

*HR Workforce
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Introduction

The Employee Mentoring Programme (EMP) at The Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) was developed in response to the aspirations of staff to have increased access to learning and professional development opportunities.

Mentoring is one of a number of learning and development opportunities available to staff at RBG, which are provided by HR Workforce Development to ensure a well skilled, flexible and adaptable workforce.

The Employee Mentoring Programme was developed by HR Workforce Development and is managed and administrated by a small team of National Management Trainees as part of the National Graduate Development Programme.

This handbook provides guidance on what you can expect from your mentoring partnership, and how to maximise this learning and development opportunity whether you are a mentor or a mentee.

Please note this handbook was updated in May 2020 to follow government guidelines to work remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Any advice and guidance given for virtual meetings in this handbook is not limited to the pandemic and may be applied to future mentoring partnerships if both parties agree.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a formal partnership that is widely regarded as an effective tool for enhancing one's professional and personal learning and development.

Mentoring is:

- A means of supporting learning and development.
- A method of transferring knowledge between people and within the organisation.
- A structured, time bound and managed process.
- Mutually beneficial for both mentors and mentees
- A means of developing strong relationships across different staff groups.

Principles of the Employee Mentoring Programme

The Employee Mentoring Programme at the Royal Borough of Greenwich is a learning and development tool that has two specific objectives:

1. To share knowledge across the organisation
2. To ensure that employees have the skills and knowledge to meet their current role objectives, future career aspirations and to broaden their worldview.

The following principles underpin the Employee Mentoring Programme at the Royal Borough of Greenwich:

- The programme will work in accordance with any current and future RBG policies and procedures.
- The programme will be inclusive and accessible to all members of staff.
- The programme will reflect the diversity of the staff at Royal Borough of Greenwich and promote a commitment to equality and diversity.
- Communication between mentor, mentee and HR Workforce Development will be central to the programme.
- An understanding of confidentiality will be respected throughout the programme.
- The programme will be mutually beneficial for all those taking part.
- There will be adequate training, preparation and support for those taking part.
- Regular reviews of the programme will ensure that the programme continues to meet the needs of staff and the organisation.

The Benefits of Mentoring

Mentor Benefits	Mentee Benefits	Benefits to the Royal Borough of Greenwich
Enhance your leadership and management skills.	Receive advice, guidance and encouragement from a skilled member of staff	Builds capacity within the organisation
Challenge yourself with new ways of thinking.	Develop personal and professional skills in a safe environment	Encourages learning and development across different departments
Contribute to the personal and professional development of another member of staff potentially from a different background.	Find creative solutions to challenges in an independent forum	Employees are encouraged to take ownership of their personal and professional development
Act as a professional and positive role model to less experienced members of staff.	Explore options and ideas on career development	Enhances organisational succession planning
Pass on organisation wisdom and knowledge.	Learn from someone else's experience and knowledge and observe an experienced role model	
Enhance and develop coaching skills.	Become more self-managing	

The Mentor Partnership

The key component of the Employee Mentoring Programme is the mentor – mentee partnership. This partnership enables the mentee to develop professionally in a supportive and safe space.

The mentor does not evaluate the mentee with respect to his or her current job or conduct performance reviews, nor provide a managerial function.

Mentor's role	Mentee's role
Create a safe learning environment where the mentee feels free to discuss issues openly and honestly	Commit to learning and increasing their skills and knowledge
Clarify mentee goals and provide guidance	Seek and be open to advice, feedback and guidance
Be a champion for their mentee	Prepare for meetings in order to make the most out of the partnership
Be a good role model	
Listen and provide support	
Share knowledge and experience to assist the mentee with their professional and personal development, where appropriate.	

The partnerships developed through the Employee Mentoring Programme are not:

- A forum for counselling
- A coaching relationship
- A friend-friend relationship
- A line manager-employee relationship
- A method of performance management
- A mechanism to influence decisions

Matching

Mentors and mentees are matched with each other by the Employee Mentoring Programme Steering Group (EMPSG).

These matches are made using the mentor and mentee application forms to identify pairs who are likely to be a suitable match.

The mentoring programme at the Royal Borough of Greenwich is managed centrally. All mentor and mentee partnerships are created through a carefully designed matching process to ensure an appropriate match.

To commence the process, a potential mentee/mentor submits an application form to HR Workforce Development. The Employee Mentoring Programme Steering Group (EMPSG) reviews the application form and then identifies key areas that the mentee would like to focus on during the programme.

From this information, the EMPSG then identify the skills and knowledge that potential mentors would need to support the mentee. An appropriate mentor is then sourced from a pool of mentor applicants.

Throughout the matching process, the EMPSG will consider any additional attributes and/or characteristics that the mentee has stated that they would like their mentor to have. As far as is possible the EMPSG will ensure that the mentor/mentee match reflects this.

Mentor – Mentee meetings

Mentoring meetings can be held face to face or “virtually” via video conferencing or a combination of both. (It is RBG’s preference that MS Teams be used for all online meetings, however Zoom may be used if you have a licensed package.)

It is highly recommended that the first meeting is held face to face to help build up a rapport and then, if both parties agree, meetings can be done virtually. However, until workplaces are COVID-19 secure, all meetings will be held virtually. As we begin our return to the workplace, if both parties are comfortable, you may wish to conduct a meeting in person at your place of work, whilst observing regulations for safe working.

First meeting

The first meeting provides the mentor and mentee the opportunity to start building their mentoring partnership.

It is recommended that the following topics are explored during the first meeting:

- Frequency, duration and location of meetings
- For virtual meetings, who will set these up and send links
- Mentee career aspirations
- Professional backgrounds
- Goals and objectives
- Arrangements for contact between meetings
- Confidentiality (see section on exceptions)
- Ending the mentoring partnership
- The next meeting date

It is recommended that the mentee comes to the first meeting with a loose agenda for the meeting, in order to provide a structure to the discussion.

For mentors, the first meeting could be used to explore what they can bring to the mentoring partnership, for example their skills, knowledge and employment history.

Virtual meetings

It can be a bit more challenging to build rapport via video conferencing, as it is less easy to “read” body language. So, if your first meeting is a virtual one, it is

recommended there is good sharing of information at the start of the relationship.

For example, questions which enable a greater understanding of values, personality and communication style can be particularly helpful to consider...

- What do you really enjoy about your work?
- What are you passionate about – in and out of work?
- What activities energise you?
- How would others describe you?

These could form part of the preparation for the first meeting.

COVID-19 Guidance for Meetings

If it is challenging to hold a full mentoring meeting while workplaces are adapting to the impact of COVID-19, it may be useful to have shorter check-ins to keep the momentum going, which could be via video conference or phone.

Goals and objectives

The role of the mentor is to respond to the mentee's needs and agenda; it is not to impose their agenda. The mentee should lead the setting of the agenda as mentoring is there to enable the mentee's personal and professional learning and development.

Topics for discussion

It is important that conversational boundaries are set by the mentor and mentee during the initial meeting. This should include any topics which the mentor/mentee has deemed inappropriate for discussion during mentoring meetings. Some people are happy to discuss their personal issues at work while others prefer to keep their personal and professional lives separate.

It is important to note that this can sometimes be difficult as it is not always possible to separate the personal from the professional, especially when discussing challenges.

When personal issues do arise, it is important that the mentor is aware of their professional boundaries and their limitations in terms of providing support.

Expectations and goals

During the initial meeting it is important that the mentor and mentee define and manage the expectations of the mentoring partnership. For mentees, this should include the identification of any short, long and mid-term goals and any career aspirations. This can also include topics that can help the mentee with their personal learning and development and broaden their worldview.

Mentees should share their goals and ambitions with their mentor so that they have an awareness of what the mentee is aiming to achieve. This will enable the mentor to comment on how they can work with the mentees in this journey and ensure that any learning is a two-way process.

It is important that goals are set for each mentoring session. This is important as it not only ensures that sessions are structured, but it also demonstrates that mentees are taking ownership of their professional development.

Practicalities

A mentoring meeting is a structured process which involves the exploration of a number of different topics and themes. Although there is often a structure to the meetings, it is recommended that meetings last about an hour. However, it is useful for the conversation to be more natural than a formal meeting and for the length to vary. It is recommended virtual meetings are no longer than 90 mins and in-person no longer than 2 hours.

Frequent communication between mentor and mentee is important to ensure that the partnership develops; it is recommended that mentor and mentee meet once every 4 – 6 weeks.

A mentoring memorandum of understanding (MOU) is recommended as this will provide space for the mentor and mentee to agree what level of communication outside of meetings is acceptable.

The mentor and mentee should agree which type of communication is preferred to arrange meetings. In particular, those mentees who are paired with mentors who are in senior management positions should confirm the method for arranging meetings.

Location

Whether meetings are face to face or virtual, the locations should be somewhere that is quiet so that you won't be disturbed, where you feel comfortable, and where you can talk freely without fear of being overheard.

If it is a face to face meeting, it is important to agree a mutually convenient meeting place. It is recommended that this is a location which is different from your usual place of work. For example, it could be a meeting room on a different floor from where you usually work.

If it is a virtual meeting, and you are based at home or from another location, it is recommended both mentor and mentee are in rooms where they feel they can talk openly and not be overheard or use headphones to keep conversations confidential.

(see also security guidelines on P 15)

Tips for virtual meetings

If you have not used video conferencing for meetings before, it can seem like a step into unknown territory, but it can be very effective and there is a lot of support available from the Workforce Development and IT teams. As a result of COVID-19, everyone is adapting to new ways of working and communicating, so this is actually a good time to try something new.

- Test your connection, video and audio before the first virtual meeting
- Don't worry if the connection lapses on occasion or you both have to experiment with audio, headphones, camera position etc
- Give each other feedback after the first virtual meeting on how it has worked for you both and anything different you may need to try
- Keep the meeting relaxed. If you would normally meet face to face over a coffee, have a coffee!
- Don't skip an ice breaker. A bit of small talk at the beginning of a virtual meeting is as important as it is in a face to face one
- Try and get a balance between looking at the camera to ensure a sense of good eye contact with the other person and also looking at the other person on the screen to read reactions and non-verbal cues.
- As with face to face meetings, allow thinking time, and be comfortable with pauses. Try not to feel you have to fill the gaps.
- Our training and guidance on [Conference Call Etiquette](#) may also be useful.

Communication between meetings

All communication between mentors and mentees should be made using work contact details, rather than personal contact details.

Unless it has been explicitly stated, mentees should not make a habit of contacting their mentors outside of the arranged meetings. Of course, this may vary from one mentoring partnership to another, and it is important that each mentoring partnership find out what works best for them. One suggestion is to keep all contact in a single email thread, or set up a chat in MS Teams as this makes it easier contain all contact in one place.

Cancellations

Mentoring meetings should be viewed as important and prioritised as much as possible. When it is not possible to attend a scheduled meeting, the

mentor/mentee should ensure that the other party is informed with as much notice as possible (ideally 24 hours in advance).

Keeping a record of meetings

It is important that there is a written record of meetings to ensure that both parties are able to hold each other accountable for any actions which they have been assigned. During the initial meeting, the mentor and mentee should discuss what information they are happy to record, and it should be made clear that this information will remain confidential (unless in exceptional circumstances detailed in the confidentiality section).

It is also an effective way to capture any learning that has emerged from the mentoring meeting.

Using the “record” function on video conference platforms for virtual meetings is not recommended.

Reviewing Progress

It is important that the mentoring programme is beneficial for both mentors and mentees.

All participants of the programme are encouraged to complete feedback forms to monitor their progress throughout the Employee Mentoring Programme.

Feedback will be used for evaluating the effectiveness of the mentoring programme. Feedback will be collected at the start of the programme, during the programme, and at the end of the programme.

Confidentiality

All mentoring partnerships will be confidential; this is to ensure that mentees and mentors feel comfortable to discuss issues and share personal experiences and learning during meetings.

Confidentiality between mentor and mentee will be respected unless the following situations emerge:

- There is a safeguarding concern for the wellbeing of the mentee, or any other person made reference to in the meetings
- There is a concern for the wellbeing of a service user
- Information is disclosed about illegal activity

Security for Virtual Meetings

There are some specific considerations around security when holding a mentoring meeting virtually.

- Use passwords to enter the video conference meeting, where possible
- Any visible confidential data should be removed from camera view
- Lock your meetings where possible. Once a meeting has started in Zoom for example, there is a Lock meeting button, so no new participants can join even if they have the meeting ID and password. MS Teams has a number of privacy and guest settings to control meetings too
- Train the camera to focus on your face – not the wider room
- If you are going to screen share in a meeting, have the documents you want to use open beforehand, so you don't have to scroll through files which may be visible to the other person. Or email the document.
- Close your email down before the meeting
- Keep all your software up to date. If you access a video conferencing service via a web browser, make sure the browser is kept up to date too

Issues

If either the mentor or mentee feel as though the mentoring partnership is not working, the best way to move forward is to have an honest and open conversation about the difficulties together. HR Workforce Development are also available to provide support if required.

For the majority of participants, the mentoring partnership will conclude after six months.

However, in some cases it may not be possible for either the mentor or the mentee to continue the mentoring partnership. This situation could arise for a number of reasons such as the mentor/mentee leaving the organisation, or the mentee requiring another type of learning and development intervention.

Mentors are strongly encouraged to remain committed to the mentoring partnership. However, there may be exceptional circumstances that require ending the mentoring partnership.

If the mentoring partnership is going to end early, it is important that HR Workforce Development is informed as soon as possible. If a mentee still has an identified need for a mentor, it may be possible for an alternative mentor to be sourced.

Key Programme Documents

The following documents will be provided to support successful partnerships between potential mentees and mentors, and to evaluate and continuously improve the mentoring programme.

The following documents can be found on the HR Workforce Development section of the HR intranet.

Application Form

Mentees and mentors must apply to participate in the mentoring programme by completing an application. All applications to the mentoring programme must be approved by the mentee's line manager.

Mentor – Mentee agreement

The mentoring agreement establishes how and when the mentee and mentor will meet.

Pulse checks

At the start of the mentoring programme mentees will complete a pulse check to identify any areas for development.

At the end of the programme participants will be asked to complete another pulse check.

This will identify if the mentee has progressed during the programme. This feedback will enable any areas for further improvement to be identified.

Feedback from participants will also be gathered throughout the programme to measure progress and for evaluation purposes.

Avenues for Staff Support

Should you require any additional support during your participation in the mentoring programme, there is a wide range of support available.

For the majority of employees, the first person who is able to offer support is their line manager. Your line manager is responsible for providing guidance and managing your performance at work. However, if you require further support when in your role, a range of alternative support is available.

For further information about the types of support provided to employees please contact the Health and Wellbeing Service.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service acts as the focal point for providing advice and guidance on health and safety matters to managers, staff and others.

Contact number: 0208 921 5588

Contact e-mail: hs wellbeing@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Employee Assistance Programme

The employee assistance programme is provided by an organisation called Health Assured. Health Assured is the UK and Ireland's most trusted independent health and wellbeing provider, making a positive difference to over 13 million lives.

The employee assistance programme can provide support on a wide range of work and personal issues. Although there is no exhaustive list, some examples include:

- Stress and anxiety
- Work advice
- Relationship advice
- Gambling issues
- Counselling
- Financial wellbeing
- Legal information
- Alcohol and drug issues
- Family issues
- Childcare support
- Medical information

The key benefits of the employee assistance programme include:

- No cost to the employee or family members
- Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year
- Unlimited support
- Confidential
- Independent, impartial source of support
- Structured counselling over the phone, via live chat, email or in person

How to use the service

Freephone: 0800 030 5182

Mobile app:

[Get it on Google Play](#)

[Download on the App Store](#)

When you open the app, you will need to enter the RBG access code before you can register: MHA112834

Website: <https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/>

It is recommended to use the Chrome browser for optimal experience. Please note some video webinars may not work on RBG computers, please use your personal devices for these.

Username: Royal

Password: Greenwich

Workplace Mediation

RBG has introduced an internal workplace mediation policy to help resolve workplace disputes between colleagues.

For information on the mediation scheme or to make a referral, contact Human Resources Professional Services:

Email: hr-corporate-and-core@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 8921 3526

Email: hr-social-and-care@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 8921 3689

Contact Details & Feedback

HR Workforce Development contact information

For enquiries and support about either the mentoring programme or wider learning and development opportunities, please contact HR Workforce Development.

Email: HR-WorkforceDevelopment@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 8921 4981

Feedback

If you would like to offer feedback or make a complaint about the programme, please contact the HR Quality and Service Assurance Team. Please provide your name, contact details, service, and a brief description of the nature of your concern.

Telephone: 020 8921 4638

Email: HR-Quality-Assurance@royalgreenwich.gov.uk