



# **UMPIRE MENTORING GUIDE**

**Used as part of the East Region Umpire Mentoring Programme**

England Netball wishes to acknowledge with thanks the work undertaken by Yvonne Adshead for her assistance in the writing this resource.

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England Netball  
Netball House, 9 Paynes Park, Hitchin  
Hertfordshire SG5 1EH

Tel: 01462 442344  
Fax: 01462 442343  
Email: [info@englandnetball.co.uk](mailto:info@englandnetball.co.uk)  
Website: [www.englandnetball.co.uk](http://www.englandnetball.co.uk)

# A GUIDE TO THE MENTORING OF NETBALL UMPIRES

## WHAT IS MENTORING?

“A mentor is a more experienced individual willing to share their knowledge with someone less experienced in a relationship of mutual trust. A mixture of parent and peer, the mentor’s primary function is to be a transitional figure in an individual’s development. Mentoring includes coaching, facilitating, counselling and networking.”

(Clutterbuck, 1991)

The mentoring process should not be regarded as a one-way process. It involves more than the ‘expert’ practitioner simply guiding the ‘inexperienced’ novice. It is based on a two-way developmental relationship, built on confidentiality, trust and respect, within which both parties have equality and can share and discuss experiences and issues, unique to them, in an open and supportive environment.

### Two-dimensional Model of Mentoring Relationships

Novice withdraws from the mentoring relationship with no growth possible	<b>HIGH</b>  <b>C</b> Novice grows through development of new knowledge and images <b>H</b> <b>A</b> <b>L</b> <b>L</b>
<b>LOW</b> <b>SUPPORT</b>	<b>HIGH</b> <b>SUPPORT</b>  <b>E</b> Novice becomes confirmed in pre-existing images <b>N</b> <b>G</b> <b>E</b>
Novice is not encouraged to consider or reflect on knowledge and images	<b>LOW</b>

(Elliott and Calderhead 1994)

Mentoring can be used for:-

- Induction
- Progression or
- Challenge

It can be used to support new umpires, to help umpires to progress from one level to the next, to progress within the same level or to challenge the performance of an umpire.

## **SELECTING AND TRAINING MENTORS**

It is essential that mentors are equipped with an appropriate profile of skills, qualities and experiences. Not every umpire, tutor or tester is capable of mentoring-suitability, not availability, is what should determine who mentors.

Various research reports, published in the last few years, have identified criteria for the selection of mentors. Through constant definition of the role, a detailed picture has emerged of desirable attributes. A mentor's personal characteristics and their interpersonal skills and qualities are obviously important, as is their professional commitment.

Mentors should:

- **Relate sensitively to learners** and work through agreed processes to build trust and confidence.
- **Model expertise** in practice or through conversations.
- **Provide information and feedback** that enables learning from mistakes and success.
- **Actively listen, question and communicate effectively.**
- **Relate guidance to evidence** from their observations.
- **Provide access to a range of opportunities** to address the different goals of the learner
- **Build a learners control over their own learning**
- **Be open-minded** with the view that their approach to umpiring is not the only one, nor indeed the 'best';
- **Observe analyse and reflect** upon their practice and that of the learner and be explicit in identifying the needs.
- **Be committed** to their role as mentor;
- **Relate practice to assessment** by ensuring they are up-to-date and aware of relevant umpiring assessments and competences and be able to relate these to the needs of the learner.

Part of the success of any mentor's work depends on having received appropriate training, development and support. The use of focused observation, reviewing and evaluating performance, giving feedback and formulating appropriate targets for development all require considerable skill, and therefore necessitate training.

**Before deciding if you want to be a mentor, ask yourself:-**

- *Can you see things from the umpire's point of view?*
- *Are you able to facilitate and empower umpires without forcing your style or point of view on them?*
- *Can you avoid giving excessive direction and allow the umpire to develop at his or her pace?*
- *Are you able to see the benefits of other approaches to problems and realise that your way is not the only one?*

- *Do you have the time to give an umpire a proper mentor experience?*
- *Do you have or have access to sources of knowledge that the umpire does not?*
- *Have you undergone the process that the umpire is going through? Can you see the bigger picture?*
- *Are you able to challenge pre-conceived beliefs and practices, of both yourself and the umpire?*

### **STAGES OF THE MENTORING PROCESS**

Mentoring relationships must be developed. The initial stage is very much a sounding out stage, with both participants assessing the other. It may be at this stage that the umpire has an ideal picture of you, the mentor, and the mentoring relationship. The umpire may have expectations of the relationship that are not concurrent with yours. You must make your role as facilitator very clear in this initial stage, and encourage the umpire to take responsibility for his or her learning from the start. This can form the basis for the initial mentoring meeting. It places the relationship on a strong footing and will indicate some areas of priority that need to be addressed. As part of this initial meeting an early identification of the individual umpire's development needs should also be considered. The mentor needs to establish: -

- Where the umpire is at present in terms of their umpiring competence;
- Where they need to be in order to demonstrate progression;
- How they can be assisted in making that movement.

Once the need is identified and accepted, targets can be set for achieving the desired change or improvement, and support can be provided to try to ensure that they are met.

*How should mentors go about identifying and assessing the individual needs of the umpire?*

*What techniques can be employed to find the evidence that will inform and target training and development?*

*How can such assessment be undertaken in an atmosphere that avoids umpires feeling threatened because of inevitable gaps in their knowledge, skills and expertise?*

There are five key approaches:

- Umpire to provide a summary of where they feel they are at and what they want from the mentoring process;
- Observation of umpiring;
- Personal review meetings;
- Reflective mentoring;
- Structured opportunities for critical self-reflection.

Based on the initial discussion between the mentor and the umpire, an action plan needs to be formulated, and targets set based on the needs assessment.

Targets should embody the SMARTER acronym.

<b>S</b>	-	<b>SPECIFIC</b>
<b>M</b>	-	<b>MANAGEABLE, MEASUREABLE</b>
<b>A</b>	-	<b>APPROPRIATE, AGREED, ACHIEVEABLE</b>
<b>R</b>	-	<b>REALISTIC, RELEVANT, RECORDABLE</b>
<b>T</b>	-	<b>TIME BONDED</b>
<b>E</b>		<b>EXCITING</b>
<b>R</b>		<b>RECORDED</b>

Observation of umpiring is the next step. It should comprise three essential stages:

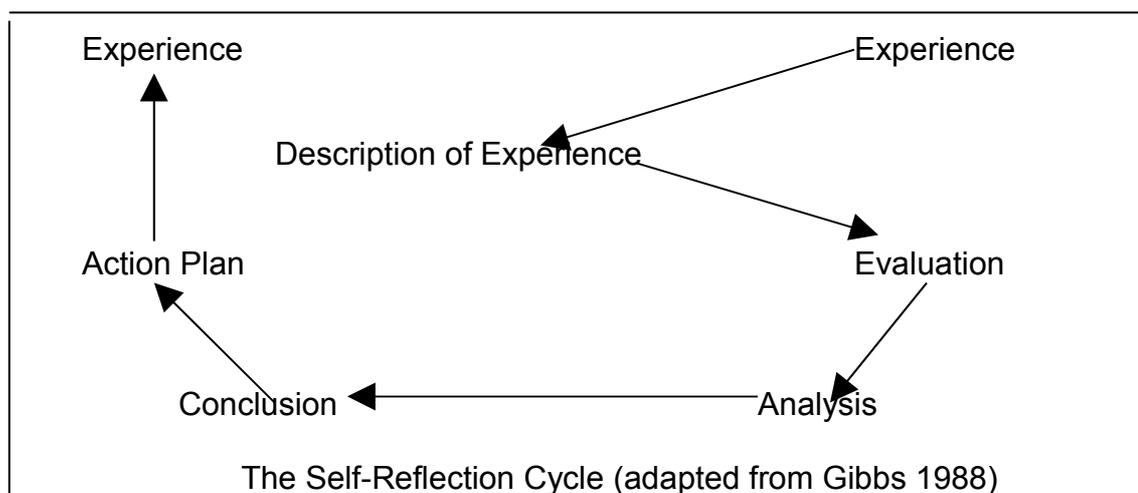
1. A preliminary meeting to establish the criteria for the observation;
2. The observation itself, with a specific focus;
3. Feedback in which the umpire and the mentor have the opportunity to discuss issues and use them again as the basis for defining needs and future targets. The feedback session should follow the self-reflection cycle.

### **THE SELF-REFLECTION PROCESS**

Self-reflection is a process, which can help umpires to learn from experiences, regardless of their stage of development. It is a reflection based on experience and provides a framework to structure umpires thoughts on an experience in such a way that the learning potential of the experience is maximised. It is central to all learning and should help the mentor to manage and structure all meetings with an umpire.

### **The Self-Reflection Cycle**

All self-reflection requires a catalyst to spark the process. This catalyst will usually be an umpiring experience.



Reflection should occur as soon as possible after the observation, so that events are fresh in the memory of both umpire and mentor. Use questioning

to help the umpire move through the different steps of the reflective cycle. Carefully phrased questions (refer to section on questioning) are the key to provoking meaningful reflection. Allow the umpire to lead the discussion.

The first step in the reflective process is for the umpire to **describe** the experience in a non-evaluative way. This helps the umpire move from his or her initial subjective reaction to the experience to a more objective perspective. Objectivity is necessary for the self-reflection to be effective. The umpire should then outline what was effective and useful (**evaluation**) in the performance or the experience. In the **analysis** of these (searching for reasons), an umpire gains an insight into his or her own strengths and weaknesses. At this stage the reflection may need to be informed by new information or input from an external source. The main limitation of self-reflection is the experience of the umpire; umpires must move outside the boundaries of their own experience if they are to develop. The mentor's contribution to the process can be invaluable – to challenge the assumptions and beliefs that underpin the umpire's reasoning.

The self-reflection then returns to the umpire's own practice, in the form of **action** points (targets) for development – to be implemented in the very next session, or as soon as possible afterwards.

### **The Mentor's Role in Reflection**

As a mentor your primary role is to facilitate this process. Your role will change as the umpire moves through the different stages of reflection

<b>Stage of Reflective Cycle</b>	<b>Mentor Role</b>
Description	Listening, questioning
Evaluation	Questioning
Analysing	Challenging
Concluding	Directing, assisting
Action planning	Clarifying

Remember, the umpire must always take the lead in the reflection process. The task of the mentor is to help umpires with their reflection, encouraging them to challenge their current thinking and ensure they have the confidence to use new information to change their umpiring practice. By careful questioning you can lead the umpire through the process without influencing the content.

### **Mentoring Environment**

Choosing an appropriate setting also has a part to play in facilitating a positive discussion. A private and quiet room will help to avoid interruptions or distractions, thus indicating to the umpire the importance you are placing on the meeting. Use of easy chairs set a slight angle will encourage a sense of equality, whereas positioning oneself face-to-face from behind a table poses a physical and psychological barrier for the umpire to overcome.

## **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Communication skills are the most important mentoring skills. The effectiveness of the professional relationship that is developed between the mentor and the umpire depends on the successful implementation of a number of generic mentoring skills. These include interpersonal, observational, assessment, target setting and written skills, many of which place a strong premium on the mentor's **ability** to communicate.

### **Observation**

The essential element of a successful observation is having a clear focus in order to provide the mentor with evidence of the strengths and weaknesses of the umpire being observed. A vital follow-up activity in this process is the opportunity for verbal and written feedback, which enables the mentor to give advice about the best ways of improving knowledge and skills and provides the umpire with an opportunity to become involved in their own development. Reviewing, linked to action planning, is crucial if the umpire is to gain a clearer understanding of what has – and has not – worked well and how to take things forward. The targets that are agreed for development often form a suitable focus for the next observation.

The following have been identified as outcomes for observations:

- Present a systematic approach for increasing effectiveness;
- Offer a basis for making valid decisions regarding the expertise of the umpire;
- Establish a cooperative atmosphere for decision-making between the mentor and the umpire;
- Foster decision-making based on the observations that are recorded from the match, rather than on the personal biases of the observer;
- Make provision for enhancing umpiring skills and changing behaviour;
- Promote accountability on the part of the mentor and the umpire.

In setting up a formal routine of observation and review, it is important to establish certain guiding principles relating to:

- When the observation is to take place;
- What the focus of the observation will be each time - which competences;
- Who will undertake the observations;
- How the observations will be carried out.

Mentors need to think about how best to conduct themselves in order to make their presence as unobtrusive as possible. Some method of recording observations, such as clipboard or Dictaphone, can be useful for providing a context for the observation. The England Netball pro-forma provided for mentoring, should be completed in consultation with the umpire during the

self-reflection process, after the umpire has had an opportunity to explain and justify his or her actions. Areas of disagreement could be left blank for later reflection, or judgement postponed to a later visit. If you merely complete the form you are an assessor rather than a mentor.

Videotaping parts of an umpire's performance can also be a useful device during an observation, to assist the umpire to gain an insight into their performance and aid the observer in illustrating key points to the developing umpire. Observing a session together allows the umpire an opportunity of outlining the rationale for his or her decision making as you are watching.

An essential part of the observation is the professional discussion that mentors should engage in with the umpire so that they can talk through what occurred in the match, give feedback, explore issues and identify targets for future action.

### **Giving Constructive Feedback**

Feedback is a process of receiving information on actions; it is an important part of learning. More experienced umpires are adept at extracting their own feedback – they have already reached the stage of self-reflection. Less experienced umpires often find it difficult to evaluate their progress objectively, or to identify areas of difficulty. They must be assisted towards the relevant pieces of information.

Often an umpire will ask for feedback on their umpiring performance and giving feedback is an important skill for the mentor in this context. It is important to remember, however, that the session is not seen by either party as a monologue – the process of self-reflection should be central. Feedback may be given in a number of ways:

- **Criticism** is evaluative by nature and can be difficult to take, whether or not it is constructive. Think of how you react to criticism even if it is well meaning. This is because criticism focuses on a problem rather than a solution. Criticism is only ever useful if it is focused on a specific aspect of umpiring that is a priority for development in the eyes of the umpire. The initial session to set the agenda is key to being able to offer any constructive criticism. If you criticise in an area that is not targeted for development, your entire input is devalued. Whatever the case, use criticism sparingly.
- **Praise** can be useful to improve an umpire's confidence. Remember though that praise is the flip side of criticism. By identifying a competence as good, you automatically apply a criticism to another competence. Try to use effectiveness or consequence as the basis for evaluation, rather than tags of good or bad.

- **Advice** is directive and assumes a right way of doing things. Remember your role as mentor is not to generate a clone of your own umpiring philosophy but to help umpires develop in the most appropriate way to them.
- **Guided self-discovery** – this process is less directive and evaluative than the other options. It requires the mentor to use listening and questioning skills effectively. The mentor allows the umpire to lead the session. Open questions are used so that the feedback is non-directive.

The mechanics of when and how to undertake this review process is an important issue which sometimes assumes a secondary significance in comparison to the observation itself. It is important, therefore, to plan feedback carefully so it can contribute to the developmental process.

The first issue is **timing**. It is good practice to offer the umpire some brief informal comments immediately at the end of the observation while the events of the match are still very fresh in one's mind. Umpires very often look for, and appreciate, a few words of constructive feedback and reassurance. There is, of course, a need to reflect critically on what has been witnessed before any formal, considered responses are made.

The second point to consider is how to **structure** the observation review meeting. It should be held in an environment that is quiet and free from interruptions. What is then discussed could be structured into three broad phases:

- Strengths observed during the match;
- Possibilities and improvements;
- Targets for future action.

It is essential to establish an appropriate balance between positive and critical comments. Mentors need to avoid the polar opposites of 'smothering with kindness' on the one hand and destroying with criticism on the other. Therefore the discussion must be shaped in such a way that both positive and negative points are made constructively and supportively, in the interest of improving the umpiring performance. That is the way to nurture a spirit of open professional enquiry for observation so that it is not seen as a threatening exercise.

First the umpire should be encouraged to offer his/her own thoughts about their performance. Did it go well and what particular aspects were successful? Asking the umpire to pinpoint two or three strengths avoids the danger of the mentor starting off with a lot of talking. It gives the umpire the opportunity to offer some positive comments, thus avoiding a feeling of vulnerability. The mentor could then assist this morale-building phase by suggesting some additional strengths that were observed. Should there be a temptation to make sweeping judgements – such as 'my performance was brilliant/disastrous' – the mentor will need to take the lead in directing the

discussion onto the particular focus for the observation. Making reference to the specific umpiring skills, competences or standards agreed upon in the pre-observational meeting will serve to generate more specific and thoughtful interpretations.

It is appropriate then to move on to aspects of the performance, which could have been approached in alternative and, possibly more successful ways. Again the umpire should be invited to make suggestions, as well as receive comments from the mentor. The latter's ability to ask considered and probing questions at this point is crucial. If there are a lot of negative points, they must be prioritised so those that are pertinent to the agreed focus are addressed first and the umpire does not feel overwhelmed. The mentor may need to give some directive feedback about weak performance. Ideally, agreement should be sought about specific aspects of umpiring performance that could be successfully changed. When added to the agreed strengths, it puts the mentor and umpire in a position to arrive at a balanced, overall picture of the latter's performance. It also results in a shared agenda for future action and offers a possible focus for a subsequent observation.

**When giving feedback remember to: -**

- Be specific – neither positive or negative feedback can be taken forward unless the recipient of the feedback is clear about what did or did not work well;
- Refer to evidence – observed behaviour or notes;
- Refer to agreed criteria – such as the competences, or standards discussed, negotiated and agreed in advance;
- Refer only to things that can be changed or developed;
- Invite from the recipient their own comments on the focus of the feedback – their umpiring in general, the observed match etc.;
- It is important you are honest... it is equally important that – where an observed match has been, in the umpire's words, "a disaster" – your sensitivity means that you will weigh up how much you need to say.

(Beels and Powell 1994)

**Listening**

Listening is an essential element in enabling mentors to communicate with the umpire. Listening carefully will not only enable the mentor to hear what is said, but to understand it and to demonstrate that one is valuing the umpire as a person and a colleague. In meetings particularly, the mentor must endeavour to be an effective listener if the umpire is to be offered the best possible advice.

Effective listening is a vital skill, entailing hearing another person's words, thinking about their meaning and then planning how to respond – all very quickly! Focusing on significant issues and using verbal prompts to develop or clarify points are two ways of approaching it.

**Focusing:** In the early stages of the relationship, umpires may wander from the topic under discussion. They may have so many pressing queries and comments that it is hard for them to keep to one point. The mentor can help the umpire to focus by, for example, selecting one area of the conversation: 'Can you tell me which part of the match you felt went particularly well?'; 'What are your feelings about what I have said so far regarding your umpiring of obstruction?'

**Verbal prompts:** The mentor can encourage the umpire to talk more, to clarify a point, to extend a thought, by:

- Using small sounds 'Uh-huh' and encouraging expressions like 'I see' and 'Go on...'
- Repeating a key word (a technique borrowed from counselling skills); for example if the umpire says 'I'm really anxious about...' the repetition of the word 'anxious?' may prompt the umpire to say more, and also assures them of the mentor's concentrated interest.  
(Beels and Powell 1994)

### **Questioning**

Questions enable the mentor to ask for known information and to encourage the umpire to offer viewpoints, judgements and justifications. Effective use of questioning is essential if the mentor is to tease out of the umpire what is going on in their minds and how they see the success or otherwise of their umpiring performance. It is important to guard against questions that could be perceived as threatening, especially if the umpire does not feel confident and seeks to protect him/herself. The mentor will also need to note carefully how the person being spoken to is responding and to judge how far to proceed and when to call a halt. The style of questioning that the mentor should adopt depends very much, therefore, on the individual umpire, the situation under scrutiny and the particular stage in the umpire's development. However, it is possible to identify certain types of question that are likely to prove productive in the response they elicit.

**Open questions:** They may be used to:

- Gain information. '*What happened as a result of your decision?*'
- Explore thoughts, feelings, attitudes and opinions: '*How could your court movement improve?*'; '*What are your views on the contact/contest situation between the GA and the GD?*'
- Consider hypothetical questions and explore options: '*What would help you to reach the goal line sooner?*'; '*How would you deal with the WD continually going off-side in the circle?*'; '*What are the possible options to consider when deciding whether to play advantage in that situation?*'

**Closed questions:** They may be used to:

- Gather information or check facts. *Could you see all the play from your position on the sideline? Which player could you have penalised for breaking at the centre pass? Did you toss the ball to the correct height at the centre pass?*
- Summarise. *'So overall you are saying you were pleased with your performance?'*

They invite a 'Yes' or 'No' answer and as such may unhelpfully close down the options for responding. Be aware with closed questioning that it may result in the umpire saying less and less and the mentor becoming pressurised to ask more and more questions.

**Elaboration questions:** These may or may not be open questions, and are used to encourage the umpire to elaborate on what has already been said or to probe deeper to gain quality information. *'Can you give me an example?'* *'Why is that important? Why did you play the advantage?'*

**Leading questions:** These suggest to the umpire that a particular answer is expected, and that there are particular beliefs or values that should be held: *'Do you really think that...?'*; *'Shouldn't you be considering...?'*

**Multiple questions:** Several different questions are asked in one sentence leading to potential confusion for both umpire and mentor: *'Is it that you felt... or that you think it would be better if...or perhaps that she should...?'*

**Reflective questions:** These may be used to check understanding and allows an opportunity to reflect on what has happened.

*Would you summarise by saying...*  
*So you are saying that...*

The initial mentoring meetings are usually supervisory in nature, involving guidance and support, supporting and building, encouraging the attainment of standards of performance, and reviewing progress and setting priorities. Where explicit attention needs to be given to bringing change and development onto the agenda, useful questions might be:

- What would you like to be different?
- What would be happening that is not now?
- What can you do to bring this about?
- What steps can you take first?
- Who needs to be involved in helping you?

It should not be forgotten that a pause or period of silence could be quite effective in eliciting further information or viewpoints from the umpire, although it is important not to take it too far.

### **Body Language**

In addition to listening and questioning, there are some key principles to apply to a third form of communication between mentor and umpire – the way in which one's bodily signals may wittingly or unwittingly have an effect on the other person in the meeting. People are not always conscious of the non-verbal messages they give out – and they can speak volumes!

**Eye contact** is probably the most significant form of body language because it implies recognition of some kind and can reveal a great deal about a person's true intent. Careful use of one's eyes will help attract and keep the attention of an umpire, whereas the use of fixed, glazed, withering or exasperated looks will invariably communicate feelings of unfriendliness, boredom, annoyance or impatience.

**Non-verbal** prompts like head-nodding or facial expressions provide evidence that the mentor is listening and may be used to encourage the umpire to continue speaking. Occasional nods indicate affirmation of the points being made by the other person, while facial expressions like raised or lowered eyebrows usually reflect sensitivity to his/her expressed views.

**Body posture** takes many forms and can exercise a powerful influence in meetings. Leaning slightly forward suggests interest or a wish to respond, while sitting back indicates that one's colleague is free to speak in an atmosphere of openness and receptivity. Slouching, on the other hand, is a sign of boredom or tiredness. Gestures with one's hands and arms betray emotions. They can convey a sense of defensiveness if they are folded and clenched; open palms reveal a sense of honesty. Finger pointing and wagging should definitely be avoided.

## **EVALUATING MENTORING**

It is important that you gain feedback from the umpire on your role as a mentor. It will inform you how successful you have been in your attempts to make a relationship relevant to the umpire's agenda and how effective the relationship has been in working towards the expressed development goals of the umpire.

It will be too late at the evaluation stage to discover that the agenda you have been working to has been perceived by umpire and mentor in different ways. The importance of clarifying expectations, agreeing priorities and setting goals has been emphasised throughout this booklet, and if this step is not sufficiently well established, you may well find that the expectations of the umpire have not been met by your actions as the mentor.

Much of the feedback you receive will be in the form of general conversations, but it is useful to have a formal evaluation process at some stage in the relationship to enable a comprehensive review of its effectiveness.

## **SUMMARY**

Mentoring is about developing umpires. If you are a good umpire, it is likely you will be a good mentor. The reflective qualities that help you to learn from experience and from others as an umpire will stand you in good stead as a mentor. Mentoring is one of the most rewarding roles an umpire can fill, if you take the time to develop the necessary skills and techniques. The aim of this booklet is to help mentors give and gain the most from their mentoring relationships.



## **APPENDIX ONE**

### **INITIAL SESSION WITH MENTEE**

#### **You need to:-**

- Explore and agree the purpose of the mentoring.
- Establish short, medium and long term goals.
- Explore the benefits of mentoring for both parties.
- Agree confidentiality expectations.
- Agree method of record keeping.
- Agree how long the mentoring relationship should last before a review takes place.
- Decide where and when you will meet and the duration of each session.

**Name of mentee .....**

**Name of mentor.....**

**Date of initial meeting .....**

**Aims of the mentoring process:**

**Long term goals:**

**Medium term goals:**

**Short Term goals:**

**Agreed time frame, venue, frequency and duration of sessions:**

**Date of first review:**

**Signed:**

**Mentee**

**Mentor**



**APPENDIX TWO**

**MENTORING SESSION**

**Agreed focus of observation:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Post –observation analysis and evaluation**

**Agreed areas of strength identified:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Agreed areas for development identified:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Agreed targets**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Date of next session:**

**Signed:**

**Mentee**

**Mentor**



## **APPENDIX THREE**

### **REVIEW AND REFLECTION**

- Have we got a good rapport?
- Are we achieving our aims and goals?
- Are we experiencing any difficulties?
- Do we need to try any new approaches?
- Do we need to alter the long, medium or short-term goals?
- Do we need support from anyone else?
- Do we need any further information?
- Have we completed everything we can and as a result need to end the mentoring?

### **Comments**

**Date:**

**Signed:**

**Mentee**

**Mentor**



## **APPENDIX FOUR**

### **MENTOR/MENTEE FINAL EVALUATION**

(Both the mentor and mentee need to complete an evaluation independently and then discuss their views)

- Has the mentoring experience been enjoyable?
- Were we successful in achieving the goals set?

Long term:

Medium term:

Short term:

- What was the best/most useful part of the mentoring process?
- What was the least useful part?
- What have we learned?
- Was progress easier because of the mentoring?
- Next steps/plans

**Date:**

**Signed:**

**Mentee**

**Mentor**

## **APPENDIX FIVE**

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