

Mentoring

Business Mentoring and E -Mentoring

Business Mentoring

Business Mentoring involves someone from business, typically a young manager, mentoring a student over an academic year. In most school-based business mentoring programmes the mentors meet their mentees at the school. However in some business mentoring learners are mentored at the workplace either while on extended work experience or as the principle site for regular meetings.

It is acknowledged that some home learning bases/schools will run their own business mentoring programme, but the majority of schools will tend to rely on their local Education Business Link Organisation (EBLO) to provide trained and checked mentors.

The main principles of good practice relating to business mentoring are found in the publication entitled *'The Approved Provider Standard'* which was developed by the National Mentoring Network (now known as the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation). The publication provides a generic minimum quality standard covering all forms of mentoring. In addition the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) has also issued a publication called *'Excellence in Mentoring in Schools'* which is essentially a quality framework and standard.

Information regarding both publications can be obtained from www.mandbf.org.uk.

As part of taking forward any business mentoring scheme, there are a number of key steps that have to be implemented.

Step 1 – Clear rationale for the programme

From the outset the home learning base/school must have a clear rationale for the business mentoring programme that includes a set of objectives and a target group of mentees. Critical decisions will need to taken on:

- recruitment and selection of mentees;
- the location and frequency of meetings;
- the setting of boundaries
- monitoring and supervision

Once these decisions have been made, it will be necessary to undertake a risk assessment. This will enable the home learning base/school to identify the key risks associated with the programme and to spell out the control measures that need to be put in place.

In order to safeguard mentees and promote the success of the programme, the home learning base/school will need to appoint a Mentoring Co-ordinator, an individual that has a defined role and designated responsibilities for the programme. Where a home learning base/school is relying upon an EBLO or other agency to provide mentors, it is essential that there is a form of written agreement that sets out the responsibility of each partner, as well as the terms and conditions of the

programme. Those terms and conditions will need to be inclusive of how the EBLO or other agency intends to safeguard learners.

Another aspect that will need to be considered at the planning stage is matching. *Work-related learning and the law* (DfES, 2006) states that in most schemes there are more women mentors than men (roughly 70:30), but the balance of mentees (in mixed schools) is generally the other way round. The home learning base/school will need to decide in conjunction with the EBLO or other agency organising the programme if male mentors will be matched with female mentees for reasons of safeguarding. Consideration will need to be given to the nature of the relationship between the mentor and mentee, as well as the maturity and competence of the learner. Many scheme managers do not allow a male mentor to be matched with a female mentee for reasons of child protection and this is supported by *Work-Related learning and the Law* (DfES, 2006) which states that in practice this type of match should be avoided.

Step 2 - Parents

As with all work related-learning activities the explicit permission of the parent(s)/carer(s) must be sought for a learner to be involved in a business mentoring programme.

Guidance provided by *Work-Related Learning and the Law* (DfES, 2006) states that, what makes a business-mentoring programme a success is the fact that it is voluntary on both sides. Some schemes will encourage mentors to meet the parent(s)/carer(s) of the mentees, on the grounds that they will want to know who is acting as mentor to their child. An alternative approach is to invite learners, mentors and parent(s)/carer(s) to a social evening at the home learning base/school where they can meet and talk informally.

Step 3 – Learner Preparation

The national quality standards for mentoring state that, the preparation of learners is a requirement. Moreover, it is an important aspect of fulfilling the home learning base/school's duty of care and it also promotes safeguarding.

Any briefing should include a session on boundaries in the mentor-mentee relationship and clear ground rules about contact between the mentor and mentee. A further useful precaution, according to the guidance *Work-Related Learning and the Law* (DfES, 2006) is a personal safety briefing, of the type offered by The Suzy Lamplugh Trust (www.suzylamplugh.org).

The majority of mentoring programmes insist that contact only be carried out through recognised channels. The rule is usually that the home learning base/school and business telephone numbers and emails addresses should be exchanged for contact. Home and personal numbers and addresses **must not** be exchanged.

Step 4 – Insurance

It is recommended that Personal Accident Insurance (PAI) is taken out before a programme begins. The expectation is that mentors are covered by the home learning base/school. Moreover, as adults who meet regularly with learners the

mentees name and CRB reference details should be added to the Single Central Record held by the home learning base/school.

Step 5 – Safeguarding

It is essential that, home learning bases/schools, as well as EBLOs and other organisations managing or supporting business mentoring programmes have in place robust vetting policies and procedures for would-be volunteers. It should be noted that, the younger and/or more vulnerable a learner is, the more thorough and longer the vetting procedures for would-be mentors will have to be. However, as stated by *Work-Related Learning and the Law* (DfES 2006) there is a need to strike a balance, in order to ensure that the selection process is not too onerous and sufficient checks are made as to the suitability of the individual.

Where the home learning base/school is undertaking its own mentoring screening, they must follow the 4 stages below as recommended by *Work- Related Learning and the Law* (DfES 2006).

- **Induction** – mentors attend an initial briefing following an expression of interest. Here they are informed about CRB checks and the vetting procedure.
- **Interviews** – in some schemes which are specifically geared for learners who are vulnerable, the prospective mentor. However, this is not the norm in most business-mentoring programmes.
- **Training** – mentors once approved, attend a training programme. This is likely to vary in length and content depending on the aims and objectives of the business-mentoring programme. The average programme is likely to include:-
 - Background and rules of the programme;
 - The school and student group;
 - The skills of mentoring
- **CRB checks** – The Co-ordinator for the programme should be alert to factors like inappropriate motivation; indications that the individual is likely to be a poor listener or signs of an overbearing manner.

Step 6 – Confidentiality

Mentoring is generally regarded as a confidential process involving a mentor and mentee having regular discussions. In general, both are briefed not to talk about the subject of their relationship to a third party. There are clear exceptions to this rule, particularly where there may be an issue of child protection. This exception must be made explicit during training and in written procedures.

Step 7 – Supervision

An important aspect of any business-mentoring programme is supervision. The Mentoring Co-ordinator must be available at all times to supervise meetings, as well as meet and greet mentors. Usual practice is that, the mentoring takes place during the school day at the home learning base/school.

Where possible, the mentoring session should take place in a large space such as a school library or hall. Increasingly, many home learning bases/schools have interview rooms or pastoral areas which have large 'sight' panels in the doors.

Should the mentoring session take place at the mentor's workplace, a risk assessment may need to be carried out, particularly if the learner is travelling independently to the work place. Learners will also need to be given a health, safety and welfare induction at the work place or before the first meeting.

Step 8 – Support and Supervision

Once the mentoring relationship is established, it is essential that there is ongoing monitoring and support procedures by the Mentoring Co-ordinator. Discussion (either formal or informal) must be had with learners, in order to check that the mentoring is proceeding as planned and there are no boundary issues occurring. Discussion must also be had with mentors, who value contact from the home learning base/school for feedback as to the impact the mentoring is having on the learner.

E-Mentoring

Web-based e-mentoring must have built-in procedures, which are likely to include a random selection of messages being sent to the Co-ordinator to read. In addition, messages must be archived for a period of 8 years, consequently making the provision of the Data Protection Act 1998 relevant, see p.52.

Should a home learning base/school decide to create a web-based e-mentoring programme, the development in terms of moderating the communication between the mentor and learner must be discussed with the Local Authority's broadband provider, i.e. embc (East Midlands Broadband Community) and the Safeguarding Development Officer, with responsibility for E-safety with the respective Safeguarding Unit.