

Mentoring and Coaching

Many people find it helpful to have a mentor or a coach, but it is not always clear how to access one or what is likely to be provided. The terms may be used in an overlapping way to indicate an arrangement of support and encouragement for personal development, usually with a professional focus but with an awareness of 'work/home (work is part of life!) balance'. These activities, while usually comprising one-to-one personal and confidential discussions, are not therapy or treatment, but similarly depend for success on the participant's willingness to engage.

Mentoring

Mentoring is encouraged by the Royal College of Psychiatrists at any stage of a psychiatrist's career, especially for new consultants, as it can be very helpful at times of transition to a new role. Informal mentoring is frequent, but the value of more formal access to mentoring is now recognised.

Mentor and mentee

The mentor is usually more experienced and qualified than the 'mentee'. They are often a senior person in the organisation. The mentor can pass on knowledge and experience, provide or recommend opportunities which the mentee may not have considered, so that they may develop skills and competencies to progress in their career, and provide contacts that the mentee would not normally access.

Mentors should ideally have training and the opportunity for ongoing support and peer supervision, but should be independent of the mentee's managerial structures. Generally, it is a voluntary role, but professional time should be allowed for it.

Meetings are usually one-to-one and can be held regularly at set times, particularly in the beginning, but later may be taken place according to need. The agenda is set by the mentee and the mentor provides support, guidance and sometimes challenge to help forward professional development.

The mentoring relationship lasts for varying lengths of time, but for newly appointed consultants it is typically up to 2 years, with meetings at least monthly. The meetings follow an agreed structure, which may include an agenda and brief notes, with possible interim contact if needed.

The mentoring relationship moves from an 'initial phase' to the 'working phase' and on to the 'dissolving phase'. Mentor and mentee may eventually establish a more equal lasting friendship.

Access to mentoring

A personal approach to a recommended mentor or known senior colleague often works well.

Most mental health trusts have in-house mentoring schemes for consultants, or know how to access mentors. Contact your clinical or medical director.

If you are a trainee or involved in training, contact your Deanery to find out about their mentoring schemes.

Some College Divisions are developing mentoring schemes, with lists of volunteer mentors. This may be of particular usefulness if you cannot find a mentor within your own organisation or would prefer not to. Those in the subspecialties are advised to approach the faculty Honorary Secretary.

The Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management runs a mentoring scheme (www.fmlm.ac.uk/professional-development/coaching-and-mentoring/mentoring-scheme).

Becoming a mentor

The College is currently providing free mentor training to individuals who would like to take part in its mentor scheme and become a mentor in their Division. Please contact us for more information.

Coaching

Coaching is typically provided on a **professional** and paid-for basis with a written, signed contract specifying how the coaching relationship will operate and providing boundaries.

Coaching is usually for a **contracted** number of sessions over a period of time and can often take the form of **telephone** discussions. Coaches should have a relevant qualification in coaching. They may or may not have special knowledge of the professional area of the client.

The aim of coaching is to support people through change, promote a balanced life, accelerate personal development and enable people to realise their potential. The agenda is focused on achieving specific, immediate goals.

Coaching is **confidential** and uses a range of skills, including listening, questioning, relating learning to the client's experience and challenging to promote personal development, balance and effectiveness. As well as improving quality of life this can increase productivity and job satisfaction.

The client is encouraged to **expand** their awareness and **understanding** of situations they face, explore options and shift their behaviour in ways that produce **positive results**. They identify areas of their life they want to work on, increase their awareness of relevant factors, work to develop options and make and carry through plans for action.

Access to coaching

Coaches can be found through a number of different sources.

Ask others about their own experiences and look at the websites to see what might suit your individual needs.

If you are a trainee or involved in training, contact your **Deanery** to find out about their coaching services.

The **Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management** have a coaching network for doctors (<https://www.fmlm.ac.uk/professional-development/coaching-and-mentoring/what-is-the-coaching-network>).

European Mentoring and Coaching Council (www.emccouncil.org).

Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (apecs.org).

International Coach Federation (www.coachfederation.org).