

Advice Skills Academy Mentoring Programme Pilot

Guidance



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An introduction to the Advice Skills Academy mentoring programme

The Advice Skills Academy is an ESF funded partnership project between advice services in the Liverpool City Region, working together to co-ordinate learning and development activity and to develop a positive learning culture.

As part of its strategy to promote the 70:20:10 model of learning, the Advice Skills Academy is now introducing a partnership-wide mentoring programme that will begin as a one-year pilot, with review points at 6 and 12 months.

Our workforce has a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience. The Advice Skills Academy mentoring programme will facilitate the sharing of this expertise, to benefit staff and volunteers across the partnership and to help us continuously learn and improve our working practices.

What mentoring is

Mentoring is 'off-line help by one person to another making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking'. (Clutterbuck & Megginson)

Mentoring is a partnership between two people. It is a process of on-going support and development which addresses learning and development needs identified by the mentee. The agenda is set by the mentee, with the mentor offering guidance and support in the form of pragmatic and objective assistance. Mentoring programmes provide an opportunity for mentors and mentees to meet on a regular basis to engage in discussions which support self-development. It is about identifying opportunities as well as solving problems.

The best mentoring relationships involve the exchange of knowledge that helps the mentee respond to their own identified need. Mentoring also allows people time to reflect on their own work and what they are currently doing well.

The mentor is usually more experienced than the mentee, often a more senior person (though not always) who can pass on knowledge, experience and open doors to otherwise unseen or out-of-reach opportunities

A skilful mentor guides without offering solutions, empathically challenges assumptions, actively listens and doesn't judge or give detailed instruction. Mentors motivate, encourage, support, empower, nurture self-confidence, aid reflection and explore strengths and weaknesses.

The relationship is a non-judgemental alliance, allowing an appreciation of different perspectives. It is, therefore, a complex task, but one that is deeply satisfying for both the mentee and mentor because of the two-way exchange of learning that occurs.

What mentoring is not

It is not about making friends, although friendships do sometimes develop. It is not about dependence, control, counselling or supervision. It is certainly not about power, gossip or cliques, giving solutions or assessment.

Mentoring arrangements are not part of the day-to-day line management relationship between people nor are they a substitute for effective line management, support or supervision.

The aims and principles of the Advice Skills Academy mentoring programme

The aim of mentoring within the Advice Skills Academy is to:

- Provide an additional type of learning and development opportunity to those currently available.
- Enhance skills and confidence through the sharing of knowledge and learning.
- Support professional and personal development.
- Provide opportunities to learn from someone with a greater or different understanding of a particular job role or area of work.

Our mentoring programme has been designed to complement the range of learning and development opportunities already available via the Advice Skills Academy website. It is based on the following principles:

- Encouraging **self-development** in a way that maximises the contribution individuals can make to their organisation's productivity and success.
- Encouraging **people to seek support and guidance** from those who are experienced and who can share their knowledge and understanding in a way that is supportive and generous.
- Providing a **structured approach** that embraces a number of opportunities for people to learn and develop their skills and knowledge.
- Facilitating **sharing, cooperation and capacity-building** across the Advice Skills Academy partnership

The benefits

The Advice Skills Academy mentoring programme has a number of potential benefits for mentors, mentees, partner organisations and the Advice Skills Academy partnership as a whole.

Benefits for mentees

- Increased confidence
- Opportunity to be listened to
- Improved mental wellbeing
- Feedback from colleagues
- Encouragement to reflect on own practice
- Clearer goals for career and personal development
- Increased self-awareness
- Improved job satisfaction
- Help to use and improve skills
- Guidance and encouragement
- Building supportive relationships and networks
- Assistance with problem solving
- Improved performance
- Progression opportunities

Benefits for mentors

- Increased confidence
- Increased sense of wellbeing
- Ability to share knowledge and experience
- Chance to make a difference
- Increased personal and job satisfaction
- Development of own mentoring, management and interpersonal skills
- Feedback from colleagues
- Encouragement to reflect on own practice
- Development of professional relationships
- Widened understanding of other organisations in the ASA partnership
- New perspectives opened up by mentee
- Opportunities to influence the next generation of managers/professionals

Benefits for partner organisations and the Advice Skills Academy partnership

- Tool to support for employees who are keen to engage in personal development
- Creation of progression pathways across the partnership
- Increased motivation and retention of employees
- Improved organisation image to support attraction of talent
- Promotion of 70:20:10 model of learning and development

- Improved communications and understanding between partner organisations
- Enhanced practice and culture of continuous learning
- Creation of cost-effective, scalable and sustainable learning and development tool
- Capacity-building across the Liverpool City Region
- Reduced silo working and competition between partner organisations
- Increased networking and collaboration across the partnership
- New ideas and opportunities for development

What is expected of mentors?

To be an effective mentor, you need to:

- Have the desire to help – you should be willing to spend time helping someone else, and remain positive throughout. Mentoring does require a dedicated time commitment on a regular basis.
- Have relevant technical, management or life experience you are prepared to share in the mentoring relationship.
- Be motivated to continue developing and growing – your own development never stops. To help others develop, you must value your own growth too. Many mentors say that mentoring helps them with their own personal development.
- Have the ability to critique and challenge mentees in a way that is non-threatening and helps them look at a situation from a new perspective.
- Ask the right questions – the best mentors ask questions that make the mentee do the thinking.
- Listen actively – be careful to process everything the mentee is saying. You will also need to use non-verbal listening skills such as observing body language and maintaining eye contact.
- Provide feedback – accurately and objectively summarise what you have heard, but also interpret things in a way that adds value for the mentee.
- Develop and maintain your competence in mentoring
- Follow the Global Code of Ethics for Coaches, Mentors and Supervisors – <https://www.emccouncil.org/quality/ethics/> and comply with current legislation and your own organisation's policy in respect of confidentiality, safeguarding and data protection.

As a mentor, you are there to encourage, nurture, and provide support, helping the mentee discover the knowledge, skills, information and experience they require. Before joining the pilot programme, all mentors will be expected to attend a one-day mentoring skills course and undertake further self-development activity as required.

What is expected of mentees?

A mentor will be selected for you through the mentor/mentee matching process. The success of mentoring depends on the quality of the working relationship developed between you and your mentor. Your commitment and enthusiasm are vital to making the relationship a success.

To be an effective mentee, you should be prepared to:

- Be challenged

- Develop in self-confidence and awareness
- Develop a reflective approach
- Learn from examples
- Learn from mistakes
- Listen and be listened to
- Be supported and encouraged
- Share critical knowledge
- Learn how things work
- Be assisted with career development
- Develop your ability to perform well

Mentor and mentee reflective learning log

The learning log is an essential tool to help you keep a record of your mentoring sessions. The mentor and mentee will each keep a reflective log to record the initial mentoring agreement, keep a brief note of anything discussed and agreed, reflect on learning and evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring assignment.

Your learning log will provide an overview of your progress so you can see what you have achieved. It will help you to compare your initial aims with what was actually achieved and to monitor how your goals change throughout the mentoring process. (See appendix).

The reflective learning log will also be used as the source of data for the pilot reviews which will take place at the middle and end of the 12 month pilot. Completed logs should therefore be stored securely until the reviews of the pilot are complete.

Mentees that participate in the programme may update their line manager on progress during routine review meetings. This will allow mentees to discuss with their line manager how their initial learning and development needs are being addressed, discuss progress to date, next steps, and how they will embed this learning into their day to day role. This can be recorded in the usual way through the Advice Skills Academy learning and development planning and reporting process.

Principles of the mentoring relationship

Mentoring is a partnership between two people. It is a process of on-going support and development which tackles learning needs identified by the mentee along with their line manager. The mentor offers guidance and support in the form of pragmatic and objective assistance. All mentoring relationships should follow the following eight principles

1. Mentoring is a confidential activity, in which both parties have a duty of care towards each other.
2. The mentor's role is to respond to the mentee's specific developmental needs and agenda; it is not to impose their own agenda.

3. The mentor and mentee respect each other's time and other responsibilities, ensuring they do not impose beyond what is reasonable.
4. The mentor and mentee also respect the position of third parties, such as line managers, or other colleagues.
5. The mentee accepts increasing responsibility for managing the relationship; the mentor empowers them to do so.
6. The mentor will not intrude into areas the mentee wishes to keep 'off limits' until invited to do so.
7. The mentor and mentee are open and truthful to each other about the relationship itself, reviewing from time to time how it might be made more effective.
8. The mentor and mentee share responsibility for the smooth winding down of the relationship, when it has achieved its purpose – they avoid creating dependency.

Guidelines for setting up and running a successful mentoring relationship

- Start the mentoring relationship by clarifying your aims and objectives and agreeing how you will work together.
- Establish some rules or boundaries This could be a set agenda for points to cover, or some performance goals for the mentee to pursue outside of their regular appraisal structure. One of the key reasons that mentoring can fail is that there is a fundamental misunderstanding about what the mentor and mentee can expect from one another.
- Set regular mentoring meetings – A mentoring relationship is one of mutual trust and respect. So meet regularly, and lead by example. The mentoring conversation may be informal, but treat the overall arrangement with formality and professionalism. If possible, conduct mentoring sessions in a neutral space which is suitable for the confidential nature of the conversation. A change of environment helps remove the conversation from everyday perspectives.
- Be careful to ensure you have an appropriate space for your session. This might include booking quiet room in the office, or space to hold a private phone conversation, or meeting outside the office depending on your situation. Carefully select the timing of the session so it does not conflict with other meetings
- Block out time before and after the mentoring session to quietly reflect rather than squeezing a session in between other meetings or office-based tasks.
- Keep a record of the key learning from the mentoring process by completing the reflective learning log.
 - For the mentor this is about reflecting on your role as a mentor
 - For the mentee it is more about the key learning and actions from the sessions

- Be honest and open – If you're not honest, a mentoring session will probably be a waste of time for both of you. Discuss current top issues or concerns.
- Sometimes an honest exchange leads to the mentor and mentee deciding that they cannot work together. It's better to know up front and build from this sort of understanding, rather than have it hurt the relationship.
- Build sustainable improvements, not quick fixes a simple answer to a problem is rarely as valuable as understanding how to approach such problems in the future.
- Refer back to your initial objectives to see if these have been met
- Ending the mentoring relationship - The mentoring process will usually consist of 3-6 sessions. The mentor and mentee will review progress at regular meetings and either party can signal that the mentoring process is nearing completion. A final review meeting is suggested in which the mentor and mentee refer back to the initial objectives, review progress and discuss future steps the mentee may choose to take.

What to do if difficulties arise

Mentee's physical or emotional health or safety

Occasionally problems are raised by the mentee within the mentoring meeting. The mentor should encourage the mentee to deal with them personally. If the mentor is concerned for the mentee's physical or emotional health or safety, they have a duty to discuss the possible risk with the mentee and to take reasonable steps to avert it.

Concerns within the mentoring relationship

Should there be any problems or concerns that do arise within the mentoring relationship please contact the Advice Skills Academy project team for further guidance. The issues could relate to a number of different things, for example, the mentee's organisational procedures or line management arrangements. As a mentor you may also experience difficulties or uncertainties in how to take the mentoring on to the next stage, or you may simply be feeling 'a bit stuck'.

Applying to be a mentor

Before volunteering as a mentor, you would need to commit to:

- One day's mentor training
- Further self-development of mentoring skills as required
- At least two hours a month/six weeks for 3 – 6 months to meet with your mentee (this will include preparation and post session reflection, an average mentoring session would be between 60 and 90 minutes)
- Completing the reflective learning log and contributing to the pilot review process

If you are interested in volunteering as a mentor please complete the **mentor application** form, arrange for it to be approved and signed by your line manager and send it to contact@adviceskillsacademy.org.uk

Applying to be a mentee

Before requesting a mentor, you would need to commit to:

- At least two hours a month/six weeks for 3 – 6 months to meet with your mentor (this will include preparation and post session reflection, an average mentoring session would be between 60 and 90 minutes)
- Completing the reflective learning log and contributing to the pilot review process

If you are interested in working with a mentor, please complete the **mentee application** form, arrange for it to be approved and signed by your line manager and send it to contact@adviceskillsacademy.org.uk