



# **Mentoring Framework: Guide for Mentors in Further Education**

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# > Introduction and overview



## Mentoring framework and guides

This guide is part of a suite of resources funded by the Department for Education. It includes a framework for the mentoring of practitioners in the FE sector, with four guides for mentors, mentees, co-ordinators and leaders in FE organisations. The framework and guides are complementary to each other and have been developed with the aim of establishing a shared understanding of mentoring for practitioners and trainers that will improve the provision and quality of mentoring and lead to enhanced self-efficacy of mentors and mentees alike.

These resources were developed following consultation with stakeholders from across the sector and research into the impact of effective mentoring to ensure that they are relevant and relatable to all types of FE organisations, easy to use, and therefore likely to lead to improvement in the provision and quality of mentoring.

The **mentoring framework and accompanying guides** are not prescriptive. They are designed to support and inform your thinking and approaches.

Cognition Education are also offering a range of free CPD activities and resources for leaders, mentoring co-ordinators, mentors and mentees. Please **visit our website** for the latest information.

At the end of this guide, you will find a list of suggested next steps so you can take your mentoring to the next level!

If you have not yet completed the self-assessment exercise at the end of the mentoring framework, we recommend you have a look at this now and revisit it when you reach the end of this guide.

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“Mentoring is one of the most effective forms of CPD for teachers and trainers”

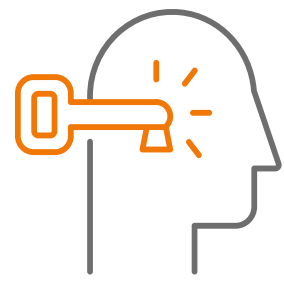
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## Introduction

You may be new to mentoring or have already mentored practitioners at different stages of their career. Practitioners at all stages of their career will benefit from mentoring by expert colleagues to help them use their knowledge to change their daily practice. We know that mentoring can have a positive impact on practitioner wellbeing and career progression, particularly when it is part of a whole organisation learning culture. However, we also know that if mentoring is adopted as a process for addressing under-performance it can have the opposite effect, making practitioners reluctant to engage because of fear of stigma.<sup>1</sup> We hope that these resources will support you to contribute to the development of an organisational culture for professional learning that has mentoring at its heart.<sup>2</sup>

Let's start by reflecting on your experiences of mentoring so far.



### Reflective questions:

1. What are your experiences, if any, of mentoring others?
2. What are your experiences of being mentored?
3. What do you think the purpose of mentoring is in your organisation?

If you have not yet completed the **self-assessment exercise at the end of the mentoring framework**, we recommend you have a look at this now and revisit it when you reach the end of this guide.



1 For example, see Hobson 2016

2 Cunningham 2007; Hobson and Maxwell 2020





## What is **ONSIDE** mentoring?

ONSIDE mentoring is a holistic framework of mentoring, which has been applied to effectively support the professional learning, development and wellbeing of practitioners in schools and FE organisations.

It has been shown to have positive impacts on mentees, mentors and their organisations, such as improved practitioner wellbeing and engagement with professional development and learning.<sup>3</sup>

### **ONSIDE MENTORING IS MADE UP OF THE SIX ELEMENTS BELOW:**

<b>O</b>	<b>OFF-LINE</b> (separated from line management and supervision) and non-hierarchical
<b>N</b>	<b>NON-JUDGMENTAL</b> and non-evaluative
<b>S</b>	<b>SUPPORTIVE</b> of mentees' psycho-social needs and wellbeing
<b>I</b>	<b>INDIVIDUALISED</b> – tailored to the specific and changing needs (emotional and developmental) of the mentee
<b>D</b>	<b>DEVELOPMENTAL</b> and growth-oriented – seeking to promote mentees' learnacy and to provide them with appropriate degrees of challenge
<b>E</b>	<b>EMPOWERING</b> – progressively non-directive to support mentees to become more autonomous and agentic



## Defining mentoring and coaching

There are many different definitions of mentoring and coaching. Contrary to what some people say, there is no one 'correct' definition of mentoring or coaching. These terms are used across the world and their meanings can vary (a lot) depending on the context. You might already hold a firm view of what mentoring means and what coaching means. However, from time to time, you are likely to encounter people who hold a different, and perhaps even a contrasting view to yours, and that's OK! The most important thing when establishing a mentoring programme is to define your terms upfront so everyone is clear about what to expect.

In the mentoring framework and accompanying guides, mentoring is considered to be a process that involves:

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“teachers and trainers supporting colleagues on a one-to-one basis, over a sustained period, to bring about professional learning and development.”

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Whilst some people draw a clear distinction between mentoring and coaching, we use the term mentoring in a broad sense, which *includes* coaching.<sup>4</sup> In other words, we consider that a trained and skilful mentor is able to adopt a wide range of helping techniques, including both mentoring and coaching activities, which they draw on in dynamic response to the individual needs of the mentee.<sup>5</sup>

## The mentor role

Your role as mentor is about supporting your mentees' professional learning and enhancement of their practice, as well as their wellbeing and career progression. Your mentee may need different kinds of support depending on the stage of their career. As they progress through their career and take on additional responsibilities, their needs will change. In your mentor role you need to tailor your support to meet their current and emerging needs.

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“You almost need to be like an organisational index.”

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**Advanced Practitioner**

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“The transition phase from training to actually becoming a working teacher – I think that's one of the areas that is quite challenging for them.”

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**Advanced Practitioner**

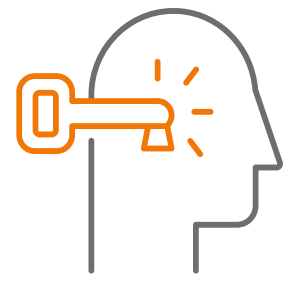
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4 These definitions of mentoring are based on ideas presented in Hobson and Maxwell 2020

5 For these reasons, from here on in, the terms mentoring and mentor are used in their broadest sense to include coaching and other helping roles.

# > Chapter One: How to develop mentoring that is Off-line



## Reflective questions:

- How are mentors matched to mentees in your organisation?
- Are mentees involved in this process?
- To what extent is mentoring for practitioners separated from management or supervision in your organisation?

## What is off-line mentoring?

Off-line mentoring is mentoring that is not undermined by a power relationship. In other words, 'off-line' mentoring is when the mentor is not the line manager of their mentee.

## Why is off-line mentoring important?

Research suggests that mentoring is most effective when it is off-line. Off-line mentoring could result in a much more developmental and open mentoring relationship. If someone is being mentored by their line manager, there is a hierarchical association where one person is in a position of power over another. Such a relationship may be likely to cause stress and anxiety about making mistakes. The mentee might therefore be more risk averse, less keen to try out new things and potentially less willing to share their thoughts and feelings in case these are

held against them. In a worst case scenario, being mentored by a manager might cause the mentee to feel helpless and as though they are under surveillance. In the long term, being mentored by a line manager could stunt a mentee's learning and development. It may also mean that significant issues are not tackled.

## How do I, as a mentor, achieve off-line mentoring?

Try to avoid mentoring someone that you also line manage. Draw on the principles of ONSIDE mentoring in order to achieve this and to help your mentee see that the mentoring relationship is non-hierarchical and about one colleague building a connection with another colleague.

Research suggests that it is more important for mentors to have 'credibility' with their mentees; 'relevant knowledge and experience beyond that relating to subject or vocational specialism'.<sup>6</sup> We might feel the need to share our experience sometimes so as to establish our professional credibility. In this relationship, however, such sharing needs to be part of a reciprocal communication where you both have the opportunity to share with each other. The relationship is based first and foremost on the connections that you are building between you and which recognise you both as equal to each other. At times, it might be helpful to reflect on when your mentee feels safe enough to share how things are going for them. How do you encourage their sharing? You will be an excellent practitioner and, with the best of intentions, might be tempted to lead in sharing an example experience or approach because you think it could be helpful to the mentee.<sup>7</sup> However, in order to maintain the openness that is required of this relationship, try to avoid any tendency you might have to lead or steer the conversation. Try to only share in response to the mentee's needs and requests. Make sure that you explicitly recognise the

6 Roberts 2000

7 Cunningham 2012



experience that your mentee already brings to their role. It is in inviting them to share that you will start to see the related experiences you already have. Those insights could assist you in fostering the relationship. It is worth thinking carefully about when and what to share – when might it be most helpful and when might it hinder the development of a non-hierarchical relationship?



In non-hierarchical mentoring, the mentor nurtures both the mentee in their learning and development and the relationship itself. Characteristics of effective mentors, such as being approachable and listening carefully, should help to cultivate a positive reciprocal relationship.<sup>8</sup> Remember that this is a collegial relationship based on openness and trust. Be curious about what your mentee is sharing with you. Recognise that you each have your own personal and professional contexts, experiences and perceptions. Remain open minded and seek to establish a shared understanding. It could be useful to ask questions in order to clarify your understanding of their perspective. Through a secure non-hierarchical relationship your mentee could feel more confident of their abilities and more likely to take independent action. Ultimately the conversations that you have are learning conversations that should nourish you both.

<sup>8</sup> Hobson 2017



### **Key recommendations for maintaining an off-line mentoring relationship:**

- Discuss with your mentee what approaches they think they will find most helpful.
- Use active listening to help you to establish fact from opinion and to monitor for any points that need clarification.
- Only restate the facts you have heard for the purposes of clarification (and if needed).
- Return to consider the mentoring contract and renegotiate as needed.
- Engage in critical reflection – think about the approaches you have been using. Are there other models or approaches you might try that you think might be useful? Share those with your mentee to get their opinion.

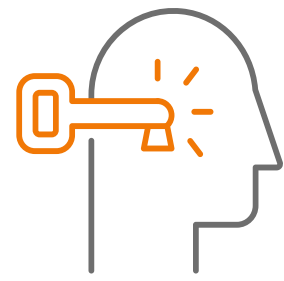


### **Developmental activity: What is your mentoring style?**

Go to the quiz (**Appendix A**) to explore your mentoring style. It's designed to be relatively light-hearted while indicating some of the aspects of mentoring that you will consider through the remainder of the guide (such as how your role interacts with the role of the mentee; remembering that ONSIDE relates to non-hierarchical mentoring).



# > Chapter Two: How to develop mentoring that is Non-judgmental



## Reflective questions:

1. How do you ensure that your mentee feels able to speak openly about their professional development needs?
2. How do you make sure they do not feel judged?
3. How do you avoid evaluating their strengths and weaknesses and instead encourage their skills in self-reflection?

## Holding your first mentoring meeting

Your first mentoring meeting is important for building trust and setting the tone for all the mentor meetings that follow, that is, an ethos of individualised, developmental and open, honest dialogue. Agreeing a mentoring contract is a good place to start. The mentoring contract can take many forms, but as a minimum it should set out agreed expectations and identify the boundaries and 'joint responsibilities' between you and the mentee.

## Key recommendations for the first mentoring meeting:

- Share some of your teaching autobiography (helping them to feel more comfortable).
- Find out about your mentee: what are their previous teaching experiences and qualifications? What are their perceptions of their strengths and areas for development at this point? What are their personal aspirations as practitioners?
- Ask what your mentee's expectations are of the two roles: mentor and mentee.
- Clarify/explain further (as needed) your role as mentor and your responsibilities.
- Clarify/explain further (as needed) their role as mentee and their responsibilities.
- Agree the length of the session (this should also be within the mentor contract).
- Agree when and where you will meet, and how you will communicate with each other in between meetings.
- Go through the mentoring contract with them – sign and date.
- Agree what records are being kept (confidential, who records, where logged).
- Ask them if they have any immediate concerns – whether about the mentoring relationship or other aspects of their work.
- Negotiate next steps.
- Schedule the next meeting and share your contact details (make sure the expectations around frequency



## What is non-judgmental mentoring?

There is some research to suggest that a particular version of mentoring, ‘judgementoring’, has become widespread in the schools and FE sectors.<sup>9</sup> In judgementoring, the mentor’s role is to assess or evaluate the mentee and ensure minimum standards are met. The mentor might make key decisions, such as steering the discussion, deciding how the mentee needs to improve and providing strong guidance. Non-judgmental mentoring is founded on a completely different kind of approach that is developmental and collaborative.

### AS A MENTOR, HOW DO I ENACT NON-JUDGMENTAL MENTORING?

The key to non-judgmental mentoring is holding back from ‘telling your mentee’ how to change things. You should avoid comments that are evaluative, especially critical comments such as ‘you did not do that very well’ or ‘you need to improve this’, where it may be more effective to invite mentees’ critical reflection. Try to offer judgments and evaluations *only* when specifically requested by your mentee (or in relation to professional conduct where your mentee contravenes organisational regulations or legislation). Even then, you want to steer them towards reflecting and making judgments themselves. Undertaking non-judgmental mentoring is not easy, which is why it is important to practise the development of such skills.

It’s important to avoid centring the relationship around observations of your mentee’s lessons. If you do observe them teaching, this should be only one feature of your interactions. Instead, try to turn your regular meetings into **learning conversations**.



### Key recommendations for being non-judgmental:

- Employ active listening strategies (see **Chapter three**). This is particularly important. Strategies include maintaining your focus on them, avoiding interruptions, allowing time for them to communicate their thoughts.
- Attend to their non-verbal communication as well as verbal communication
- Avoid making assumptions: establish a shared understanding, for example, by asking your mentee to explain their perspective in order to help you to understand it more clearly.

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9 Hobson 2021



**TRY OUT THE GROW MODEL WITH YOUR MENTEE.<sup>10</sup>**



- What does your mentee hope to achieve?
- What do they feel are their strengths and areas for development in relation to their goal?
- This might be focused on a specific area such as behaviour management, active learning, subject upskilling.
- What do they see as possible options in moving towards their goal?
- How are they going to decide which option to try?
- What steps do they think they need to take first?
- What timeframe are they going to work towards?



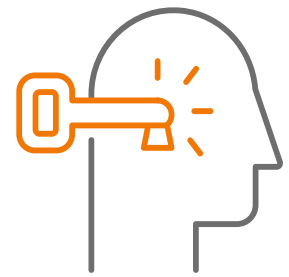
**Watch the video and note the questions the mentor asks at each stage of GROW. Reflect on how you could use this model in your mentoring meetings.**

<sup>10</sup> Whitmore 2017, Mindtools [online]



# > Chapter Three: How to develop mentoring that is Supportive

**Aim:** to support your mentee’s psycho-social needs and wellbeing.



## Reflective questions:

1. How do you check in with mentees about their wellbeing?
2. What support is available in your organisation?
3. How do you signpost mentees to different types of support?

## What is supportive mentoring?

Mentoring that is supportive seeks to be aware of and responsive to the changing emotional and psychological needs of the mentee. Our professional self is interconnected to our personal self and personal context. We might all have bad days on occasion perhaps due to things happening in our personal lives, not just our professional lives. A supportive mentor will stay curious about the emotional wellbeing of their mentee.

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“Mentoring is teaching them that work life balance.”

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Assistant Head Teacher 14-19 Special School

## Why is supportive mentoring important?

If your mentee is not able to be open about the issues they are having, this will limit the support you are able to provide. A supportive mentor takes a broader interest in their mentee. Rather than focusing solely on work related issues, supportive mentoring takes an interest in the overall wellbeing of your mentee and sees this as the key to their development as practitioners.

## How do I ensure my mentoring is supportive?

As anyone teaching in FE knows, FE practitioners fulfil multiple roles as part of their daily working lives and this can lead to them feeling overwhelmed and stressed. It’s easy to forget that they have a life outside of teaching with its own joys and stresses, which can spill over into their working lives. As a mentor you can lend a sympathetic ear to your mentee, **using active listening** to act as a sounding board and drawing on your experience to help them find strategies for managing their workload and maintaining their wellbeing. Helping your mentee feel valued and form positive relationships with others at work are also ways in which you can help boost their wellbeing.



Below are some key recommendations for you to try, including signposts on active listening. Remember to add to those and to fine tune them in the light of your experience and your mentee's context.



### **Key recommendations for enacting mentoring that is supportive:**

- Be flexible and responsive in pursuing whatever is more immediately of concern to your mentee.
- Active listening – spend more time listening to your mentee than talking.
- Know about and signpost them to other supportive colleagues as well as to wellbeing services on offer in your organisation.
- Walk with them – walk and talk can be very useful as an approach that reduces direct gaze and can facilitate more relaxed communication.
- Avoid changing any label that your mentee applies to describe their emotional wellbeing (active listening should help clarify the context in which the label is being applied).
- Invite them to think about possible supportive strategies: what do they feel might work best and what are they wanting/willing to try?
- Encourage them to reflect on what is going well for them.

## **The importance of brokering support within and outside the organisation**

It is also important to remember that as a mentor, you are not responsible for your mentee's actions nor are you acting alone. In your role, you should talk to others, for example, the mentor coordinator, if there is one, and other colleague mentors. Mentoring is most effective where there is whole organisational support for mentoring or within an expansive organisational culture.<sup>11</sup> When the organisation is supportive: "the work of mentors is recognised, valued and rewarded."<sup>12</sup>

### **Carol Dweck's theory of growth mindset**

**You may have heard of Carol Dweck's theory of growth mindset. Based on research she conducted in schools, Dweck identified two types of mindset: growth and fixed.**

People with a growth mindset believe their talents can be developed through hard work, using good strategies and input from others. In contrast those who believe they are born with a fixed amount of intelligence or talent have what Dweck calls a fixed mindset. People with a growth mindset tend to put more energy into learning, and worry less about looking intelligent, so it should come as no surprise that they tend to do better than those with a fixed mindset.

#### **"IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD" - AFRICAN PROVERB**

While having a single, named mentor who completes the administrative mentoring role, many practitioners build a support network across a number of different colleagues. Team-teaching with other practitioners can be a part of this. It allows them to draw on a range of different perspectives and avoid the cloning /'mini me' approach that sometimes happens in mentoring. Also, your mentee gets to feel more like a member of a community.

11 Fuller and Unwin 2003

12 Hobson 2020

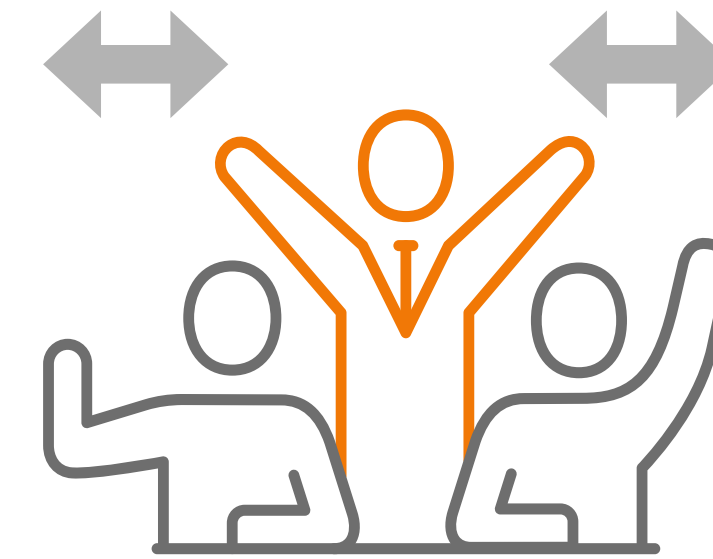




However, it is important to note that everyone is a mix of growth and fixed mindsets; a person may have a fixed mindset in relation to some subjects or types of learning, and a growth mindset in relation to others. Your role as a mentor is to support your mentee to adopt a growth mindset to tackle the challenges they are facing. A supportive approach will make all the difference in this.

### **Growth mindset:**

- Intelligence is a dynamic quality
- Focus on strategies that lead to learning
- Mistakes are evidence of learning
- Focus on mastery goals.



### **Fixed mindset:**

- People are born with a certain amount of intelligence or talent
- Effort signifies low intelligence
- Challenge threatens self-esteem
- Focus on performance goals.

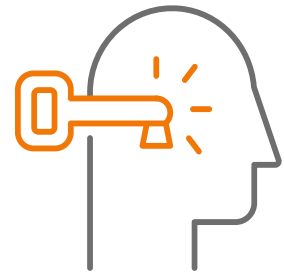


### **Key recommendations for encouraging a growth mindset in your mentee:**

- Praise effort that leads to mentee learning and progress.
- Help your mentee identify the strategies and processes that result in learning and progress.
- Encourage your mentee to take sensible risks.
- Support your mentee to learn from their mistakes, including risks that didn't work out.



# > Chapter Four: How to develop mentoring that is Individualised



## Reflective questions:

1. How do you tailor your mentoring to meet your mentee's individual needs?
2. What types of questions do you use to explore your mentee's experiences?
3. When and how do you review the mentoring process with your mentee?

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“They’ve got to learn from the way that they approach things rather than from us just saying ... I wouldn’t do it like that.”

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Coach Sixth Form College

## What is Individualised mentoring?

An individualised approach puts your mentee and their needs at its centre. In this section, we have included some basic principles that you could draw on.

## Why is individualised mentoring important?

Firstly, it is important to recognise that no two mentees are the same. They will have different strengths and different areas where they need support. So, supporting them on these specifics is key to helping them develop in the most effective way.



## How do I make sure my mentoring is individualised?

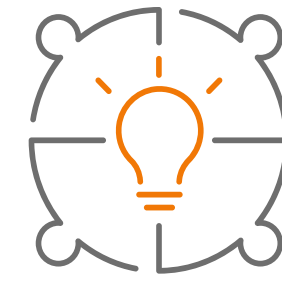
Regular mentoring conversations will deepen your understanding of their personal and professional needs and developmental progress so that you can adjust your approach, becoming more or less directive in response to your mentee's emerging needs. Be open minded and continuously revise your opinion of your mentee in light of their development as you work with them. They will be gaining new skills, different perceptions of themselves and a renewing sense of themselves as a practitioner. The relationship you have with them is itself growing and changing.

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“If we are talking a mentorship over a few years, obviously the dynamic of that relationship should change as time goes by and they become more experienced.”

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**Coach** Sixth Form College



### Key recommendations for individualising mentee support:

- Get to know your mentee and keep getting to know them throughout the mentoring process.
- Become familiar with, and spend time practising, a wide range of different mentoring approaches and techniques so that you have a broad repertoire to draw on (see **Chapter five**).
- Identify when particular techniques are going to be most useful and be prepared to change your approach both within meetings and over the course of the relationship (for example, if your mentee is feeling low, then use positive affirmation).
- You might have been working with them for a while, they might have taken on responsibilities or had other experiences that have stretched them in particular ways. Who are they now? Open up that conversation.
- Help them develop their own internal dialogue that they can use to reflect on their practice alone or with others.
- As well as regular mentoring conversations, be prepared for spontaneous discussions to address issues that have arisen while they are still fresh.

There are a number of different learning theories and concepts you could draw on for your mentoring that can add real depth to your practice. We outline some of these below. The thought here is that some of the ideas could strengthen your capacity to provide individualised mentoring. Reflective questions have been included to help you to apply some of the principles.



## Critical dialogue

Think about how much time you talk and how much time your mentee talks in your meetings. Do you need to reflect on that balance? Critical dialogue “considers people as social human beings and not as recipients.”<sup>13</sup>

### PRINCIPLES OF CRITICAL DIALOGUE<sup>14</sup>

Dialogue is central to communication and in education it underpins theories of social learning.

Learning happens when people interact with each other, using and sharing their current knowledge in a process of collaborative sense-making, which leads to the creation of new knowledge.

Dialogue means multiple voices and multiple directions. In this dialogue, knowledge is produced at the same time that dialogue takes place. However, this is not necessarily a skill that comes naturally, and you may have to teach your mentee to use critical dialogue as part of their reflective practice.

## An andragogical perspective

Individualised mentoring means you need to tailor your support to the particular personality and developmental needs of your mentee. Through this perspective, you might encourage your mentee to reflect on themselves as adult learners. Explore their motivations for learning and ask about what kinds of things they are learning and how that connects to their developing practice.

### PRINCIPLES OF ANDRAGOGY<sup>15</sup>

- ‘Adult learners need to know why they are learning particular things.
- Adult self-concept – they need to perceive themselves as self-directed and responsible for their own decisions.
- Adult learners have a wide variety of experience which represents a rich resource for students and practitioners. They do, however, need to recognise bias and subjectivity in their opinions and experiences.
- Adults have readiness to learn those things which will help them to deal with real-life situations.
- Adults are motivated to learn those things which are of interest or important to them. This, and their readiness to learn, implies that adults have intrinsic motivations for learning’.

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13 Lucio-Villegas 2017:156

14 Jarvis, Briden and Senior 2013

15 For example, see Scales 2018





## Constructivist principles

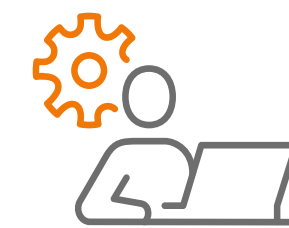
A constructivist practitioner will help the learner to make their own connections between the new learning and any prior knowledge and experience they already have. Learning is seen to be an active process in which the learner needs to build their own connections in order to develop their knowledge and understanding. There are two concepts you might like to explore: scaffolding and active and discovery learning. In each case, learning is seen to be cumulative.

## Scaffolding

By offering scaffolded support to your mentee, you should enable them to progressively take on a leading role as you gradually withdraw your support. How you scaffold your support will be influenced by your knowledge of:

- their current stage of development
- in which areas they might benefit from more support
- in which areas they are becoming more self reliant
- Active and discovery learning.

Prompt your mentee to try out new things and to take risks. Share moments in your practice when you made 'a mistake'. Talk to them about how you reflected and adjusted and learnt from it.



### Developmental activity: using active and discovery learning

Encourage your mentee to learn from others, perhaps through peer observing and team teaching, and then to try things out. In your mentor meetings, help them unpick these experiences so that they are supported to learn from both their mistakes and their successes.



## Socially situated learning

In Lave and Wenger's original research, they refer to newcomers to a profession/ trade, exploring how those newcomers move from novice to master in their profession.<sup>16</sup>

Think about how practitioners enter the education profession, and how experienced practitioners might need to adapt to a new organisation or a new role. If your mentee is new to the organisation, you could introduce them to colleagues and help them on a practical level by signposting them to relevant departmental policies, showing them where to go for coffee, for photocopies, etc.

### PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALLY SITUATED LEARNING APPLIED TO FE

Practitioners learn the culture and practices of their organisation by engaging in the everyday activities associated with their professional community.

As they become familiar with the practices of their organisation, they become increasingly secure as members of its community, and move from the edges of that community towards its centre, that is, the 'novice' becomes 'master'.



### Developmental activity: socially situated learning

If we think of the organisation as a community, to what extent does your mentee feel that they are part of that community?

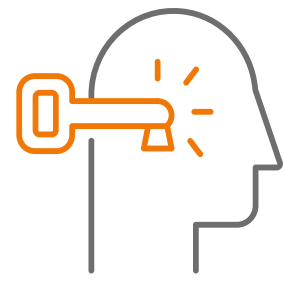
You might find it helpful to ask them the following questions:

- What have you learnt about the organisation?
- How would you describe the sense of community?
- What values are shared within the community?
- What part do you currently play in the community and what part would you like to play in the future?
- What can you do to move towards that future role?

<sup>16</sup> Lave & Wenger 1991



# > Chapter Five: How to develop mentoring that is Developmental



## Reflective questions:

1. At what points do you collaborate with your mentee?
2. What does that collaboration look like?
3. What (and when) do you learn from your mentee?

## What is developmental mentoring?

Developmental mentoring is a growth-oriented strategy.<sup>17</sup> It is grounded in an ethos that recognises your mentee as a peer, as a knowledgeable practitioner and sees that a more developmental approach to mentoring shifts control from the mentor to the mentee.

## Why is developmental mentoring important?

A developmental approach contrasts strongly with a judgmental approach. It is important because whereas judgmental mentoring can compromise your ability as a mentor to effectively support your mentee, in developmental mentoring your relationship with your mentee is moving increasingly to one of reciprocal learning where you and your mentee can learn from each other. A developmental approach supports the fact that your mentee has lots of ideas and knowledge already and uses this as a foundation you both can build on.

In the early days and with less experienced mentees, you might find yourself in tune with the advanced practitioner quoted here. Their love of mentoring was very apparent and it included that desire to signpost as appropriate in support of their mentees.

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“You’ve got to be like Yoda, you’ve got to know all the new stuff that is going on in education.”

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Advanced Practitioner



## How do I enact developmental mentoring?

In developmental mentoring, the mentee is an equal and is capable of managing their learning. We have summarised the principles of developmental mentoring and what this might mean for you as a mentor in the table below. At what point can you let your mentee decide how they approach something? Trust your own knowledge of them – you will know when you might need to guide and when you should step back in support of their accelerated development.

<p><b>Principles of developmental mentoring<sup>18</sup></b></p> <p>The mentor and mentee are equal. Mentoring is a developmental activity.</p> <p>The mentoring relationship is open and non-hierarchical and separated from line management.</p> <p>The term mentee hints at the equality of the mentoring relationship.</p>	<p><b>The mentor:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• views their mentee as an equal</li><li>• supports their mentee to manage their own professional learning</li><li>• acts as a ‘sounding board’ for their mentee</li><li>• develops the way their mentee thinks about issues important to them</li><li>• encourages their mentee to take responsibility for decision making.</li></ul>
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There are a number of other approaches to mentoring that share common features with developmental mentoring, as you will see below. In **educative mentoring**, the mentor seeks to establish a collaborative relationship. This means a relationship in which you work together with your mentee, both contributing, both valuing the contributions of the other. How can you move the mentoring relationship to one in which the mentee starts to set the agenda and manages the collaboration?

<p><b>Educative mentoring (constructivist oriented mentoring)<sup>19</sup></b></p> <p>The mentor enters into a collaborative relationship with their mentee. There is a focus on inquiry into knowledge of practice.</p>	<p><b>The mentor:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>collaborates</i> with their mentee</li><li>• listens to their mentee and encourages a growing self-reliance</li><li>• encourages and supports regular co-reflection on classroom practice</li><li>• models the practitioner’s role as a collaborator in the mentor-mentee interactions</li><li>• co-plans with their mentee</li><li>• shares information with their mentee.</li></ul>
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18 Clutterbuck 2004

19 Langton & Ward 2015



In **growth and compassion-based mentoring**, the mentor maintains a calm and supportive relationship, whilst recognising that their mentee brings their own developing expertise. Inviting the mentee to tell their stories and to share their vision and goals is a key step in a growth-oriented approach. What might those stories tell you? How might you support your mentee in sharing some of their practices with their colleagues? And how might it benefit your mentee to do so?

### **Growth and compassion-based mentoring<sup>20</sup>**

The mentor feels for their mentee rather than feeling with their mentee (empathy).

Based on neuroscience, this approach focuses on compassion for the mentee's goals rather than judging success against externally defined criteria. Research indicates that this approach leads to positive behavioural change.

#### **The mentor:**

- develops a supportive mentoring relationship in a calm environment
- listens to their mentee's stories
- focuses on their mentee's strengths, aspirations, and personal developments
- encourages their mentee to share their vision, goals, and identify what success will look like
- tries to understand their mentee's perspective
- encourages their mentee to think about how they feel.



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20 Boyatzis et al. 2013



## Using powerful questioning and active listening

The developmental approach depends very much on the mentor's skill in asking the right questions at the right time. Whilst as practitioners we might choose to have some pre-prepared questions for a lesson, we also know that it is through our active listening that new questions emerge. The same practice relates to mentoring conversations.

How good a listener are you? Sometimes all your mentee needs is a listening ear to help them to prioritise: what should they do first? What next? This can be particularly important as they navigate different areas of work and perhaps take on increasing responsibility. When you listen, your mentee feels heard. When you listen actively, they know that they are heard *and* seen.



### Key recommendations for active listening:

- Show interest and maintain attention.
- Check your understanding if needed (repeat/paraphrase/summarise to check).
- Do not interrupt. Allow your mentee the space and time to share their thinking.
- Pay attention to your mentee's non-verbal cues.
- Invite your mentee to summarise their thoughts if that feels helpful to them (this might be in the form of three take away points they want to flag up to you).

Further sources on active listening that you might like to explore:

- <https://www.edutopia.org/article/value-active-listening>
- <https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/uploadedfiles/parcc/cmc/reflective%20listening%20nk.pdf>



### Developmental activity: reflecting on a recent mentoring conversation

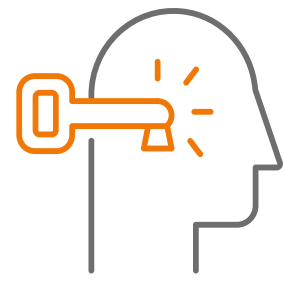
You might (with your mentee's consent) want to record a mentoring conversation OR you could reflect afterwards.

Make notes on the following:

- When do I ask one question after another?
- When does doing that hinder the conversation?
- What is the purpose of the questions I ask?
- On reflection, therefore, which questions were the priority questions to be asked in that conversation?
- Could I use fewer questions?
- Could I use more open questions?
- How else could I adjust my questioning?



# > Chapter Six: How to enact mentoring that is Empowering



## Reflective questions:

1. How do you support your mentee to become more autonomous?
2. How do you help them develop their own professional identity, which may be different to yours?
3. How do you and your mentee recognise the progress they have made?

## What is empowering mentoring?

One way to look at it is to reflect on how your mentoring relationship might have moved from being more to less directive. You will now be more aware of the need to monitor how much time you talk and how much time your mentee talks. As suggested in Chapter five, you are taking on more of a coaching role as you encourage your mentee to take the initiative and to set the agenda. What will follow? Your mentee will take responsibility for their professional learning and development.



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“Coaching, in its purest form, is the process of helping a person solve their own problems through a process of structured questioning, whereas mentoring recognises the expertise of the mentor who not only asks questions but can also help development through the sharing of their expertise and experience.”

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Thedman 2018:6





## Why is this important?

As a mentor, your role is to empower your mentee to take responsibility for their own professional learning and in so doing become increasingly autonomous. This will improve their confidence and enhance their wellbeing, which will in turn impact positively on their practice. Conversely, if you are too directive, this can lead to a form of learned helplessness where your mentee relies on your judgments at the expense of developing their own critical thinking about their practice.<sup>21</sup> Not only is this likely to inhibit their progress, but research has found that overly-reliant mentees are more likely to suffer from what has been termed ‘reality aftershock’<sup>22</sup> once the mentoring relationship has come to an end – that is, they can struggle to cope without the support of their mentor.

As shared at the beginning of this guide and demonstrated in the mentoring framework, the ONSIDE approach to mentoring, with its emphasis on empowerment, development and wellbeing incorporates several practices frequently associated with coaching as we seek to develop mentees’ autonomy.<sup>23</sup> We will now look at what this means for your mentoring practice.

## How can I, as a mentor, enact empowering mentoring?

By becoming increasingly non directive, you are supporting your mentee to take incremental steps towards greater independence. The rewards of doing so are of course great. If your mentee feels more empowered, they also have a greater understanding of what they are capable of and hopefully increased self confidence. For you as mentor, you will hear how their ability to reflect on their practices and adapt them has strengthened.

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“The mentor should be helping to guide them to find their own solutions really.”

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Course Leader General FE College

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21 Cameron et al. 2014

22 Hobson and Ashby 2012

23 Hobson and Maxwell 2020



You might already be aware of **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**.<sup>24</sup> In the original model there are five levels, all of which are easily applicable to the mentoring needs of your mentee. If you have been working through the chapters in this guide, you may already have taken steps to help your mentee feel that they 'belong' (in their team, in their institution). What have you done to boost their self esteem? When have you used praise and explicitly recognised the progress they have made?

The top level of the hierarchy refers to self actualisation. If we interpret self actualisation as realising our potential, we might also remember how it feels to aim high and finally, through our efforts and motivation, achieve our aspiration/ goal. How have you felt when you achieved a goal you had set for yourself? Empowering your mentee means letting them know that they can set their own goal and that it is time for them to take the lead in relation to their development.

Manning and Hobson suggest that non-directive mentoring is "in the interests of their longer-term development and well-being". We get a boost when we achieve a goal we set for ourselves whether in relation to our personal or professional lives.<sup>25</sup>



### **Key recommendations to enact mentoring that is empowering:**

- Share your teaching experience in order to position them as the lead (having expert knowledge): ask them to help you to think it through more fully – what might they suggest you reflect on and why?
- Share their strengths in a meeting with your mentee – make sure they see how much they are developing.
- Invite them to show a teaching and learning approach to others (peer colleagues, staff development event).
- Are they able to informally mentor someone in a particular area? This might now be a very appropriate next step.



adapted from Maslow 1954

24 Maslow 1954

25 Manning and Hobson 2017: 590



## Action planning

Action planning can be a sensitive area, as action plans are typically associated with other mechanisms such as performance-related monitoring. However, action planning is a very useful element of mentoring conversations because it can encourage your mentee to explore the future and identify next steps. When do you feel an action needs to be identified and for what purpose? And who should set it? Not all conversations will lead to specific actions. Some might be much more pastoral in nature. Where you do set actions, it might be that those revolve around such aspects as subject specialist expertise, development of learning and teaching approaches, for example, if your mentee is struggling to adapt to a particular group/level/course, and following observation feedback. By adopting the ONSIDE approach, your mentoring is non-hierarchical and will be increasingly non-directive over time. Actions are going to come mostly or entirely from your mentee, subject to their needs at that time. Prioritising actions should always be part of a negotiation. You should also remember to reflect on what other support your mentee might need to help them feel more secure in working on that action.

You might know of or have a specific action plan template that you find effective. In **Appendix C** we have included an example that you and your mentee can adapt as needed.



### Key recommendations for action planning:

#### In a non-directive mentoring relationship:

- Ask why they think it will be helpful or important to work on that (giving full attention).
- Encourage and motivate by showing your confidence in them and using praise.

#### In a less directive mentoring relationship:

- Listen to your mentee's critical reflection and support where that still feels appropriate.
- Work with them (to the extent necessary) to make identified actions SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound).
- Be prepared to share an example as a possible model if needed (depending on what they are working on, their needs at this time and the stage they are at in their development).



# > Chapter Seven: Bringing it all together

## How to feel more confident in your mentoring approaches.



### Reflective questions:

1. How do you plan for your own professional development?
2. What opportunities are there to develop your mentoring practices?
3. What resources can you draw on? (colleagues/materials/time...)

In order to maximise your effectiveness as a mentor, you will need to have a range of skills and approaches at your fingertips. Hopefully this guide and the mentoring framework have helped you view mentoring as a holistic process that is most beneficial when leaders, mentors and mentees work together within an expansive learning environment that is conducive to professional learning. Through your mentoring approaches, you are working to support practitioners in being “reflective and enquiring practitioners who think critically about their own educational assumptions, values and practices.”<sup>26</sup> There is no one-size-fits-all checklist for mentoring conversations. Ultimately what is required is ongoing critical reflection on your own practices, perhaps with others through networking, and a growing perception and present and future focused attention as to what will work best for your mentee, at a specific time, and in that particular context. Remember, too, to factor in your own developmental and support needs, and

26 ETF 2014

27 Thedham 2018: 18

communicate these to your supervisor or mentor coordinator if you have one. Make sure you take advantage of any opportunities to network with others, and engage with induction and further professional development for you as a mentor and experienced practitioner.

You might consider enrolling on one of **the mentor training programmes offered by Cognition Education**, which are for beginner, as well as advanced mentors.

Your mentee should feel safe to share their fears and concerns with you, whether that is about how to manage a particular class, how to engage students in conversations around inclusion and diversity or about their perception of themselves as a developing practitioner, manager, mentor or wherever their individual career trajectory is taking them. Open and invitational communication and the building of rapport, such as has been outlined throughout this guide, will help you both maximise the benefits of mentoring. If your mentee is finding it difficult to communicate verbally, you might try visualisation approaches. One approach you could try is to ask them to draw an image through which to represent and then discuss the particular experience. Metaphors are another useful strategy for your mentor toolkit.

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“Metaphors and stories are used extensively in coaching and mentoring as they can help elicit different information around a particular situation, rather than just describing it.”<sup>27</sup>

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The main message here is to be open to trying out other ways in which to elicit a fuller sense of your mentee's experience and their reactions to it. Hopefully this guide has reinforced your existing knowledge and increased your confidence as a mentor, whilst also giving you ideas for new things you could try.



### Key recommendations for next steps:

- Talk to a peer mentor about a mentoring experience and invite their comments as a critical friend.
- Record (with your mentee's permission) a mentoring conversation and think about the extent to which you led the conversation and the types of questions you asked. It will be useful to reflect on your mentee's responses as it is likely to give you further insight into what is going well and what else might work.
- Give yourself time to reflect, even if only briefly, on your mentoring relationship with your mentee and how that works (two way/one way/judgmental/developmental etc.).
- You might find journalling helpful as a way of recording mentoring experiences and crucially as a place for critical reflection – return to those journal entries and look for patterns/habits that could be challenged. Are there are other ways of working that might prove more beneficial for you and your mentee?
- Set specific actions, such as reading about a mentoring model, trying a new approach, observing a colleague's mentoring session – these and more could accelerate your learning and your sense of confidence in your mentoring skills.

We hope you realise how very valuable your mentoring role is to the development of your mentee. It is important that you manage your time effectively to protect your own wellbeing as well as providing support for your mentee. It is a powerful and rewarding role and your commitment to it is to be applauded. Finally, don't forget to take care of your own continuing professional development!



### Developmental activity: mentor meet

Start up a mentor meet as a monthly or fortnightly event for mentors in your organisation. It should have a social dimension as well as functioning as a forum for sharing ideas and experiences. With some commitment this could develop into your own community of practice for mentors.



## > Next steps

Thank you for reading this guide on mentoring in the FE sector. Our goal is to raise the quality of mentoring for the benefit of mentors, mentees and their learners. We hope that you have found the ideas presented in this guide useful for developing your mentoring practice.

We recommend that you now consider undertaking the following next steps:

1. Revisit the mentoring framework and self-assessment exercise.
2. Ensure that your colleagues have copies of the mentoring framework and accompanying guides shown to the right.
3. Visit our [website](#) to check out Cognition Education's training and CPD opportunities for mentees, mentors and leaders.





# Appendix A: What is your mentoring style? Quiz





# Chapter One: What is your mentoring style? Quiz

**Tick or highlight your response then turn over for some feedback!**

- 1. You meet with your mentee for the first time. What do you do?**
  - a) Ask them about their practitioner experience to date
  - b) Tell them all about yourself
  - c) Talk through a batch of policy documents
- 2. You are concerned that your mentee has missed two mentor meetings. How do you approach this?**
  - a) You ask to review their timetable with them so that you can agree better times
  - b) You put in a complaint to their line manager
  - c) You ask to be matched to a different mentee
- 3. Your mentee is well motivated but isn't yet showing that they have implemented your suggestion on using more technology. What do you do?**
  - a) Ask them some strength-based questions about how they have successfully used technology to date
  - b) Invite them in to your lesson to show your use of a technology tool you have recommended
  - c) Criticise their lack of progress in this area
- 4. Your mentee has shared their criticism of a fellow colleague in front of you. How do you deal with this?**
  - a) You share how uncomfortable you feel about this and why
  - b) You talk to the Head of Quality
  - c) You share their critical comments with the colleague
- 5. Your mentee is feeling overwhelmed by the workload. How do you support them?**
  - a) You work with them to establish which tasks are currently more important and how to manage those
  - b) You ask to talk to their line manager
  - c) You say that this is the job of an FE practitioner
- 6. Your mentee doesn't listen to feedback. What should you do?**
  - a) Ask them to write down what they have understood from your feedback
  - b) Complain to them
  - c) Complain to their line manager

**Count up your answers: How many for A? B? C?**

## FEEDBACK ON THE QUIZ:

1. **You meet with your mentee for the first time. What do you do?**

- a) Ask them about their practitioner experience to date
- b) Tell them all about yourself
- c) Talk through a batch of policy documents

2. **You are concerned that your mentee has missed two mentor meetings. How do you approach this?**

- a) You ask to review their timetable with them so that you can agree better times
- b) You put in a complaint to their line manager
- c) You ask to be matched to a different mentee

3. **Your mentee is well motivated but isn't yet showing that they have implemented your suggestion on using more technology. What do you do?**

- a) Ask them some strength-based questions about how they have successfully used technology to date
- b) Invite them in to your lesson to show your use of a technology tool you have recommended
- c) Criticise their lack of progress in this area

4. **Your mentee has shared their criticism of a fellow colleague in front of you. How do you deal with this?**

- a) You share how uncomfortable you feel about this and why
- b) You talk to the Head of Quality
- c) You share their critical comments with the colleague

5. **Your mentee is feeling overwhelmed by the workload. How do you support them?**

- a) You work with them to establish which tasks are currently more important and how to manage those
- b) You ask to talk to their line manager
- c) You say that this is the job of an FE practitioner

6. **Your mentee doesn't listen to feedback. What should you do?**

- a) Ask them to write down what they have understood from your feedback
- b) Complain to them
- c) Complain to their line manager

**Mostly As:** brilliant! You understand the need to work cooperatively and collaboratively with your mentee in support of their development.

**Mostly Bs:** room for improvement. Remember to talk to the mentee first to make sure you definitely understand the issue from their perspective.

**Mostly Cs:** You are likely to benefit from reading the rest of the guide, particularly Chapter two on non-judgmental mentoring. A mentor should provide advice and guidance as a critical friend.





# Appendix B: Example of a mentoring contract



# Example of a mentoring contract

This contract is between the mentor \_\_\_\_\_ (name) and the mentee \_\_\_\_\_ (name) and will last for approximately \_\_\_\_\_ (time period).

This provides an initial contract to support a positive mentor-mentee relationship. It would be helpful to review it together at points on the mentoring timeline (i.e., if mentoring over a year, look to review at least twice during that time).

The mentor and mentee must sign to agree the following:

- To meet at regular intervals such as \_\_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_\_ (number per month)
- To hold those meetings in a private office to support open dialogue
- To be honest and supportive of each other, understanding each other's role and responsibilities
- To attend all meetings and to let each other know in advance (at least one week) if a meeting needs to be rescheduled
- To maintain confidentiality regarding mentor meetings
- To negotiate action points
- To employ active listening skills
- To respond carefully and proactively

(Add any other bullet points as per your organisation/perceived mentoring need)

Signing this contract means that you agree to the points raised above. You are also signing in recognition that this contract might be reviewed (particularly if mentoring over a long time period, i.e., over a year).

Mentor name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentee name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentee signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_





# Appendix C: Example mentee action plan



# Mentee Action Plan

Goal	Outcome	Action	Resources	Timescale
<i>What do I want to develop?</i>	<i>What will success look like?</i>	<i>What action will I take?</i>	<i>What will I need?</i>	<i>When will I start and end?</i>

## Evaluation of my actions.

- To what extent have I achieved my goal?
- Which actions were more helpful?
- Is there anything else I would have liked to try?
- What impact did my actions have?

**Notes:** This is your action plan so you should feel free to use bullet points or add more rows. You might also find it helpful to use RAG rating – highlighting red for not worked on yet, amber (orange) for working on, green for completed.



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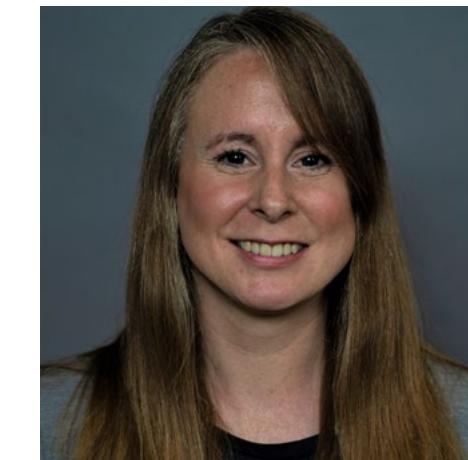
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We would like to thank the staff who shared their experiences in the creation of these guides.

### Funded by



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