How to gain the most from working with a mentor
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Introduction

This brief guide provides information about what you can expect from your mentoring partnership and how to make the most of this development opportunity.

Mentoring is:
- A means of supporting individual learning and development
- About increasing an individual’s competence and confidence
- One person helping another to make significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking
- A clearly structured, time-bound and self-managed process with clear, mutually agreed roles and goals.

Benefits

Through working with a mentor you will get valuable time and space to discuss professional and organisational issues and work on the things that are important to you. Mentoring gives an opportunity for constructive reflection with someone who will be open, honest and impartial.

By embarking on mentoring, you will have the opportunity to:
- Gain fresh insight into your world of work
- Gain a confidential adviser to sound out your ideas
- Challenge your own accepted wisdom and mindset
- Discuss challenges or skills with particular people
- Discuss alternative strategies and how they might be implemented
- Draw upon your mentor’s experience
- Find out about new networks and alternative sources of information
- Gain specific insights to improve performance.

Being mentored is a challenging and thought-provoking process and a superb opportunity for personal development.

**CHOOSING YOUR MENTOR**

It is important that you are thoughtful about choosing your mentor. Consider what your needs are and look for the best fit.

**Mentees** should log on to [www.peopleconnect.scot.nhs.uk/mentoring](http://www.peopleconnect.scot.nhs.uk/mentoring) and complete ‘My Mentee profile’ and ‘mentee preferences’ as comprehensively as you can.

Once accepted, you can search for a suitable mentor from the matches provided in the ‘My Matches’ tab. You can then contact a potential mentor to begin a mentoring partnership.

If your preferences change at any point simply change your preferences using the Edit buttons. Remember to submit the form again to refresh your list of potential mentors.

Please see the flow chart on page 13 (Appendix 1 for Matching – Sequence of Events).

**Mentors** can log on to [www.peopleconnect.scot.nhs.uk/mentoring](http://www.peopleconnect.scot.nhs.uk/mentoring) and complete ‘My Mentor profile’ and ‘mentor preferences’ as comprehensively as you can, and submit for approval.

A member of the Mentoring team will respond to your submission within 5 working days. Once approved, mentors will be available for contact from potential mentees.
The mentoring service is dynamic therefore needs to be up to date. So remember to update the number of mentoring partnerships you are currently in.

If you are unable to undertake any more mentoring partnerships, update your ‘Available for Contact’ status to ‘No’, but remember to update this once you become available again so that potential mentees can contact you.

**FIRST CONVERSATION / MEETING**

Before you confirm your choice of mentor the first conversation offers you the opportunity to exchange information about career histories, interests and your expectations of mentoring.

You will want to find out about their particular mentoring style and whether the mentor can provide you with the challenge, learning opportunities and expertise that you require. You also want to check that the personal chemistry is right.

In some cases people know very quickly that they want to get started and will start to agree the practicalities. Others prefer to reflect on the conversation and agree to contact the mentor within a few days to let them know if they want to go ahead.

The mentor also has the right to decide if they want to work with you. You are both seeking to establish a relationship based on equal responsibility and mutual respect.

**AGREEING A CONTRACT**

To help create the working relationship, clarify how you will work together and highlight expectations, it is helpful to agree a contract.
To help you during the meeting, we have created a simple checklist that could be used as a starting point for your contracting discussion in Appendix 2.

1. **Goals and Objectives**

**Setting the agenda**

The mentor’s role is to respond to the mentee’s needs and agenda; it is not to impose his or her own agenda.

**Expectations and goals**

It is important that you and your mentor discuss your expectations of the mentoring partnership and of your relationship. Think carefully about what you are hoping may be the outcome of the mentoring process, and whether these are short, medium or long-term goals.

- Are you looking for specific career progression or promotion?
- Do you want to have an impact on the working relationship you have with your team, peers or senior leaders?
- What are the significant transitions you need to make in your thinking, knowledge and work?

Share your expectations with your mentor and allow him/her to comment on how they can contribute to this part of your learning.

Within each mentoring session, expect to set goals for that session. Your mentor will have a variety of tools and techniques available to help you establish your learning goals. One of these may be the GROW model (Goal – Reality – Options – Way ahead) which provides a clear and logical focus for your discussion.

2. DURATION & FREQUENCY

Where to meet?

Agree a mutually convenient place. It is usually considered best to meet outside your office or workplace. Find somewhere where you won’t be disturbed, where you feel at ease and you can talk without being overheard. Changing the location can also help to stimulate different thinking and a different style or approach to the conversation.

How long should a session last?

A mentoring session is not just two people having a conversation. It is a process that has a structure and needs time to talk through ideas, issues and situations. Therefore sessions may last between 1-2 hours, including time to agree on action points for the next meeting.

It is reasonable to expect both mentor and mentee to respect each other’s time and other responsibilities, ensuring that they do not impose beyond what is reasonable.

How often to meet?
You make the decision on this as it depends on your commitments and the nature of your learning needs. Generally every 6-8 weeks is a good rule of thumb.

**Reviewing progress**

Periodically you should review your progress with your mentor and this will help you build on your relationship and decide how many more sessions are required. This will be a review of expectations and progress on goals and will typically be most useful at the third and final meetings.

The Mentoring team will send evaluation to both mentors and mentees for confidential feedback on the process and progress to help inform future training with Organisational Development Leads.

### Between sessions

**Unexpected questions**

Unless you have agreed to keep in touch, you are not expected to contact each other between meetings. You must agree with your mentor about how to deal with contact between sessions. Discuss whether e-mail or phone contact is acceptable and under what circumstances.

**Homework**

Mentees should accept increasing responsibility for managing the relationship after the initial chemistry meeting. The mentor is there to empower you to do so and will generally promote your autonomy.

Mentees should be investing an appropriate amount of time for maintaining the relationship, including any preparatory and follow-up activity.
4. Cancellations

You should contract what to do in the event that one of you needs to change the date or time of your planned session. You should expect to keep all agreed appointments and prioritise these meetings but there may be times where this simply isn’t possible.

5. Confidentiality

All mentors will respect your confidentiality. However, you should discuss the boundaries of confidentiality with your mentor.

Note taking

Mentoring is a development opportunity where you will learn a lot about alternative strategies for going about the way you work. To maximise the benefit of this experience and to capture the learning points that emerge in the course of your mentoring sessions, you and your mentor should establish, agree and record learning goals. These may well extend beyond the immediate goals of your job role and the organisation.

Private issues

You and your mentor should agree if there are any issues you prefer not to discuss. Some people are happy to discuss personal issues that impact on their work; others keep their work and private issues completely separate.

One of the challenges is that mentoring involves you as a whole person and matters that you raise may have links to your personal as well as professional life. The mentor should say when they think this is the case so that you can agree how best to move on. At times the matter may be beyond your mentor’s competence and they may suggest or refer you to someone else if appropriate.
Breaking confidentiality

It should be made clear that all information about the content of a mentoring session remains confidential, unless mutual consent is given. This includes any information the mentor has offered as a result of being open and honest about their experiences.

If, during the course of the mentoring relationship, one or either of the partners highlights concerns in clinical practice they should share their concerns and adhere to their code of professional conduct. In extreme cases, this may mean the close of the mentoring relationship.

6. ENDINGS

It is good to discuss this at the beginning when contracting with your mentor and discussing the minimum/maximum number of sessions for the arrangement. Then, as your work together progresses, you and your mentor will make the judgement about when the mentoring arrangement should come to a formal close.

Once you have achieved your objectives, or made good progress towards them, you might feel that it is time to talk about closure.

The end will come when the number of sessions contracted for has been completed or you no longer feel the need for regular contact and because you feel confident and able to move on. Build in a formal review so you can offer feedback, focus on what has been achieved and think about how to sustain the learning when no longer meeting with your mentor.
When things don’t feel like they are working

Sometimes things may not go entirely as you would wish. If this happens, you will find the best way forward is to have an honest and open discussion about the relationship and your concerns with your mentor. Perhaps external pressures, on either side, are affecting the working relationship. It may simply be that the time has come for you to finish working with your mentor.

Quality Assurance

The Mentoring team will:
- Review the number of mentors available for mentees
- Notify mentors and mentees of updating to documents
- Be a point of contact for feedback from mentors and mentees
- Keep mentors and mentees abreast of wider activities
- The Mentoring team will work with local OD Leads during the approval process and to offer anonymised data on usage.

How to get the best out of working with a mentor – your role

Research shows that the opportunity to work with a mentor, who will give you their undivided attention and work on issues that are key to your success, is of great value. It is also a significant investment of your time. By treating your mentoring arrangement seriously, protecting the time allocated to the process and ensuring your sessions are given the highest priority, you are likely to get the most out of the relationship.
The qualities that lead to the greatest success include:
- Being motivated to learn
- Being willing to listen and open to change
- Having the ability to undertake self-analysis
- Determination
- Being realistic about what is achievable
- Being honest and willing to seek feedback
- Making time to work on action points
- Maintaining a record of process.

You should also:
- Set the agenda for the meetings
- Prepare for each mentoring meeting
- Think about the outcomes you are looking for from each mentoring meeting
- Take equal responsibility for managing the development of the mentoring relationship.

Maintaining records
To support the mentoring process, serve as a memory jogger and maximise the benefits of your learning, you should prepare for each meeting, record the significant issues that you discuss and note the actions that you propose to take before your next mentoring session.

By keeping these documents together you will be building a log of your personal learning through mentoring. The focus of your mentoring might directly relate to your job and therefore your reflections on your development might best be captured on eKSF to illustrate your growth throughout the mentoring partnership.
Appendix One

Matching – Sequence of Events

Step 1  Read Mentoring handbook

Step 2  Complete mentor/mentee profile and preferences and submit (www.peopleconnect.scot.nhs.uk/Mentoring)

Step 3  Mentees search mentors in ‘My Matches’ for suitable match

Step 4  E-mail mentor to arrange introductory meeting/conversation

Step 5  Meet/converse with mentor
         Decide to proceed with mentoring partnership
         YES
         NO

Step 6  Arrange dates for 1st and subsequent mentoring sessions
         Search other mentors in ‘My Matches’ for suitable match (edit Mentee preferences if necessary)
         Proceed from Step 4

Step 7  Proceed with partnership
**Agreeing a contract**

To help create the working relationship, clarify how you will work together and highlight expectations it is helpful to agree a contract. The following headings should be discussed at the contracting stage as a minimum and you can check the body of the Mentoring Handbook for more information on each of these headings. Tick the boxes once complete.

This should include:

1. Goals and objectives
   - Setting the agenda
   - Expectations and goals
2. Duration and frequency of meetings
   - Where to meet?
   - How long should a session last?
   - How often to meet?
   - Reviewing progress
3. Between meetings
   - Unexpected questions
   - Homework
4. Cancelations
5. Confidentiality
   - Note taking
   - Private issues
   - Breaking confidentiality
6. Communication with your line manager/organisation
7. Endings