

BDIAP Report

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Thanks to the BDIAP, I was able to complete the ILM5 Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring in an Organisational Setting. The qualification involved several training days, three written assignments and 18 hours of coaching practice. As part of this process, I coached a histopathology registrar preparing for the FRCPath Part 2 examination and I am coaching a trainee specialist biomedical scientist.

In the workplace, coaching and mentoring are processes which can be established to confer significant benefits at both the individual and organisational level. Mentoring is a powerful personal development and empowerment tool.¹ In academic medicine, effective mentoring may produce faculty who are more productive, obtain more grants and publications than colleagues without mentors and who get promoted more quickly.²

Introduction

Coaching and mentoring are not new concepts. Mentorship was first described in 800 BC, in Homer's classic poem 'The Odyssey'. The poem describes a time when the King of Ithaca, Odysseus, was preparing to leave for Troy. He wanted to ensure there was someone who could take care of his son in his absence: someone who would act as a teacher, advisor and friend. The guardian's name was Mentor³.

Presently, there are numerous definitions of Mentoring in the literature, for example⁴:

'a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and personal development'

Coaching is a closely-related concept, which describes:

'a process of empowering an individual to help them to develop and to achieve their goals'.

Rather than using their own experiences to guide or influence a coachee, a coach will help that individual to identify the knowledge and skills that are already within them.

Whilst coaching and mentoring share many similarities, there are also several differences between the processes. On one hand, they both typically involve trusted one-on-one

relationships which function to enhance an individual's motivation, confidence and clarity, and they can both improve an organisation's efficiency, productivity and sense of morale. On the other hand⁵:

- Coaching may be offered over a set time period, whereas mentoring is a longer-term relationship
- Coaching may focus on a specific goal or outcome, whilst mentoring takes a more holistic approach, and may encompass both professional and personal aspirations
- A coaching programme is often structured with set meeting times, but mentoring can be more of an informal process

In the work environment, coaching and mentoring will take place within an organisational context, and will therefore be influenced by the specific organisation's aims, values and culture. The core values of the NHS are largely patient-centred and include respect and dignity, commitment to quality of care, compassion and improving lives. The organisational context of the NHS may therefore affect a mentoring programme in several ways:

1. Understandably and importantly, patient care is always the number one priority. This will have implications in terms of the time and financial resources that can be allocated to a mentoring programme.
2. The culture for junior doctors has traditionally been to 'just get on with it' – most senior clinicians reached their positions without any significant organisational support. This could influence a mentoring programme in one of two ways: senior staff may be reluctant to be involved in a mentoring programme as they believe that juniors should 'learn the hard way' like they did or alternatively, senior staff may use their experiences to understand the pressures that junior staff can face, and may be passionate about promoting mentorship to help improve wellbeing.
3. Specifically in academic medicine, an individual's academic success is judged on their publication history and the research grants they win, which are therefore regarded as the aims of an academic training programme. There is evidence that mentoring programmes can help individuals to achieve these aims, so the organisation is more likely to support such schemes as they align with their overall strategies.

There are numerous reasons for implementing a mentoring scheme for academic registrars within the NHS. The scheme will be beneficial to the individual and to the institution. Generic advantages for the individual include an increased awareness of their profession, enhanced assimilation into an organisation, increased job satisfaction and increased likelihood of success⁶. There are also specific examples relevant to the medical profession:

- Mentoring has a positive impact on stress levels, morale, sense of support, wellbeing and job satisfaction⁷.
- Individuals who engage in mentoring programmes are more productive, obtain more grants and publications and get promoted more quickly².

The positive impact on the mentees feeds back into improving the functioning of the organisation, as work is done more efficiently. Furthermore, reduced stress levels mean that individuals are less likely to have time off sick, and staff retention is enhanced.

Evaluating a Mentoring Scheme

Before a mentoring scheme can be evaluated and its effectiveness determined, it is first necessary to define what the aims of the programme are. The purpose of a mentoring scheme for academic registrars would be to:

- Improve wellbeing
- Improve work-life balance
- Increase publication rate and/or increase grants won
- Increase the proportion of registrars who obtain a clinical lectureship post after completion of their PhD
- Increase the number of registrars who ultimately gain an academic consultant post

Some of these parameters can be assessed over a relatively short-term period, whilst others require ongoing assessment over a prolonged time period, for example:

1. To determine the effectiveness of the programme on wellbeing, participants will be asked to fill in a validated questionnaire before the programme begins and at 6-monthly intervals, for example the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale. Their results will be monitored longitudinally, and also compared to a matched control cohort who are not participating in the programme.
2. To determine the effectiveness of the programme on work-life balance, participants will be asked to fill in a validated questionnaire before the programme begins and at 6-monthly intervals, for example the Work Life Balance Culture Scale. Their results will be monitored longitudinally, and also compared to a matched control cohort who are not participating in the programme.
3. To ascertain the impact on publication rates and grant income, this will require follow up over several years. The output from the mentee cohort can be compared to a matched control group.
4. For the organisation, the effectiveness of the mentoring scheme can be determined using human resource measures such as days taken off as sick leave, and staff turnover rates.

Barriers to Mentoring

Whilst there are many benefits of implementing a mentoring scheme, such schemes are sometimes met with resistance, both from individuals and from the organisation. There may be barriers, but most of these can be overcome.

At the organisational level, major barriers encountered are that of time pressures and prioritisation. In the NHS, patient care must always come first, so activities which don't immediately benefit the patient are sometimes deemed as less important. To overcome this, a sensible strategy would be to incorporate dedicated mentoring sessions into an individual's job plan, and to schedule them into a clinician's Supporting Professional Activity (SPA) sessions, so that they occur at a time which isn't set for service provision.

Another organisational barrier is that of a lack of senior individuals willing to act as mentors. To resolve this, there needs to be a two-pronged approach: it is important to educate the senior staff so that they fully understand the benefits of the process, but it is also necessary that 'being a mentor' is recognised as an accredited activity that can be reflected upon for appraisal and revalidation purposes. To cement this, mentoring time could equate to CPD points.

For individuals, common reasons cited for not wanting to engage in a mentoring scheme include a lack of belief that mentoring can be beneficial and a lack of self-confidence/ fear of being judged by a mentor. In the former situation, relevant literature reviews which include quantifiable outcomes can be provided to educate the individual, but often the most successful way of helping someone to understand that mentoring is a positive experience is just to give it a go, so that the individual can experience first-hand the impact that it can have! For individuals with low self-confidence/ fear of judgement, it is imperative that the mentor and mentee are well-matched, and that the mentor has good communication skills. Once a good and trusting rapport has been established, the mentor can help the mentee to explore the issues which underpin a lack of confidence, and the pair can work together to develop strategies to improve it.

Mentoring Training Proposal

Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours

Before any mentoring scheme is implemented, it is important to consider what attributes an individual needs in order to become a successful mentor. This shall be considered in terms of behaviours, knowledge and skills.

According to UK Coaching, **behaviour** is defined as '*The way in which someone acts or conducts their self, especially towards others or in response to a situation or stimulus*'⁸

Research conducted by UK Coaching identified ten behaviours that were regarded as beneficial for coaching. These fell into three domains⁸:

1. Personal:
 - a. Philosophy and values: acting with integrity
 - b. Progressive: striving for self-development and to attain the highest possible standards
 - c. Collaborative: working with others to tap into expert insight
2. People:
 - a. Communication: good communication skills
 - b. Relationships: connecting with individuals in an empathic and respectful manner
 - c. Motivation: inspiring others
3. Practice
 - a. Technical knowledge: the ability to confidently facilitate sessions
 - b. Planning: logically plan sessions
 - c. Doing: act to keep individuals safe, challenged and engaged
 - d. Review: provide feedback

An individual's **knowledge** is their '*understanding of or information about a subject that you get by experience or study, either known by one person or by people generally*'⁹

Dr Maha writes that mentors need to have a good knowledge base as they '*act as an experienced guide on a particular topic. Many professions use an 'apprentice model' of education. This originated in the middle ages and was used by craftsmen to teach a trade to juniors. The knowledge and skills of experienced individuals were passed on to those learning*'¹⁰. In relation to academic medicine, the type of knowledge an individual would need to possess would cover areas such as the milestones of an academic career pathway, the bodies offering grants and which journals to submit papers to.

A simple definition of a **skill** is that it is '*the ability to do an activity or job well*'^{adapted from 11}
Dr Philips-Jones describes nine key skills that a mentor should have:

1. Active listening, which is an example of a communication skill
2. Building trust
3. The ability to encourage others
4. The ability to identify goals and current reality
5. The ability to instruct
6. Be inspirational
7. The ability to provide constrictive feedback

8. The ability to manage risks, preventing mentees from unnecessary mistakes as they take appropriate risks
9. Opening doors

It is important to be aware that a good mentor needs to be competent in all three areas of knowledge, skills and behaviours in order to build a strong, trusting, encouraging and successful relationship with a mentee.

Communication Skills

It is critical that a mentor has good communication skills, whatever domain they choose to work in. Good communication skills, and the subsequent establishment of good rapport, are fundamental in building a relationship. Communication skills are both verbal, or spoken, and non-verbal, which describes body-language. The major components of good communication skills are summarised below:

- **Appropriate body language:** it is important that a mentor's body language conveys that they are interested and engaged with their mentee, for example they may lean slightly forward and would not adopt 'defensive' or 'uninterested' postures such as folding their arms, looking away.
- **Good eye contact:** it is important to maintain good eye contact with a mentee – this involves sustained eye contact with natural breaks, so it isn't too intense or too non-committal.
- **Appropriate behaviours:** the behaviours of a mentor should reinforce their interest in the mentee, they should show that they are engaged in the relationship. For example, it would be inappropriate for the mentor to check their mobile phone/ keep looking at the clock/ go and make a cup of tea during a session.
- **Active listening:** a mentor needs to actively listen for the message an individual is conveying, even when it appears to be hidden in their words.
- **Appropriate use of language.** It is important that the language a mentor uses is suited to the understanding of their mentee, and that they employ appropriate terminologies. When a mentor is talking, their tone and emphasis are also important.
- **Additional communication skills that are important for a mentor include:**
 - Clarifying what a mentee has said, if there is any uncertainty
 - Summarising to ensure mutual understanding
 - Being open minded and non-judgmental
 - Showing empathy

The Responsibilities of a Mentor

The mentoring relationship is a trusted one-on-one interaction, in which the mentor may be more knowledgeable and/ or experienced than the mentee, and in which they may have a nurturing role. As such, there are several responsibilities that a mentor has. Several bodies have reported that the responsibilities of a mentor include:^{13, 14}

- Ensuring they commit to regular meetings with a mentee for a set time period
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Interacting ethically
- Determining the mentee's goals and aims for the relationship
- Providing constructive feedback
- Works within the boundaries of the mentee's capabilities
- States their own limits
- Maintains a professional relationship

It is always important that a mentor is non-judgemental. Being judgemental may stem from bias, which can be conscious or unconscious. Bias is defined as '*prejudice in favour of or against one thing, person or group compared with another, usually in a way that is considered unfair*'¹⁵. A significant proportion of bias occurs at a subconscious level, which makes it more difficult to identify¹⁵. For any individual acting as a mentor, it is recommended that they complete the organisational training modules addressing Bias and Equality and Diversity.

There are certain listening skills which help to foster a non-judgemental interaction, many of which have been described above under communication skills. They will be repeated again now to reinforce their importance. Such skills include being quiet and giving the mentee the time and space to talk freely, summarising, open body language, showing empathy and understanding, using open questions, not getting distracted, don't belittle what the mentee is saying or try to offer simple solutions, remaining calm and patient¹⁶.

If a mentor becomes judgemental, an open, nurturing and supportive relationship can become disapproving, toxic and can harm the mentee. It is vital that a mentor is aware if they start to experience judgemental opinions. These may occur if there is a clash of values between the mentor and mentee, or if the mentor feels that they 'know best' about something¹⁷. There are helpful strategies which a mentor can employ to try and recognise and manage being judgemental¹⁷. One is that of reflective practice: a mentor can examine their own motivations and values so that they recognise the triggers which activate judgementalism in their reactions to particular situations and people¹⁷. Once individuals have greater self-awareness, they have made the first step in exploring their own thoughts and behaviours, and in doing so, they may identify issues which the themselves might need

to tackle, for example by talking to their own mentor. It is also necessary for a mentor to recognise any situations in which they can't be objective or non-judgmental¹⁷ so that they can avoid such situations in the first place.

Because a mentor is in a position of responsibility, they should ensure that they agree to adhere to a code of ethics. Each individual organisation may have their own code, but the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) has issued a global code of ethics for mentors, the principles of which can be summarised as acting with integrity, maintaining confidentiality, all interactions must be appropriate, any conflict of interest must be avoided, the mentor must respect a mentee's right to end the relationship, mentors must maintain the reputation of the profession, mentors must abide by equality and diversity policies, mentors must understand that if they breach their code of conduct they may undergo a complaints procedure, mentors must stay up to date with all statutory requirements, mentors must have appropriate knowledge and skills to perform and they must undergo on-going supervision and CPD¹⁸.

Different Mentoring Models

There are many different models of mentoring described in the literature. The most common approaches comprise¹⁹:

- **One-on-One Mentoring:** this is the most common model of mentoring, and often employs the '**Protégé Model**' whereby a senior mentor will guide and nurture a more junior mentee.
- **Peer Mentoring:** peer mentoring involves individuals with similar 'ranks' and levels of experience mentoring one another. There is sometimes a reciprocal relationship, in which individuals take turns as being 'mentor' and 'mentee', or it can simply refer to a mentor being the same level as the mentee.
- **Group Mentoring:** this involves a single mentor working with a group of mentees. Whilst it may be advantageous in settings where availability of mentors is poor, its major disadvantage is that each mentee will have their own individual ideas, goals and expectations, and this can be hard to manage and develop in a group environment.
- **Reverse Mentoring** involves a junior staff member mentoring someone senior. This can be helpful in certain scenarios, for example when junior staff have greater IT skills than those in senior positions.

It is also important to consider how mentoring is delivered: in person or virtually are the major options.

Reflective Practice and Supervision

The importance of reflective practice in mentoring has been extensively explored by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)²². The CIPD state that:

'Reflective Practice is the foundation of professional development; it makes meaning from experience and transforms insights into practical strategies for personal growth and organisational impact'

The process of reflective practice involves increasing self-awareness, considering one's thoughts and actions, self-analysis and subsequent modulation of perceptions, thoughts and behaviours based on what is discovered. Reflective practice is vital as a mentor because it deepens learning and helps individuals to relate new learning to previous experiences, which aids in its embedding²². Through the process of reflective practice, people are better able to manage their emotions, cope with stress, respond to challenges and create productive relationships²² all of which are important as a mentor.

Supervision is another integral aspect of ensuring that mentors are competent to practice. Supervision can occur by a senior individual, by a peer or in a group environment. Generally, in all professional contexts, supervision is a desirable and necessary process as it helps to ensure that high standards are maintained, and it provides feedback to allow development and evolution. David Clutterbuck, who co-founded the EMCC has described the benefits of supervision for mentors²³. He has highlighted that:

'Supervision helps the mentor determine when and how to use their knowledge to beneficial effect; when to "park" their own knowledge; and how to separate their values, ambitions and career needs from those of their mentees'

Furthermore *'supervision can help the mentor reflect more deeply on the relationship dynamics and how they and the mentee can achieve, for example, greater trust, openness and sense of purpose'*²³

Supervision also has a role to play when the mentor-mentee relationship comes to an end: a supervisor can help the mentor to plan a positive, fulfilling termination²³.

The Contracting Process of a Mentoring Scheme

This report has highlighted what mentoring is, how it benefits an individual and an organisation, what attributes are required in a mentor and how mentoring schemes might be monitored and evaluated.

The final aspect to consider is how to implement such a programme, in particular considering why there must be an effective contracting process, and what characteristics

such a contracting programme should have. This is vital as it ensures safety and protection for the mentor, mentee and the organisation.

The Coaching Focus organisation claims that the contracting session is the most important session of all, as it sets the boundaries of the relationship along with mutual expectations²³. During a contracting process, it is important to establish adapted from 24, 25:

- The **aims and objectives** of the mentoring partnership, for example is the mentee hoping for guidance with regards to career progression or managing work-life balance or something else. At this stage it is also useful to agree how the mentoring process will be monitored to ensure that the mentee is successfully moving towards their goals.
- **Mutual obligations** – these are both practical and relationship-based, for example both parties might want to agree that they will always be on time for sessions, that sessions will occur at defined time intervals or that both individuals will treat each other with respect. The EMCC suggests that the mentor's obligations could include factors such as being open and honest, providing constructive feedback and supporting or challenging a mentee appropriately, whilst the mentee's obligations might encompass taking responsibility for their learning and development, reflecting between sessions and seeing through agreed action plans.
- **Confidentiality:** the mentor-mentee relationship should be a confidential one, however there are certain times when confidentiality can and should be broken, for example if either party is a danger to themselves or to others. At the initial contracting session, the limits of confidentiality should be discussed, and it should be made clear to both parties what protocol will be followed if ever confidentiality is breached.
- **Boundaries:** the boundaries of the relationship should be ascertained at the outset of the relationship, for example will the relationship be purely work-related, or can personal issues be discussed as well.
- **Code of ethics:** the mentee should be provided with the code of ethics that the mentor has agreed to abide to.
- **Complaints procedure and termination of the relationship.** The mentee should be given the appropriate complaints procedure, so they know how to proceed if anything goes wrong. Similarly, they should also be informed how to end the mentoring relationship if they feel that is desirable or necessary.

The importance of having a robust contracting process can be seen by the fact that it is included as a key component of many Coaching and Mentoring bodies codes of practice. For instance, the EMCC has a statement in its code of ethics which reads¹⁸:

'Before starting to work with a client, members will explain and strive to ensure that the client and sponsor know and fully understand the nature and terms and conditions of any coaching, mentoring or supervision contract, including financial, logistical and confidentiality arrangements'

Managing a Mentoring Process

Establishing a mentoring programme requires significant investment of time and thought up-front to ensure that the process is successful. At the outset there must be:

- Support from senior staff.
- Involvement of all stakeholders, including consultants, training programme directors, educational supervisors, clinical supervisors, registrars and the deanery.
- Clearly defined aims and objectives of the programme, and clearly defined methods of evaluating whether these have been met.
- Training considerations – the organisation must determine if/ what qualifications the mentors should have.
- If the qualifications require funding, there must be consideration given to where the finances will come from to permit this, for example from the proposed mentors' annual study budget.
- It is vital to define who will form the pool of mentors and who will be in the pool of potential mentees, and also how they will be matched. The Royal Society of Medicine²⁶ has a scheme whereby all mentors write a short biography which can be accessed by mentees. The mentee chooses who they would like to be their mentor, then it is the mentee's responsibility to make contact with them.
- There should be thought given to practical issues, such as where the meetings will take place.
- It is also pertinent to consider how the scheme will be advertised to relevant parties.

Once a mentoring scheme is set up, it needs to be managed appropriately so that it meets its objectives and continues to grow and evolve. There should be a defined body of named individuals who take the lead in managing the programme. The steps involved in managing the scheme include:

1. Initial organisational contracting with the mentors, so that the mentors know what their responsibilities are in the organisational setting.
2. Matching between mentors and mentees.
3. Contracting between the mentor and mentee.
4. Mentoring process between mentor and mentee. During this time there should be supervision of the mentor, and the mentor must demonstrate that they are engaging in reflective practice.

5. Evaluation of the process, for example through the use of surveys, publication rates, grants won, human resources parameters
6. Utilising feedback from the evaluation process to modify the process as appropriate.

Summary

Coaching and Mentoring are processes which can be established in an organisational setting to confer major benefits at both the individual and business level. For a successful mentoring scheme to be established it is vital that its aims and objectives are determined and that there are methods in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme. Mentors must be appropriately trained and must possess suitable knowledge and skills to fulfil their role. They must act with honesty and integrity and should abide by a defined code of ethics. Mentoring can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing and also on quantifiable parameters such as staff retention and sickness rates.

'Colleagues are a wonderful thing- but mentors, that's where the real work gets done'
Junot Diaz

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