

## Key Points: Mentoring for Mentors

### Mentoring for mentors

Being a mentor is one of the most rewarding roles you can play at work. You can support someone else in their development and will undoubtedly get new insights and learn yourself.

The European Mentoring and Coaching Council define mentoring as: “A learning relationship, involving the sharing of skills, knowledge, and expertise between a mentor and mentee through developmental conversations, experience sharing, and role modelling. The relationship may cover a wide variety of contexts and is an inclusive two-way partnership for mutual learning that values differences.”

Mentoring is different from coaching in that it also allows for the mentor to share their own views and experiences. It uses many of the same skills as coaching however, such as active listening and asking open questions. Your role as a mentor is to help your mentee make sense of their own questions and offer them help through your own perspectives – not tell them exactly what to do.

Setting up the mentoring relationship is really important. In your first meeting take time to get to know each other. You might like to talk about what is important to you in the workplace or you might want to share stories of your proudest moments at work. Building a solid foundation of trust in the early part of your mentoring relationship will enhance the value of your interactions.

Here are some things to think about when establishing your mentoring relationship:

1. **Set Mutual Expectations and Goals:** Begin by establishing clear expectations and goals with your mentee. This helps in aligning your mentoring efforts with their aspirations and ensures a focused approach.
2. **Listen Actively:** Pay close attention to what your mentee is saying. Active listening helps you understand their needs and challenges, allowing you to provide more relevant guidance. Sometimes your mentee just needs space to talk and explore their own thinking.

3. **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Encourage your mentee to think deeply and explore their ideas by asking open-ended questions. This approach fosters critical thinking and self-discovery.
4. **Share Your Knowledge and Experience:** Be open in sharing your experiences and insights. This can provide valuable learning opportunities for your mentee and help them navigate their own career path.
5. **Be Patient and Supportive:** Allow your mentee the space to explore and make mistakes. Patience and support are crucial in building their confidence and encouraging growth.
6. **Confidentiality and Ethics:** It is worth having a short conversation about if you want your relationship to be confidential or not and on what conditions you might share info with other people.

**Safeguarding:** If you are mentoring young people, you need to ensure you are aligned with any safeguarding policies of the organisation with which you are working. If you are working with adults, it is always worth thinking through how you might signpost someone who may disclose they are struggling with mental health issues. It is not your role as mentor to address these, but you can highlight where your mentee can get help – you might also want to discuss if they would like you to arrange support from their line manager (if they agree to this).