect whether you achieve the outcome you want?
- How committed are you to achieving this?
- How could you have done this better?
- How does this fit in with your personal values?
- How genuinely committed are you to this goal?
- How much could you have contributed to this problem?
- How will you feel about your decision if you look back on it in 2 year's time?
- If this is really what you want to do, why haven't you started?
- If you did know the answer, what would it be?
- If you get the outcome, will that give you what you want?
- What could you stop doing that would help your situation?
- What else could you do?
- What is your gut instinct about this?
- What 2 or 3 things would make a difference to how you feel, if you focussed on doing them and ignored everything else?
- What messages might you be sending in this situation?
- What would you have liked to have said? Why didn't you?
- What would you have liked the other person to have said? Why didn't they?
- What would your 'best self' say or do here?
- What's the danger here?
- Who do you need to give you permission to do this? What's stopping you giving yourself permission?
- Who knows? Who can? Who will?

Giving feedback and challenging

- Talk about what you as the mentor have noticed
- Focus feedback on behaviour rather than the person
- Focus feedback on behaviour related to a specific situation
- Be very specific with your feedback – it's not a guessing game!
- Focus on behaviour which the receiver can do something about
- Focus feedback on the amount of information that the person receiving it can use, rather than on the amount that you have that you might like to give
- Check that the communication has been clear



Preparing for feedback

- How will it affect him/her
- What exact words will you use to give the feedback?
- How would you feel if someone said that to you?
- What can you say (sincerely) to maintain their self-esteem?
- Is the feedback timely?
- **Pay attention during feedback**
 - How is the recipient taking the feedback?
 - Watch for changes of expression and body movements
 - Changes in eye contact and sideways glances?

How to Challenge

Challenge is an extension of feedback. It is much more positive than it sounds, as it is a very important skill for enabling learning. Challenging has been described as “An invitation to consider another perspective”.

How to challenge:

- 1) Listen and notice when to challenge
- 2) Ask questions to understand the mentee's point of view ('what makes you say that?')
- 3) Ask questions to clarify why they think/ do that ('what makes you think that?')
- 4) Make observations (these might be in the form of statements or questions that summarise what they have said objectively ('so you say no one in your team supports you on this, but you haven't asked them?', 'so you'll carry on dictating to your team, because you don't want to be a doormat? What about the middle ground?')
- 5) Offer alternatives to invite them to consider another point of view ('have you considered another explanation?', have you considered how that will feel for...?', what effect do you think that will have on...?')

When to challenge

You will need to use your judgement as you develop your ability to challenge, however you can start by looking for:

- A difference between what is said and what is done
- An unwillingness to accept or respond to feedback
- An unwillingness to take the initiative in conflict situations (e.g. 'it's the other person's fault')
- An unwillingness to learn if it means modifying behaviour
- Overly negative, irrational or exaggerated talk (e.g. 'it's all hopeless', 'I just can't do this', 'I've never been so insulted')

Advising/ guiding without taking over

Don't fix it for them

To be able to answer your questions, the mentee needs to access, organise and articulate their thoughts. This promotes awareness and leads to more choices to make a change. This is how mentoring works – by the realisations that people come to through skilled mentoring.

Why fixing and over-advicing can backfire:

- If you assume you know what is best for them, you won't listen
- You can damage the relationship – the message is 'stop talking so I can tell you the answer'
- You can stifle creativity and innovation – the message is 'do it like me' (they're not you!)
- It goes without saying that there's no point in asking excellent questions if you don't listen to the answers!

3 questions to give the mentee control

1. What would you like to get from this session?
2. How can I be most helpful to you in this session?
3. What do you think?

Use Questions sparingly

If questions are over-used, a session will be like an interrogation. Try listening instead

Be aware of what you say

Are you using 'me' or 'I' too often? – *tell me, it seems to me*

Better to use- *what do you think?, what do you want to look at?*

When telling is ok

To avoid serious mistakes

When there's a set procedure

When they ask you, but only when they have exhausted their ideas, and then some!

Ask if you can make a suggestion, and try to offer a couple of alternatives and then let the mentee decide