

IMSP060CB: Labour Standards Apprentice and Mentor Policy

Version 1.0 (11/2024)

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1.0	HR	November 2024	Version 1

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of mentorships is to support individual employees as an apprentice and help them to develop their skills and acquire a recognised qualification within the scope and duration of their programme. This policy will set out the roles and responsibilities of the mentor to ensure success whilst they are learning new skills and knowledge to enable the apprentice to be productive and achieve their apprenticeship qualifications.

The following guidelines will provide mentors with the information necessary for them to conduct a positive and meaningful mentoring relationship.

2. SCOPE

This policy and procedure applies to all employees undertaking mentorships for apprentices and employees studying for qualifications under an apprenticeship arrangement within Mears Group Plc and its subsidiaries.

It is not applicable to agency workers or subcontractors or Mears employees undertaking other mentoring relationships such as day to day coaching and mentoring or as part of development identified through a personal development plan and / or succession planning.

Mentors will not be issued with a new contract as a result of the mentorship.

3. DEFINITIONS

General Manager or equivalent – the senior manager for the branch or contract with overall responsibility for the apprentice and mentor.

Line Manager - refers to the direct Line Manager on Workday for the mentor. In some branches some of the responsibilities may be carried out another designated manager, such as the Customer Success Manager.

Mentor – is an individual who has been selected to act as a practical skills trainer and role model for an apprentice or is supporting an employee on an apprenticeship.

Apprentice – an individual following a structure programme combining practical and academic study to attain a recognised qualification.

HR – primarily refers to the Human Resources People Services team who will be responsible for providing advice and guidance to mentors on this policy and the requirements of the apprenticeship.

Learning Provider – a college, higher education establishment or training agency that is responsible for providing educational resource and assessing the apprentice's progress and attainment against the defined standards for the programme.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

Mentors are responsible for:

- Playing an active role in the induction of apprentices
- Forming a positive and nurturing relationship with their apprentice that is outside line management
- Supporting aspects of the personal development of an apprentice from a practical day-to-day perspective, helping them settle into their job whilst learning new skills and knowledge.
- Sharing information about their job, as well as providing guidance, motivation, support, and role modelling.
- Ensuring that the apprentice is progressing in a timely manner through the apprenticeship programme and meeting the objectives set by the training provider and line management at branch.
- Providing guidance, enabling, and empowering the apprentice to develop their own strategies to deal with day-to-day work, once qualified, in line with Mears Red Thread.
- Providing feedback to branch-level management, providers and HR to allow for meaningful discussions in support of the apprentice's progress.

- Dealing with most day-to-day role-related queries and activities involving an apprentice
- Directing the apprentice to relevant manager or Human Resources for further support.
- Actively participate in any personal development agreed by the business in respect of their role and mentorship.
- Attend any meetings or events linked to the apprenticeship programme.

General Managers are responsible for:

- Identifying suitable mentors to meet the requirements of their cost centre, with contingency arrangements in place to cover for periods of a mentor's non-availability.
- Ensuring that the mentors are trained prior to the allocation of an apprentice and fulfil their responsibilities for the duration of the apprenticeship, taking steps to support the mentor to meet their obligations as necessary.
- Ensuring that mentors attend training and updates, as requested by HR, to maintain their eligibility.
- Processing payments on Workday for eligible mentors in accordance with the policy.
- Liaise with HR to ensure compliance with the policy.

Line Managers (or designated managers) are responsible for:

- Checking that all the mandatory training has been completed, including attendance at Toolbox Talks, on a timely basis.
- Workday and systems are kept up to date and utilised correctly.
- All on-boarding steps have been completed by both mentor and apprentice and Workday is regularly updated.

HR are responsible for:

- Overseeing the apprentice mentoring scheme within Mears.
- Ensuring that the mentors complete appropriate training before and during undertaking the mentoring of an apprentice.
- Ensuring that all parties to the apprenticeship programme are supported throughout the process.
- Conducting audit checks on the completion of appropriate apprentice reviews, from both a quantity and quality aspect.

5. POLICY

Mentors provide advice and encouragement on all aspects of the apprenticeship, including the job role, working environment and on-the-job training. They support the apprentice throughout their apprenticeship, providing structured feedback, opportunities to develop their skills provision, share knowledge and experience to facilitate the successful completion of an apprenticeship with Mears.

Mentors identify and plan learning opportunities for the apprentices to learn or practice new behaviours, skills, and knowledge in line with the requirements of the apprenticeship programme, as well as supporting the company's operational requirements. This will involve facilitating discussions and an environment that supports and addresses the company's culture and values, personal performance issues, technical advice and support, constructive feedback on quality of work, time-keeping and behaviour.

In addition, mentors will liaise with the apprentice's line manager, General Manager or equivalent and the tutor/training provider to ensure that any issues, concerns or causes of celebration are identified and addressed.

Taking on a mentorship is an indication of the competence of the mentor and a clear indication of their commitment to the development of both their apprentice and themselves. The mentor will recognise the value of the skills and expertise that they can share and consider this as a means of giving something back to both the company and the communities that it serves.

Mentorships are rewarding by definition but are also regarded as an essential baseline for employees who wish to develop and progress within their trade and the company as a whole. Successfully undertaking a mentorship will be a key factor in accessing opportunities, including projects, management training, secondments and other developmental activities.

In addition, mentors will receive additional support, reward and recognition to enable them to carry out their roles and to encourage them to regularly renew their commitment.

Eligibility for Mentorship

Mentors play an extremely vital role within the Mears Apprenticeship programmes and the decision to take on a mentorship should not be taken lightly. It is essential that the mentor should not be the line manager of the apprentice and the mentor must be selected and appropriately trained in advance of the start date of the apprentice.

Employees wishing to be a mentor must express their interest to their line manager in the first instance. The line manager will then review the requirement for a mentorship.

Potential mentors will then be assessed for suitability. Criteria will include their skills, experience and performance to ensure that they can successfully upskill the apprentice. Their approach to the role, customers and training will also be taken into account to ensure a successful apprentice and mentor relationship.

The mentor will be performing satisfactorily in their role, with sufficient breadth of experience to be able to undertake the mentorship, and willing to continue to develop in their role.

The appointment of a mentor must be mutually agreed between the appointed mentor and the line manager and will be subject to the approval of the relevant General Manager or equivalent.

Mentors must attend the relevant mentor training as identified by HR before being allocated an apprentice and undertake refresher and other training as requested.

Reward and Recognition

During the time in which an apprentice is placed with a mentor, they will be eligible for a bonus if they support an apprentice for a minimum of 3 months, in any rolling 12 months, pro-rated if part-time.

First 3 months of an apprentice's service with Mears, the line manager, or nominated manager in branch, must ensure that mandatory training has been successfully completed by the apprentices as detailed in the below table.

Trade Apprentice	Time Scale	Office –Based apprentice	Time scale
SHE induction (including completing SHE handbook & Statement of Understanding risk assessment documentation)	1st day of employment	SHE office induction (including completing SHE Handbook & Statement of Understanding risk assessment documentation)	1st day of employment
Asbestos awareness E-learning	1st month of employment	Information Security e-learning	1st month of employment
Information Security e-learning	1st month of employment	Display Screen Equipment e-Learning	1st month of employment
Working at Height e-learning	1st month of employment	Mears induction log book	1st month of employment
Alterations to property	1st month of employment		
Mears induction log book	1st month of employment		
1-day SHE awareness course	Before 3rd month of employment		
Completion of the 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd month probation review			

The targets detailed below should be met throughout the full duration of the apprenticeship:

Target	Mentor responsibility
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Ensuring at least 90% college and work attendance is met. Liaising with colleges and assessors throughout the apprenticeship programme	Being aware of attendance. Having contact with the apprentice to check attendance
Engaging with colleges and training providers to ensure apprentices are progressing and to find out what actions need to be completed	Able to inform line manager about what the apprentice is studying at college, able to find suitable activities in line with college topics
Providing statements of competence required as part of the portfolio building	Producing statements to confirm apprentices' competencies, setting objectives and areas for improvement. Ensuring they are on target with college objectives
Ensuring photographs are taken showing apprentices doing the work	Ensuring photographs are taken showing apprentices doing the work
Arranging or working with Human Resources to find appropriate work experience, if the branch cannot provide the full range of work tasks required for the qualification	If the apprentice needs specific work experience, liaise with the line manager and Human Resources to address this
Looking for opportunities for the apprentice to get work experience	Understand what competencies are required to be demonstrated within the apprenticeship and arrange work experience. Raise with line manager where this is an issue.
Involvement in the completion of the apprenticeship	Be aware of apprenticeship standards and requirements for any assessments and end point assessment.

Upon evidence of the above targets being achieved and sign off from Human Resources, the mentor may be eligible for a £250 bonus payment for each 3-month period that they support an apprentice. Separate documentation will be sent each year in line with the company Pay and Bonus Policy. It will be the responsibility of the line manager in agreement with Human Resources to transact this payment on Workday for a payment to be made.

It may be required from time to time for an apprentice to be placed on a short period of work experience or other cover arrangement with another employee or potentially a third-party company, such as a subcontractor. Where this period is two weeks or less, the assigned mentor would remain in place and be expected to maintain their role.

Where the assigned mentor is not in place or unable to fulfil their role during the period that the apprentice is re-allocated then an alternative mentor will be nominated. They will receive a pro-rated payment for their mentorship provided that they accrue a minimum of three months' activity in a rolling 12-month period, on a full or part-time basis.

Employees who are only responsible for providing work experience would not be entitled to the bonus payment, although the branch may choose to recognise their contribution, at their discretion.

Training and Development

It is key that the same level of basic training is delivered to each mentor of apprenticeships to ensure a consistent and a high-quality standard.

Mandatory course to be completed by no later than 1 month of being allocated as a mentor:

- Introduction into mentoring

Mandatory course to be completed within first 3 months of being allocated as a mentor:

- Safeguarding
- Mental Health

Optional additional courses to assist with being a mentor may include:

- Performance management
- Assessor qualification / awareness course
- Mentoring and coaching qualification
- Appraisal training

Additional time-off may be approved by the line manager to facilitate the effective conduct of the mentorship, in addition to agreed company-wide events. The mentor should attend any essential training identified for their substantive role, along with any job-specific or developmental training agreed by the company.

Alternative Mentors

The company recognises that there will be occasions where the mentor will be unable to fulfil their obligations to their apprentice. This may be due to absence, personal commitments or it may be agreed by their line manager in response to business needs or to cover specific skills that are not available on the contract. Wherever possible, the re-allocation of an apprentice will take place on a planned basis to ensure a handover. If this is not possible then arrangements will be put in place as soon as possible and within one week.

In these cases, arrangements will be put in place to ensure that an alternative mentor is available to enable the apprenticeship to continue without interruption. In the event that an apprentice is temporarily allocated to an alternative mentor the expectation is that they will return to their substantive mentor at the earliest opportunity, subject to the agreement of the relevant line manager.

6. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Mears Group is committed to complying with the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that the way the Group treats employees does not discriminate against individuals or groups on the grounds of any protected characteristics.

Mears Group PLC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that its staff comply with the Equality Act 2010 so that no individual is subjected to unlawful discrimination because of a protected characteristic.

Disabilities

Consideration will be given to whether performance issues may be related to a disability as defined within the Equality Act 2010. Where this is the case, an assessment of any reasonable adjustments that could be made to the employees working arrangements, including changing duties or providing additional equipment or training, will be undertaken. Management may also consider making adjustments to this procedure in appropriate cases where it is justified to do so.

If an employee has a disability, they should discuss this with their Line Manager in the first instance, who will take appropriate advice, guidance, and support from the HR Advisory team, to understand how this may be best be supported.

7. MONITORING

The Group Head of People Services supported by the HR Advisory team will monitor and analyse data on a quarterly basis. They will use the data to monitor the implementation and consistent application of the policy. The data will be used to inform and improve policies, as well as provide recommendations for improving working practices.

From time to time, it may be appropriate to arrange debriefs with managers to review the way that a probationary matter was handled and to consider further training and development needs. The Legal and Employee Relations Manager will share matters of best practice and will monitor consistency in managerial decision making across the Group and may recommend additional training and development for managers as required.

8. OTHER RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- Recruitment Policy
- Management of Attendance Policy
- Employing Close Relatives and Friends Policy
- Fairness and Inclusion Policy
- Improving Work Performance Policy
- Performance Management Policy
- Information Security and Data Protection Manual
- Safeguarding Policy
- Pay and Bonus Policy

This policy has been written with regard to the following legislation:

- Children and Young Person Act 2008
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

9. APPENDICES

There are no appendices in this policy.