

The Governance Project

Guidelines for mentors

Introduction

The following information endeavours to provide a summary of best practice in relation to mentoring. This document is not designed to be a formal agreement but it is hoped that both mentor and mentee will take time to read the guidelines and undertake to follow them as far as possible or as may be agreed between mentor and mentee.

Purpose

The purpose of the Governance Project Mentoring programme is to provide support and development to individual members of the management committees, boards of trustees etc of voluntary sector advice agencies. The programme will promote understanding of the role of an MC member, the advice sector context and help members develop their confidence and the essential skills for their role.

Benefits for the mentee

- It will assist with induction as a management committee member
- It will help clarify the role of an MC member and that of the operational manager
- It will develop the MC member's knowledge of the advice sector and its regulatory context
- It will help the MC member to develop their skills, both professional and personal, in a structured manner based on individual needs
- It will give the MC member the confidence to participate more fully in the work of the MC
- It will provide the opportunity for the MC member to reflect on their own progress and to resolve any issues in a supportive, confidential and safe environment

Benefits for the mentor

- It will widen the mentor's skills and knowledge
- It can bring a different insight to the way an MC works
- It broadens the mentor's experience and understanding of the different ways MCs may operate
- It will assist the mentor to develop or hone skills in helping to develop individuals

Benefits for the organisation

- It can help to improve the functioning of the MC and improve decision making
- It can help to develop skills of members from underrepresented groups/communities to enable them to become MC members
- It can help with MC member retention

Role of the mentor

The mentor's role is to provide support and resources to an MC member(s) usually through a programme of regular meetings.

At the initial meeting the mentor should set out:

- The purpose and scope of the mentoring
- The agreed methods of contact including
 - What level of contact is acceptable without becoming intrusive
 - What are acceptable times to make contact
- The frequency, length and structure of future meetings
- The duration of the mentoring programme

The mentor should:

- Assist the mentee to clarify their development needs and targets
- Provide professional support and guidance around the problems or issues raised by the mentee
- Provide constructive feedback to the mentee
- Share knowledge and experience of the systems, protocols and relationships that are necessary for a good MC member to have
- Ensure that the mentee gains confidence and the ability to act independently through the mentoring
- Ensure that the mentee does not become dependent on the mentor
- Indicate or introduce the mentee to other useful contacts, sources of information, relevant training opportunities etc
- Ensure that any matters discussed are treated as confidential

While some contact may be through email it is not advisable to try and conduct the whole programme through this medium as face-to-face contact can be more beneficial. It also takes considerably longer to build a good trusting relationship via email.

Ending the programme

Either party may end the relationship at any time following a discussion with each other so long as mutual respect is maintained.

Once the relationship has achieved its purpose the mentoring programme should be wound down smoothly and the outcomes passed to the Governance Project manager.

AdviceUK's role

AdviceUK will take every step to ensure that it only selects suitable people to act as mentors on the programme based on:

- Having agreed to follow the guidelines set out above
- Having the appropriate professional knowledge and skills
- A willingness to commit their time
- Being friendly, approachable, trustworthy and trusting of others
- Being a good listener and having the ability to give constructive feedback
- An ability to consider issues of equal opportunities/diversity within the context of a management committee and voluntary sector organisation

AdviceUK will endeavour to ensure a good match between the mentor and mentee and that they follow the mentoring guidelines. However, AdviceUK cannot take responsibility for the accuracy/appropriateness of the advice given by an individual mentor or the consequences of whether the mentee follows that advice or otherwise. In the event of a dispute AdviceUK will use its best endeavours to reach a mutually acceptable resolution.