

Guidance Notes

THESE NOTES ARE FOR THE USE OF THOSE RUNNING E-MENTORING PROJECTS WHO WISH TO APPLY FOR THE APPROVED PROVIDER STANDARD. PLEASE READ THEM CAREFULLY BEFORE STARTING TO FILL IN YOUR APPLICATION FORM. THEY CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION THAT WILL HELP YOUR APPLICATION TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

Introduction

The last ten years has seen a major growth in the use of mentoring as a vehicle for social change. The present Government has recognised its importance as a means of addressing important policy objectives; for raising educational attainment; tackling anti-social behaviour and promoting respect and understanding for others.

Many projects in the field of mentoring are now taking advantage of the benefits of electronic technology. Some are using e-mentoring simply as an extension to 'face-to face' activities. Others are using the technology to attract additional volunteers, improve the flexibility of the scheme or develop young peoples' computer skills.

E-mentoring has been defined as 'an interactive learning process by which one person assists another to grow and learn in a safe and supportive relationship using electronic communication.' (K.Longridge, 2004). It has also been described simply as 'mentoring by e-mail'.

E-mentoring shares many of the same characteristics as conventional face-to-face mentoring. However, although there are similarities, there are also important differences, particularly in relation to the safe, secure and confidential use of e-mentoring technologies.

A National Standard for Mentoring and Befriending

The Approved Provider Standard is a national benchmark for organisations running

mentoring and befriending projects. Designed for use with projects of any size, it provides a realistic and credible basis for assessing core practice. The assessment framework is focused on the key management and operational areas that underpin the effectiveness of any mentoring or befriending project: the aims and structure; client referral and assessment processes; recruitment, selection and training of volunteers; monitoring and evaluation. Projects achieving the APS will be operating to a nationally approved standard that gives Government ministers, project organisers, and many thousands of volunteers, a reliable and objective benchmark of safe and effective practice.

Accreditation lasts for three years, at which time projects are required to seek re-accreditation.

The Standard is promoted and administered by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) on behalf of the Government through the Active Communities Directorate of the Home Office and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Mentoring and befriending projects dependent on Government funding will be required in future to demonstrate a commitment to the Approved Provider Standard.

Using the Guidance Notes

The MBF has produced these guidance notes to help you complete the application form. The notes explain the reasons why we require certain details from you. They also indicate the kind of information we need for each section of the application form and provide examples of appropriate evidence.

The application form and guidance notes are divided into three main sections;

- a) Application and contact details
- b) Facts about your organisation
- c) Project information

To help you cross-reference between the documents, the order and numbering of the questions are the same in the application form and guidance notes.

Returning the Completed Form

Completed forms should be returned to the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation at the address shown below. Additional copies of the application pack can be obtained from this address.

Mentoring and Befriending Foundation
FREEPOST
NWW338IA
Manchester
M30 IAX

Please note that the APS assessment process is completely free of charge. Applications are treated in the strictest confidence.

If you would like the MBF to return your APS application/evidence portfolio to you after the

assessment has been completed, please tick the relevant box on the application form.

NB: The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation is not liable for loss of applications due to mail errors. You are advised to take a copy of your application form and supporting evidence before posting. You may wish to send your application by recorded mail to ensure safe delivery to the MBF office.

The Assessment Process

In devising the assessment process we have balanced the importance of producing a Standard that is credible and worthwhile with the need for something generic which can be realistically applied to any form of one-to-one, volunteer mentoring or befriending, as well as to the variety of organisations involved.

We have identified five key areas that form the basis of the assessment.

1. Project aims and structure
2. Client group
3. Recruitment and selection of volunteers
4. Volunteer preparation and training
5. Monitoring and evaluation

Please make your responses to each of the questions as full and comprehensive as possible. Where supporting evidence is a requirement in your response to a particular question, this is clearly indicated in the guidance notes. The evidence is used to provide confirmation that the processes and procedures described in the narrative are being applied in practice. It also helps to build a more complete picture that will enhance and add to your written response. Supporting evidence should be cross-referenced with your narrative answers to assist the assessment process. Please note that you may be able to use the same evidence to support narrative answers for more than one of the APS questions.

The standard is not designed to assess completely new projects i.e. those that have not

been through a full operational cycle. However, a 'Working Towards' status has been introduced that enables projects to formally commit to the Standard a full twelve months prior to submitting their APS applications. New projects are, therefore, able to use the principles underpinning the APS as a framework for development, before submitting their full applications at a later date. During this period the MBF will be pleased to assist with any aspect of application preparation. If this option would be appropriate to your situation, please contact the MBF to register for 'Working Towards' status.

Although the APS assessment process is primarily a 'desk-top' exercise, we may need to contact or visit you to clarify certain issues. In some instances, following initial assessment of your application, we will offer an interim conditional approval with award of the full Standard subject to the satisfactory resolution of certain issues or evidence requirements.

If you have any queries about any aspect of the assessment process please contact the MBF on 0161 787 8600.

Section A - Application and Contact Details

This section of the form asks for basic information concerning your application. We also need to know how to contact you if we have any queries and to keep you informed. Please give us as many ways to get in touch with you as possible. We may also need to visit you to ask more questions or look at how your project works.

1. Name of the organisation

Please give the name of the organisation responsible for running your e-mentoring project.

2. Contact address

Please provide the address of your organisation together with a telephone contact number or e-mail address.

3. Person to be contacted

Please give the name and contact details of a person with whom your application can be discussed and any queries addressed. This should be someone involved in the submission of your application and with some knowledge of the project that you wish to register for the Approved Provider Standard. Usually this would be the scheme co-ordinator.

4. Declaration

This section needs to be signed by two people with the authority to commit your organisation to undertaking the Approved Provider process.

For Office Use Only

Do not complete the box at the bottom of the page headed "For Office Use Only". We will use this to allocate a number to your application and record the date it was received. This will help us to keep you informed and track the progress of your application.

Section B - Facts about your Organisation

We need to know what kind of an organisation you are as a context against which to review your application and the evidence that you provide.

1. What type of organisation are you?

You may need to describe your organisation under several headings e.g. registered charity, community group, limited company. Please use as many as you decide are appropriate.

2. Main activities and the work that you do.

Please describe your organisation under the following headings:

- its broad purpose
- the nature and range of services you provide and to whom
- the geographical area covered (national, regional or local)

3. Has your organisation achieved any other Quality Standards?

Please tell us if your organisation has achieved or is working towards any other quality standards. We would like to know the name of the award and the awarding body, the date that the award was made and when it will be reviewed.

Please note that it is not necessary to have achieved other awards in order to qualify for the Approved Provider Standard.

Section C - Project Information

This section of the application form asks you to provide details of specific aspects of your e-mentoring project. Please make your responses to the questions as comprehensive as possible, providing supporting evidence where this is requested.

You should include **'live' evidence** wherever possible (i.e. used rather than blank documentation), providing confirmation that the processes or procedures described in your narrative are being applied in practice. Issues of confidentiality can be protected by deleting/obscuring individual details/identity.

If you wish to submit more than one project for assessment against the Standard, you need to complete this section of the application form separately for each of the projects.

Project Aims and Structure

1. What is your e-mentoring project called?

Please give us the name of the project you are submitting for assessment against the Standard. Please note that the name you provide here will appear on the APS accreditation certificate.

2. What is the purpose of your project?

Please provide a brief history of your project, describing how it came into being and why you felt it was needed. You should also indicate the length of time that the project has been in operation and identify any significant changes or developments that have been made since it was introduced.

Your response should include an explanation showing why you felt that e-mentoring was the most appropriate solution for meeting the needs of mentees and achieving the desired outcomes? Please also tell us if e-mentoring is used in conjunction with face-to-face mentoring and whether one-to-one e-mentoring support is combined with group activity.

Your response to this question should also include a list of aims that defines the purpose of the project and what you are trying to achieve. For example, you may have defined your aims in terms of developing ICT skills, improving achievement, raising awareness of career/higher education opportunities, or tackling barriers to educational progression or effective transition. Your aims should be specific and measurable and it should be clear who is benefiting from the project.

In some instances, the aims of the project will be incorporated within a broader policy framework such as a school development plan

or student support framework. It is also often the case in e-mentoring that individual projects are developed as part of a larger consortia or funded through a wider initiative. Here, your response should explain how your project contributes and adds value to the wider purpose or goals.

Please provide as supporting evidence any documentation (or relevant section/s) which describes your programme's aims. Suitable evidence includes policy statements, project proposals or funding submissions, copies of annual reports.

3. What organisational and management structure is in place to support your project?

Please tell us how your project is organised. Who is responsible for co-ordinating activities on a day-to-day basis? Is there a senior manager and/or a steering group consisting of key stakeholders to whom the project co-ordinator reports?

If the project is delivered in partnership with another organisation, such as a private sector partner or schools/higher education consortium, please outline the division of responsibilities between the partners and describe how the relationship operates.

If a larger organisation, such as a major business or public-sector corporation facilitates the project, then please explain how it is integrated within the structure of the parent body.

Co-ordinators of e-mentoring programmes share most of the tasks associated with running conventional face-to-face mentoring schemes, but in addition there are functions

Project Aims and Structure cont.

associated with the technology. For example, in school-based programmes, the co-ordinator has a vital role to play in securing students' access to computers, monitoring communications and providing students with support.

Many web-based e-mentoring projects use bespoke software that has been developed commercially. The software provider will usually retain operational control of the web-site with responsibility for:

- Authorisation and registration onto the system including allocation of e-mail addresses
- Recording of CRB checking information
- Encryption of addresses and other data
- Recording and archiving of e-mail contacts and other data
- Monitoring of e-mail contacts
- Provision of management and evaluation data

If your project is operating with the support of a software provider, please outline the division of operational responsibilities between the provider and the project team and describe how the relationship operates.

Your response to this question should give an overview of the management and operational arrangements that are in place, including the number of staff employed in delivering the project and an outline of their respective roles and responsibilities. Please also provide details of the technology used e.g. standard e-mails or web-based solution. Although it is unnecessary to include specific financial details, please tell us how the project is funded, giving the source of the funding (e.g. the name of the funding body) and the time period for which funding has been allocated.

Taking into account the nature and size of the project, your response should demonstrate that there is an appropriate structure in place and sufficient funding and in-kind resources for it to operate effectively.

Examples of appropriate evidence include organisational charts, details of any software used, co-ordinator's job description/person specification and management or steering group meeting agenda/minutes. Please also provide copies of any policies/procedures that have been developed for key management or operational areas of the project.

4. What support mechanisms are in place to ensure that staff overseeing the project are operating effectively?

Please tell us how you ensure that members of staff overseeing the project are operating effectively. Do those involved in running the project have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are they assessed against these? Are regular meetings held between line managers and project staff to review progress?

For example, in a school-based project, it would be expected that a senior member of staff would support the work of the project co-ordinator. This might take the form of monitoring the project's development, supporting integration with mainstream activity and ensuring that the co-ordinator has the necessary resources and time to carry out their responsibilities successfully.

Your response should demonstrate that an appropriate review system is in place for supporting and monitoring the work of staff overseeing the project. Evidence should be

Project Aims and Structure cont.

provided that shows that project manager/workers have the necessary experience/background and have received appropriate training to carry out their roles successfully. You should also refer to any arrangements aimed at providing further development opportunities for project staff, including internal/external training or networking activities.

Client Group

5. To whom does your project provide services?

Please give details describing the characteristics of the individuals (mentees) who are supported by your project.

In your response to this question, please also include information in terms of the current position on the following:

- The number of mentees currently supported by the project
- The number of trained e-mentors
- The number of 'active' e-mentoring pairs

6. How are mentees identified and referred to you for support?

On what basis are individuals identified to take part in your project. Please describe the process used for selecting and referring individuals onto the project. Who is involved in this process? What referral/eligibility criteria are used? Where referral is through a third party, please explain how you ensure that those referred meet with your eligibility requirements.

The selection criteria used should be consistent with the aims of your project and with good equal opportunities practice. E-mentoring should be open to anyone regardless of their ethnicity, disability, gender or sexual orientation provided they meet the criteria identified for the target group. Individuals participating in the project should do so on a voluntary basis.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of internal guidelines, records of individual interviews/assessments, equal opportunities statement and documentation relating to referral procedures involving external or partner organisations.

7. How are mentees made aware of what the project involves?

Please describe how mentees are made aware of what they can expect from their involvement in the project. The APS assessment will look for evidence that the process ensures that participants have access to all relevant information about the project. As a minimum, we would expect this process to cover:

- An overview of the aims and purpose of the project
- The benefits and rewards of participation
- The nature of the e-mentoring relationship, including roles and responsibilities, levels of commitment required and 'Do's' and 'Don'ts' relating to behaviour
- An understanding of the technology, including the hardware and software used
- Guidance on e-mail construction and the procedures relating to the content, frequency and style of e-mail contacts
- Guidance on the arrangements concerning confidentiality and the safe and secure use of technology, especially with regard to use of the Internet
- The support available and what to do if any problems arise

It is expected that the preparation of mentees for their participation in the project would take the form of a structured process involving group briefings and/or individual contacts. Some projects require participants to sign up to a 'contract' that confirms what commitments have been agreed to. In schemes involving young people, your response should indicate how parents are informed about the project and how their consent is secured.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of information leaflets/on-line materials, mentees 'contracts', briefing materials, records of individual or group briefings, parental notification and confirmation.

Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

8. How do you recruit your e-mentors?

One of the main advantages of e-mentoring is the degree of scope and flexibility it gives to the recruitment of volunteers. However, as with more conventional forms of mentoring, projects should have clear criteria with regard to the recruitment of the individuals they wish to attract. These should be consistent with the aims of the scheme and the roles required of the volunteers within it.

Do you apply any specific criteria to the recruitment of e-mentors? Are there particular qualities, experience or backgrounds that you require of your volunteers? For example, knowledge of specialist subject matter may be a requirement of e-mentors if the project has a curriculum focus?

What are your sources of recruitment? Are e-mentors recruited on a local, regional, national or even on an international basis? For projects that involve students as peer mentors, your response should indicate how you identify and select appropriate young people for the role. Where volunteers are recruited from the wider community, for example, from the business or higher education sectors, your response should indicate who is responsible for their recruitment. If a partner or external agency does this on your behalf, please describe the process involved, including how you ensure that those recruited meet your eligibility requirements.

Equal opportunities principles should be applied to recruitment practices. E-mentoring offers considerable scope to recruit mentors from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. A variety of promotional and recruitment

methods, both traditional and on-line, can be used to encourage diversity in e-mentor recruitment.

Your response should demonstrate that an appropriate and robust recruitment and selection process is in place that includes:

- Promotional literature or on-line material that is clear, accessible and appeals to a diverse audience
- Assessment against person specification to determine suitability for role
- Background checks e.g. use of references, CRB checks, where appropriate
- Processes for dealing with applicants that are found to be unsuitable e.g. probationary period, satisfactory completion of initial training

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of recruitment/promotional literature or on-line material, person specification for e-mentor role, equal opportunities statement, application forms or equivalent, copies of guidelines or documentation relating to recruitment procedures.

9. What screening procedures and personal protection arrangements do you operate?

Ensuring the safety of participants lies at the heart of the Approved Provider Standard. Projects must ensure that the safety of both parties in the relationship is protected through the adoption and application of appropriate arrangements on matters such as personal protection and confidentiality. For example, all projects dealing with young people or vulnerable adults should conduct CRB checks

Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers cont.

regardless of whether mentors are participating on a face-to-face basis, acting as e-mentors or operating in a combination of the two roles. CRB disclosure should be backed up with other screening processes, including a structured interview/assessment process.

The main difference between e-mentoring and conventional face-to-face projects lies in its use of technology and the additional issues this raises in terms of ensuring the protection and security of participants. A variety of measures have been adopted to ensure the safe, confidential and secure use of e-mentoring technologies. These include:

- Screening of e-mentors, incorporating CRB checks
- Dedicated web-site through which all messages are routed
- Use of antivirus and security software (firewalls)
- Encryption of recorded data and real e-mail addresses
- Checking e-mails for suspicious words and phrases
- Random checking of e-mails by programme co-ordinators
- Supervision of mentees' e-mentoring contact time
- Retention and archiving of all e-mails for accountability

E-mentoring will normally take place via ordinary e-mail addresses or through a dedicated web-site. Moderation of e-mails is reasonably straightforward in web-based projects as monitoring procedures are normally built into the software. Developing a secure system is more difficult if the project is using standard e-mails. A school-based scheme will

usually rely on school or LEA firewalls to provide a level of protection. Business mentors e-mail messages will normally be scrutinised by the company's own internal monitoring arrangements. Mentees and e-mentors may also be asked to save messages and to build up their own archive that can then be used as evidence if a problem occurs.

In your response to this question, please describe the processes/procedures you have in place with regard to the following issues:

- The screening of volunteers, including CRB checks
- Ensuring the health and safety of participants (including e-mentors, mentees and project staff). Please include details of relevant insurance arrangements
- Arrangements for dealing with complaints
- Arrangements for ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of participants
- Procedures with regard to the safe and secure use of technology
- Guidelines relating to the content, frequency and style of e-mails, and for the use of attachments
- Procedures for meeting the requirements of the Data Protection Act concerning the archiving and use of personal data
- Processes for obtaining parental, family or third party consent (where relevant)

Examples of appropriate evidence include details of registration with the Criminal Records Bureau, confirmation of police checks, notes from the screening/assessment process, copies of insurance documentation, internal guidelines or policies relating to the points listed above. Please note that, where possible, you should include copies of 'live' documentation that can

Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers cont.

demonstrate evidence of implementation e.g. CRB checks. Issues of confidentiality can be protected by deleting/obscuring individual details/identity.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of background information about participants or on-line materials used, guidelines outlining matching procedures, records of matching decisions.

10. What process is used for matching mentees and e-mentors?

There should be a consistent process for identifying the needs of mentees and comparing these with the characteristics of volunteers. This process should aim to make the best use of the attributes, experience and interests that the volunteer has to offer, as well as being responsive to the mentee's needs and stated preferences.

The process may include the use of questionnaires, a structured interview process or group meetings to see how mentors and mentees interact. Some web-based programmes have posted biographies of volunteers on the site for mentees to select their mentors on the basis of this information. Other e-mentoring projects have arranged face-to-face meetings between mentees and e-mentors at the outset to build rapport and help establish the relationships.

Whatever process for matching is selected, it is also essential to have arrangements in place for dealing with relationships that turn out to be unsuitable. This is particularly important in e-mentoring where the breakdown in relationships is relatively high in comparison with face-to-face mentoring.

Please outline the process you use for matching mentees and volunteers, including arrangements for dealing with relationships that break down.

Volunteer Preparation, Training and Support

11. How do you prepare e-mentors so that they can offer effective support?

Please describe the process you use for preparing e-mentors so that they are aware of the demands of the task and can offer mentees good quality support. Your response should demonstrate that the process used is relevant and appropriate to the role required of volunteers in your particular project. E-mentor training combines elements of traditional mentor training with some e-mentor specific activities. As a minimum, initial training should include the following elements:

- An overview of the background and purpose of the project
- The benefits and rewards of participation
- The nature, needs and circumstances of the client group
- The requirements of an e-mentor, including levels of commitment, skills used, roles/responsibilities
- The nature of the e-mentoring relationship, including 'code of conduct' and boundaries of the relationship
- An understanding of the technology, including the hardware and software used
- Guidance on e-mail construction (including the 'first e-mail') and the procedures relating to the content, frequency and style of e-mail contacts
- Information on the operation of the project, including health and safety procedures, reporting and evaluation arrangements, support available from the project team
- Guidance on the arrangements concerning child protection, confidentiality and the safe and secure use of technology, especially with regard to use of the Internet

E-mentor preparation and training may be something that is delivered for you by an external organisation. If this is the case, please indicate how you monitor and evaluate what is being provided on your behalf? This process should give you the confidence that the training is meeting the needs of your volunteers and preparing them effectively for the roles required of them within the project.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of training session timetables, relevant sections of training programmes, support materials, volunteer handbook/guidelines and feedback from participants.

12. How do you provide on-going support for e-mentors?

The role of an e-mentor can be a demanding one and it will also be a new experience for the majority of adults undertaking it. Volunteers may need guidance and positive feedback to help them develop confidently into their role.

Regular contact by the project co-ordinator can be helpful in identifying and resolving difficulties at an early stage. Participants may require advice on the conduct of their relationship or need assistance in dealing with particular issues.

Projects should have in place a support process that can be easily accessed by e-mentors, mentees and project staff. This will usually take the form of regular contact and feedback via e-mail. Some projects may establish an on-line 'forum' or 'bulletin board' where non-confidential information can be exchanged, best practice shared and answers to frequently asked questions posted. Telephone contact or

Volunteer Preparation, Training and Support cont.

conventional mentor support sessions may also be used.

In some instances, it may be appropriate for projects to offer further training. Web-based approaches to e-mentoring lend themselves to on-line training solutions, as new information and techniques can be made available during the course of the programme, as and when they are required.

Your response should show how you provide on-going support for participants and ensure that e-mail contacts are continuing to take place. Examples of appropriate evidence include records of contact between the co-ordinator and participants, including e-mail/telephone contacts, notes from review meetings, copies of newsletters, details of further training opportunities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

13. How do you monitor the progress of e-mentoring relationships and determine whether they are successful?

Every project should have a process in place for monitoring the progress of relationships to determine whether they are functioning successfully and working towards the goals that have been identified for them.

Most e-mentoring relationships will operate within a clearly defined time frame. Decisions will have been taken that determine the basis on which mentors and mentees are able to communicate, including the style and content of e-mails and the duration and frequency of contacts. Mentors and mentees will normally have agreed certain objectives or targets that will give a focus to their relationship and provide a benchmark for measuring what has been achieved at the end of the e-mentoring process. Within the broader aims of the project, the particular needs and circumstances of the mentee will determine the objectives set. For example, they may have been defined in terms of successful achievement (e.g. completion of a particular school or work assignment), greater awareness (e.g. improved understanding of suitable career or higher education opportunities), or increased motivation (e.g. better homework performance, improved study skills).

Please describe how you monitor progress and determine the success of individual relationships. Some of the processes you describe here may also contribute to other aspects of the project. For example, Information about individual relationships obtained as part of an on-going monitoring or assessment process can be aggregated/analysed and

used to contribute to the overall project evaluation.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of action plans, on-line materials, examples of objectives set, participants own reported perceptions of change, including copies of pre and post programme questionnaires, feedback from third parties.

14. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your e-mentoring project?

To what extent are the overall aims of your project being achieved? What is working well and what can be improved? All projects need an evaluation process in place that enables them to assess the effectiveness of the service that is provided. They should also seek to continually improve their methods of operation in order to achieve better results.

E-mentoring projects employ the same evaluation strategies as those used in conventional mentoring programmes, but they are also able to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the technology. For example, the additional data available through e-mail records can be used for further analysis and evaluation. Web-based projects usually include on-line measurement and evaluation tools to assist with the management of the project, including end of programme evaluation and assessment of impact.

Please describe what methods are used to evaluate your project. This may take the form of informal and/or formal period reviews, performance against contract requirements, analysis of data linked to specific outcomes and external or in-house evaluation exercises.

Monitoring and Evaluation cont.

Your response should explain how improvements are identified and who has responsibility for implementing them. Please refer to any changes or improvements you have made to your project as a result of these assessments.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of project review meetings, development plans, annual or evaluation reports, analysis of data demonstrating impact.