



THE PUBLIC SECTOR

**Coaching &
Mentoring Pool**

Led by West Midlands Employers

An essential guide

for line managers and sponsors

Creating the time and conditions for people to think,
grow and perform at their best.



SUPPORTING COACHING AND MENTORING



Why organisations invest in coaching and mentoring

Public service roles are demanding. Sometimes what people need most is not another training course, but protected time to think.

Coaching and mentoring provide structured, confidential time for individuals to reflect on their work, explore challenges, and develop greater clarity, confidence and perspective.

When supported well, they can strengthen leadership, improve decision making, and deliver lasting benefits for both the individual and the organisation.

Across the **Public Sector Coaching and Mentoring Pool**, subscribing organisations have observed positive workplace impact after an individual has worked with a coach or mentor. Noticeable improvements in confidence and resilience, leadership effectiveness, communication, decision making and the ability to handle difficult situations.

MORE THAN 550 people accessed coaching or mentoring in one year

1,850 hours of coaching were delivered

96% of participants reported improved confidence, performance and leadership capability

What are coaching and mentoring

Coaching and mentoring help people step back from day-to-day pressures, gain perspective and think more clearly about their work and development so they can be at their best.

Coaching supports individuals to explore challenges, test their thinking and identify their own solutions.

Mentoring draws on another person's experience to provide insight, encouragement and practical guidance.

“This gave me the space I needed to reflect on how I deal with change - and to feel more confident about managing it.”

County Council Performance Manager

When might coaching or mentoring help

Coaching and mentoring can be valuable at different points in someone's working life.

- stepping into a new role
- developing as a leader
- navigating change or uncertainty
- building confidence
- facing a complex challenge
- exploring career development
- returning to work after a period of absence

Mentoring can be particularly valuable where someone would benefit from sector insight, specialist expertise or learning from another person's experience.

When coaching or mentoring may not be appropriate

Coaching and mentoring may not be suitable when:

- an individual is experiencing significant mental health concerns or sustained stress
- they are unwilling to engage
- the purpose is to address formal capability or disciplinary issues

In these situations, other forms of support may be more appropriate.

Your role as a sponsor

Your support plays an important role in helping coaching and mentoring create meaningful and lasting impact.

The sponsor is often an individual's line manager, but this does not have to be the case, it could be a project manager, an HR representative or whoever will be supporting the individual whilst they are receiving coaching/mentoring.

Your role is not to direct the relationship or expect the coach or mentor to 'fix' the individual.

Instead, your role is to:

- provide organisational context
- help clarify development priorities
- make time for sessions
- encourage reflection and application of learning
- remove barriers where possible

How sponsor involvement works

Early in the coaching or mentoring relationship, you, the individual and the coach or mentor can come together to clarify the intended outcomes, discuss the wider work environment and agree how you can best support the individual's development.

It's a simple but beneficial conversation that helps everyone start with a shared understanding of what success looks like.

These conversations can be particularly valuable where wider organisational or systemic factors may be influencing the individual's experience, priorities or ability to apply their learning in practice.

The level and form of your involvement will depend on the focus of the coaching or mentoring and the support needed.



Your involvement is likely to add significant value when...

- the coaching or mentoring supports leadership development, a new role or organisational change
- you and the individual have identified a specific development need or stretch opportunity
- the individual is leading important work or preparing for greater responsibility
- you will play an active role in helping the individual apply their learning in practice
- shared understanding is needed around priorities, expectations, behaviour or organisational context

Example 1:

A newly promoted manager is using coaching to build confidence in delegation and managing difficult conversations. By taking part in the initial conversation, you can help clarify what successful progress would look like and create opportunities for them to practice new skills in their role.

Example 2:

A colleague is receiving coaching/mentoring while managing a project you are overseeing. Your input helps the coach or mentor understand the wider context and enables you to support the individual in applying insights between sessions.

The extent of your involvement may vary, but the purpose of coaching and mentoring remains to support development that benefits both the individual and the organisation.

Your involvement may be more light-touch when...

- the coaching or mentoring is largely self-directed
- the individual is focusing on personal effectiveness, confidence or career reflection
- the organisational context is straightforward and your input is limited
- you or the individual are leaving the organisation and your role in supporting their development is reducing
- you are not the most appropriate person to provide context or ongoing support

In these circumstances, the coach or mentor will work with the individual to agree the best approach that provides clarity about the purpose of the coaching or mentoring and how it can support positive outcomes for both the individual and the organisation.

Often even a brief discussion can strengthen the impact of the coaching or mentoring.

Example 1:

A colleague is using mentoring to explore future career options. While the detailed discussions remain confidential, a short conversation can help you agree how the mentoring will support their development and how learning can be applied in their current role.

Example 2:

An employee who is leaving the organisation may use coaching to think through their next steps and manage the transition positively. Your involvement may be lighter, but the coaching can still help them remain focused, resilient and effective during the transition.

Time commitment and cost

Where appropriate, you as the sponsor, will usually be invited to join a short conversation at the beginning of the coaching or mentoring relationship, and again towards the end to review progress, reflect on learning and discuss how development can continue beyond the sessions.

Most coaching and mentoring relationships involve:

- 4 - 6 sessions
- each lasting 1 - 2 hours
- spread over several months

Participants will usually need protected time during working hours to attend.

If your organisation subscribes to the [Public Sector Coaching and Mentoring Pool](#), there is no direct cost to access coaching and mentoring. The only potential cost is any travel expenses incurred by the individual where there is benefit in travelling to meet their coach or mentor in person.

Organisations that are not members can contact WME to discuss joining the Pool or accessing coaching and mentoring through an associate arrangement.

Confidentiality

Coaching and mentoring work best when individuals feel able to reflect openly and honestly in a supportive and confidential environment.

During the initial discussion, the coach or mentor will help everyone agree how progress and outcomes will be reviewed with you, without sharing the detailed content of coaching or mentoring conversations.

What to expect from the first conversation


These early conversations are often called three-way contracting conversations and usually take around 30 minutes.

The coach or mentor will facilitate the discussion and help everyone:

- clarify goals and intended outcomes;
- understand any relevant workplace context;
- discuss how success will be supported;
- and agree how progress will be reviewed.

Before the initial discussion, consider:

- What strengths do you already see in the individual?
- What opportunities or challenges may be helpful for them to explore?
- What positive changes or outcomes would you hope to see?
- What organisational or work context would be helpful to share?
- How can you support progress?
- What barriers can you help remove?



“I have been able to take a more positive view on some of the challenges being faced by our team. This has enabled me to be more beneficial to the team as a whole and offer more constructive solutions to problems.”



Ready to recommend coaching or mentoring?

Sometimes the most valuable thing you can offer is protected time to think.

To find a coach or mentor, visit the [matching hub](#) or see the [Coaching and Mentoring Handbook](#).

For further support

E: info@wmemployers.org.uk **T:** 0121 281 3558 **W:** www.wmemployers.org.uk

