

# **MENTORING SCHEME HANDBOOK**



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# 1.0 Prostate Cancer UK's role

## 1.1 Why do we have a mentoring scheme?

We recognise that to grow and develop within the prostate cancer research community, researchers need a way to seek and gain support from their peers. In setting up our mentoring scheme we'll act as facilitators, matching mentors and mentees, providing guidance and support where appropriate.



Mentoring means you have an independent person, separate from your work and your institute, who you can have a confidential conversation with and who's experiences you can draw on.

**Dr Adam Sharp, Mentor**

## 1.2 What is our definition of mentoring?

Mentoring is a development partnership based on peer support – those who have achieved independence share their knowledge with those earlier in their career.

- Prostate Cancer UK will match mentors with mentees and monitor the initial progress of the mentoring relationship.
- Mentors offer career development/ progression support.
- Mentees have clear development objectives and seek support achieving them.

This is not a scheme to socialise, or to coach through life experiences, but an opportunity to give and receive constructive career-focused support.

## 1.3 How do we make a match?

We ask potential mentors and mentees to fill out an [online form](#) with basic details including areas of expertise (for mentors) and areas for development (for mentees). Based on this information we will make matches. We will approach mentors and mentees individually with the potential match. Once both parties agree, we will share contact details.

## 1.4 How will we monitor the partnerships?

We'll send both members of the partnership an initial short survey after four weeks, to check that everything is up and running smoothly. After a further three months, we'll send you both a follow-up survey to get feedback on the experience. The purpose of the surveys is to ensure the partnership is working and that both parties are finding it useful. If either party has a concern, we will support where we can. After the second survey, you can agree to continue the partnership together, or stop if it has come to a natural conclusion.



# 2.0 Mentors

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## 2.1 What is a mentor?

As a mentor, you're an experienced researcher with valuable insight into the academic world and want to help less experienced researchers with career-related problems, questions, or goals. As someone who has recently gained independence, you will have recent experience of the issues your mentee may be facing.

## 2.2 How to be a good mentor



Be clear about your experience from the first meeting.



Be honest with your mentee about whether you can help with their goals and objectives.



Be confident to lead or steer the conversation to ensure the goals set by the mentee remain the focus of your meetings.



Be available for regular meetings. How regular your meetings are will depend on what your mentee's goals are – we suggest once a month in the first instance, but recognise every mentoring relationship will be different.



Be open to the benefits of mentoring for both you and your mentee.

## 2.3 Active listening

As a mentor it's really useful to practise active listening when meeting with your mentee. It's likely your mentee will already have a solution in mind for their problem but may need your support and expertise to help them commit to their decision.

We can't provide training on active listening, but listed below are some resources on how to be an effective active listener:

- [CharityComms: The art of great conversation: active listening and how it can empower others](#)
- [Mindtools guide to active listening](#)
- [British Heart Foundations 10 tips for active listening](#)

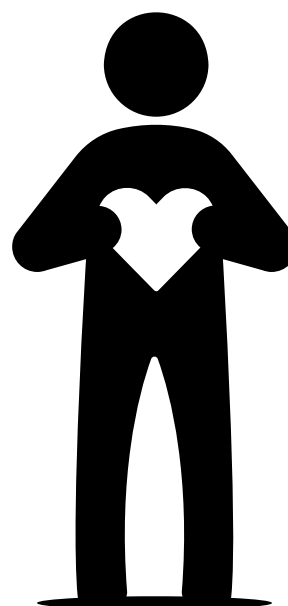
## 2.4 Safeguarding

We recognise that mentoring relationships can often include more personal discussions. However, if you become seriously concerned about the welfare of your mentoring partner, your first port of call should be the safeguarding lead at your institution. Where possible, you should get the consent of your mentoring partner before you do this.



My mentor went above and beyond, sharing her experiences and giving me practical advice to help me move forward with my own career.

**Dr Demi Pritchard, Mentee**



## 3.0 Mentees

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### 3.1 What is a mentee?

As a mentee, you're a researcher in the early stages of your career path who has not crossed the threshold of independence (e.g. final year PhD or Post Doctoral Research Associate). From this scheme you could seek support and advice from a more experienced researcher.

### 3.2 How to be a good mentee

- Be clear with your career progression and personal development goals.
- Be able to identify areas of support and what you hope to achieve from being mentored.
- Be receptive to advice on career progression.
- Be punctual and available to meet regularly with your mentor, based on the schedule you decide upon.
- Be committed to the process.



I met my mentee every 6-8 weeks. At the end of each session, I would give her something to work on ahead of our next meeting. This gave us a natural starter for each meeting, and our conversation developed from there.

**Dr Emma Scott, Mentor**

### 3.3 How to set an objective

A mentoring objective should focus on your personal development and how you can build on the skills needed to advance your career. Your mentor may have experienced similar challenges and will try to guide you to put actions in place to further your progress.

Avoid objectives that are too specific (e.g. I want to learn a specific technique) or too vague (e.g. I want to be a better researcher).

There are several approaches you can use to help you – it's important to pick one that's the best fit for you.

You might consider using the **SMART** method. SMART objectives are:

**SPECIFIC,  
MEASURABLE,  
ACHIEVABLE,  
REALISTIC AND  
TIMED.**

Or you might find the **GROW** approach more suitable. This is where you:

outline a **GOAL**,  
consider the **REALITY**  
discuss **OPTIONS** and  
use your **WILL** to determine the best  
next steps.



I had a clear goal for mentoring, and so I discussed this with my mentor ahead of the meeting and we settled on some questions I could think about in advance. This meant when we met, we were able to jump straight in, and made our limited time more useful.

**Dr Rebecca Garnham, Mentee**

## 3.0 Mentees

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### 3.4 SMART example

Your objective may be to become more confident when talking about your work at an upcoming meeting. With your mentor, or ahead of your first meeting, you could try to define this as a **SMART** objective.

#### **SPECIFIC**

I want to be more confident when speaking about my work to other researchers who don't specialise in the same area as me.

#### **MEASURABLE**

I will be prepared and confident when I deliver my talk.

#### **ACHIEVABLES**

I've made a start by practising with colleagues in my own team so I'm confident I can get there with a bit of help.

#### **REALISTIC**

I have already been invited to speak at an event for other researchers. I know all the details of the work and have time to prepare.

#### **TIMED**

There is a meeting coming up in three months where I can present my work.

### 3.5 GROW example

Or you may prefer to use the **GROW** method to explore an objective focused on your academic writing.

#### **GOAL**

**Identify a goal you'd like to achieve.**

*e.g. In this session I'd like to explore techniques for improving my written work.*

#### **REALITY**

**What are you currently doing to achieve this goal**

*e.g. I'm writing at the end of the day when all my experiments/lab commitments have been met.*

#### **OPTIONS**

**What are all the different ways in which you could approach this issue?**

*e.g. Could you block time in your calendar to write early in the day? Could you take a break from research to write in the middle of the day?*

#### **WILL**

**Discuss your options with your mentor – do they have any extra advice? Is there an option you can trial? What commitment, on a scale of 1 to 10, do you have to take the agreed action forward?**

*e.g. You will try to manage your own calendar before asking for more support and are able to prioritise this with a level 10 commitment before the next session.*



# 4.0 How to structure your first meeting

## 4.1 Introductions

Give brief career histories, what you enjoy working on and why. Keep this brief and succinct.

## 4.2 Discuss the objective

Talk about the objective, how your time together can be used to help achieve the objective and agree a timeframe. Discuss how the objective fits into long-term career goals and how you can work towards these together. If you like, you could set milestones and organise your meetings around those milestones.

## 4.3 Establish learning goals

Identify what the mentee hopes to gain from the relationship and what support to expect from the mentor.

## 4.4 Establish some ground rules

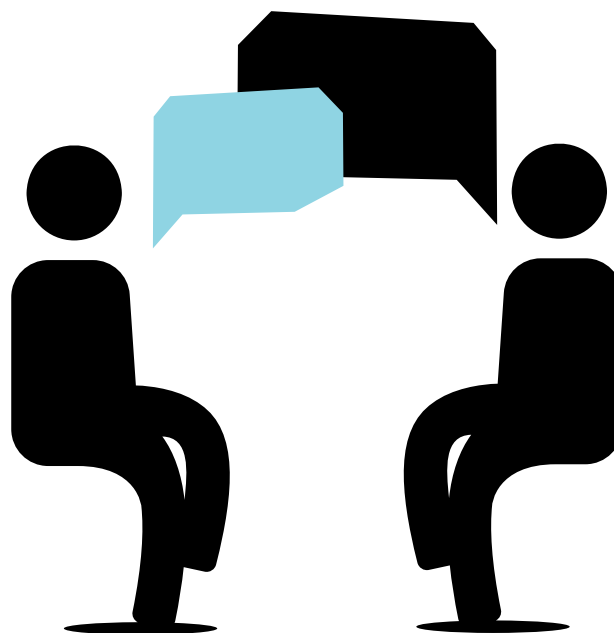
Discuss how often you will meet, for how long and in what format. We suggest meeting monthly, for up to an hour, but this will depend on the objective and goals you have established. Will you meet virtually, or over the phone?

## 4.5 Confidentiality

For the partnership to be most effective you may need to discuss private or controversial work issues. Agree in your first meeting to keep everything you discuss confidential, unless there is a safeguarding concern (see section 2.4).

## 4.6 Agreeing an end date

To help manage expectations, you should agree an end date at the beginning of your mentoring relationship to give structure, purpose, and a timeframe to the relationship.



Our first meeting was informal and relaxed. My mentor discussed his career, interests and work, and I discussed my PhD, and from this we identified ways we could work together to help me achieve my goals.

**Dr Emma Lishman-Walker, Mentee**

# 5.0 Top tips to keep the mentor-mentee relationship going

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Now that you have been matched, and the first meeting has taken place, we have created some top tips on how to maintain a fruitful mentor-mentee relationship.



**1**

Be respectful of each other's time – attend meetings on time.



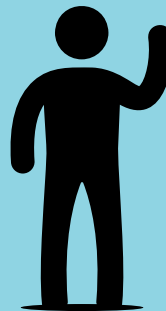
**2**

Be attentive in scheduled meetings and prepare



**3**

Be honest with what you'd like to achieve in this process.



**4**

Be reflective on what you have achieved with this relationship.



**5**

Be clear about your objectives.



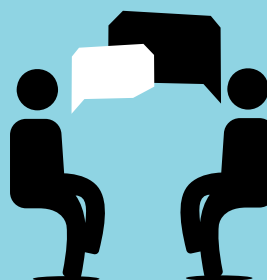
**6**

Be flexible to each other's commitments.



**7**

Be open to feedback.



**8**

Be able to provide equal contribution.



# 6.0 Ending your mentorship

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The ending of your mentorship is an important step towards putting what you've learnt during this process into action at work.

## 6.1 Three-month review

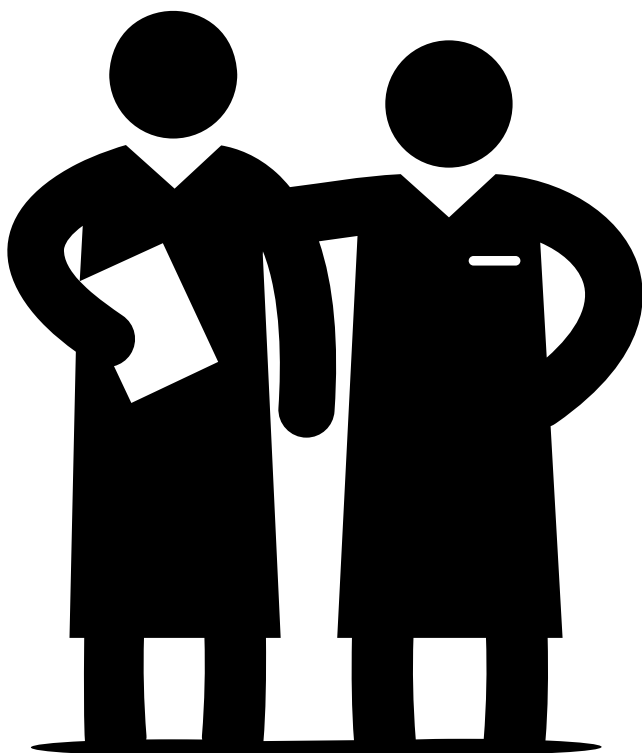
After three months, we will send you both a survey to review the impact of the partnership. At this point, you can agree to continue the partnership or to stop the partnership if the relationship has come to a natural conclusion.

## 6.2 The final meeting

If you decide to end the mentorship, here are some ideas to help tailor your final meeting:

Reflect on the goals/objectives set during the first meeting and how these goals have been met.

Discuss future objectives with the mentee and make suggestions for further support where necessary.



My mentee had a specific goal which she has achieved. She may wish to look for another mentor to help with the next step. It's important to know it's OK to end a mentorship relationship that's achieved its aims.

**Dr Eileen Parkes, Mentor**

## 6.3 After the final meeting

Now that you have come to the end of the mentorship, we would like to find out if the scheme has been useful. Your insight is vital so that we can continue to learn how to support the research community and ensure the mentoring scheme is beneficial.

Please keep an eye on your inbox for our survey email. We really appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts and will put any comments to good use.

## 6.4 What's next?

Your mentoring experience doesn't have to end after your first partnership. If you'd like to take part in the next round of mentoring relationships as either a mentor or mentee, please let us know:

**[research@prostatecanceruk.org](mailto:research@prostatecanceruk.org)**

## 6.5 Any problems, let us know

If you have any concerns and need to get in touch with us, then please email us:

**[research@prostatecanceruk.org](mailto:research@prostatecanceruk.org)**