

## **Mentoring: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What is mentoring?**

*Mentoring is the process by which an experienced, highly regarded, empathic person (the mentor) guides another individual (the mentee) in the development and re-examination of their own ideas, learning, and personal and professional development.*

A full set of definitions of mentoring, coaching and related development processes is available at [www.rcpch.ac.uk/mentoring-support](http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/mentoring-support)

Mentoring relates primarily to the identification and nurturing of potential for the whole person. It can be a long or short term relationship. Crucially, the agenda for a mentoring relationship is always set by the mentee. The mentor helps the mentee to develop insight and understanding through becoming more aware of their own experiences.

### **2. Why is mentoring important?**

Mentoring has been identified as a key process in personal and professional development. Mentoring helps doctors feel valued, leads to increased job satisfaction, enhanced problem solving skills and other transferable skills. These benefits are particularly important for those who are undergoing periods of transition e.g. as a new consultant.

### **3. What is the difference between educational supervision and mentoring?**

The educational supervisor role carries with it a responsibility to ensure adequate performance and progression through training, including enhancing learning through assessment. In contrast, the role of a mentor is to enhance personal and professional development according to the agenda of the mentee themselves. There may therefore be a conflict of interest between the mentor's role in supporting the needs of the mentee as defined by the mentee themselves and the role of the supervisor in ensuring adequate achievement and performance. It is for this reason that the two roles are different, although possession of mentoring skills by an educational supervisor will enhance their ability to support personal and professional development of trainees.

### **4. What is the difference between coaching and mentoring?**

Many definitions of coaching exist, which overlap to a greater or lesser degree with mentoring. Whereas in mentoring there is an implication that the mentors will be “older and wiser” than the mentee, this is not the case with a coach, who may have no direct experience or knowledge of the coachee’s area of work.

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## **5. What is peer mentoring?**

Peer mentoring is the provision of mentoring by those of a similar stage e.g. trainee to trainee, consultant to consultant. This is different from ‘peer support’ or ‘buddying’ in that peer mentors will be trained in mentoring skills and the relationship is likely to be more formal.

## **6. I have been involved in running a mentoring scheme: how can I get our work recognised by the RCPCH and also share best practice with others?**

In order to provide paediatricians with examples of local and national mentoring schemes and training programmes that meet the RCPCH standards for mentoring, RCPCH offers an optional endorsement process for scheme providers. We would be delighted to hear from all scheme organisers interested in seeking RCPCH endorsement – please contact us via [mentoring@rcpch.ac.uk](mailto:mentoring@rcpch.ac.uk) or see our endorsement guidance at [www.rcpch.ac.uk/mentoring-support](http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/mentoring-support)

## **7. Can I get involved in the RCPCH mentoring programme?**

Yes. If you are already active in your own organisation in promoting mentoring and supporting paediatric mentors and mentees, or if you would like to develop and grow mentoring capacity among paediatricians in your organisation, we would be delighted to hear from you and welcome you to our Mentoring Champions network.

Please see our Champions page at [www.rcpch.ac.uk/mentoring-champions](http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/mentoring-champions)

If you’re not yet at this stage but would like to be kept informed of our work, you can join the Mentoring Programme e-network – just email your name, grade and location and what you’re interest in mentoring is to [mentoring@rcpch.ac.uk](mailto:mentoring@rcpch.ac.uk) and we’ll keep you updated with developments by email.

## **8. How can I access training in mentoring skills?**

There are many mentoring skills courses available. RCPCH runs Mentoring Skills courses across the UK – see our Courses and Events section at [www.rcpch.ac.uk/courses](http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/courses) to check availability. Also see what is available locally via e.g. your Trust training department, your deanery or your regional leadership academy.

## **9. How can I find out about schemes in my area?**

RCPCH lists endorsed schemes on its website at [www.rcpch.ac.uk/mentoring-support](http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/mentoring-support) but you can also check what is happening locally via e.g. your deanery or leadership academy.

## **10. How can I set up a mentoring scheme in my area?**

The RCPCH Mentoring co-leads and our local Mentoring Champions network can support you with resources and advice to help you set up a scheme locally. Join the Mentoring Champions network at [www.rcpch.ac.uk/mentoring-champions](http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/mentoring-champions) to access good practice and advice from our leads and local champions, as well as bespoke training days.

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