

The Chancery Bar Association

Mentoring scheme: introduction

Most of us, at some time or other in our professional careers, feel the need to talk to somebody who can offer advice and the benefit of their experience. Often, there may be someone in Chambers, or a former pupil supervisor, who can fulfil that role. At other times, those people may not be appropriate. This is when a Mentor – an informed, objective and supportive professional who is outside your immediate workplace – can provide a sympathetic ear and impartial guidance on how you might achieve your career goals.

Mentoring has become a widely used way of managing talent in many areas of business, industry and the professions, from supporting graduates and newly qualified individuals to people in mid-career and those who are taking up demanding senior positions.

The Chancery Bar Association has established its own mentoring scheme, building a resource bank of members practising at senior levels who will act as Mentors, with the aim of providing a support and advice network open to all members of the Association.

What is mentoring?

The Chancery Bar Association Scheme is a confidential, one on one, non-judgmental relationship in which one individual (the Mentor) provides support, advice or encouragement to another (the Mentee). The mentor is generally more experienced than the mentee.

Mentoring is not a one-way process. It is a relationship based upon mutual trust and respect and, in a successful mentoring relationship, the Mentor can benefit as much as the Mentee. Many Mentors talk about the value of refreshing their own experiences and knowledge, gaining an understanding of a different viewpoint and skills, and also the satisfaction of helping a fellow professional to realise their goals.

A Mentor is a guide who can help the Mentee to develop solutions to career issues. Mentoring provides the Mentee with an opportunity to think about career options and progress.

The Scheme

It is hoped that members applying to become part of the Scheme will be able to:

- form a relationship which will be of value to both of them over a defined period of time; and/or
- assist in dealing with one-off, specific situations.

The Chancery Bar Association is always looking for practitioners, at all levels of seniority, who would be prepared to act as a Mentor based on their own career experiences, or who might be prepared to offer advice on a one-off basis, based on their own career experiences. Members of the Association may wish to be Mentors and to have a Mentor of their own. Mentees will be encouraged to become Mentors themselves in time.

The Chancery Bar Association also runs a mentoring scheme for pupils: <https://www.chba.org.uk/for-members/mentoring-scheme/pupillage-mentoring-protocol/view>.

Junior mentees under 5 years call are encouraged to become mentors on this scheme.

How do I become a Mentor?

Matching is a very important part of a successful mentoring relationship, and to assist in this process, individuals wishing to participate are asked to complete a form providing information about their professional background, particular skills and specialisms. Chancery Bar Association members who are interested in becoming a Mentor should complete the [Mentor Application Form](#), available on the Association's website, and send this to the Association's Administrator, Francesca Compton (see contact details below).

The forms will only be disclosed to the members of the Matching Panel for the purpose of the matching process.

How do I become a Mentee?

If you would like to have a Mentor, you need to complete [the Mentee Form](#), available on the Association's website. In addition to providing details of your professional background, there is an opportunity to identify any particular issues that you seek to address through the Scheme. The form should be sent to the Administrator, Francesca Compton (see contact details below).

If a Mentee wishes their form to be anonymised for the purposes of the matching process, or not disclosed to a particular member of the Matching Panel, this should be stated in a covering note to the Administrator when returning the Mentee Form. No reasons need be given.

The matching process

The matching process is carried out once a term by a small panel of Association members (the Matching Panel), who are currently as follows:

Janet Bignell QC (Chair)
Justin Higgo QC
Carly Sandbach
Tim Sherwin

When the Matching Panel has identified a possible Mentor, the Administrator will contact the Mentee for permission to give out the Mentee's contact details to the prospective Mentor. If the Mentee agrees, the Administrator will then provide both the Mentor and Mentee with contact details and they will be asked to make contact with each other. If the Mentee does not agree, the Administrator will, if the Mentee wishes, refer the form back to the Matching Panel for a further Mentor to be identified.

The information on the forms is kept confidential.

Managing the mentoring process

To help both parties manage the mentoring relationship effectively, a set of guidelines has been produced. ([Link to: A brief guide to mentoring.](#)) These lay down the principles of role model mentoring, the responsibilities of the parties and an outline of the process.

What happens if it doesn't work out?

The Mentor/Mentee relationship is voluntary and neither party is under any obligation to continue it. As the guidelines suggest, a mentoring relationship should include a 'no fault divorce' clause. There are various reasons for a mentoring relationship not working well, from personality differences to pressure of time. If either individual wishes to terminate the arrangement he or she should contact the Administrator who will arrange for the Mentee to be introduced to a new Mentor.

Sharing the learning

Confidentiality is an essential element in the management of a successful mentoring relationship (although all participants in the scheme should be aware of their obligations under BCC Rules C66-C69 and Guidance gC95-g102). At the same time, feedback is an important part of managing an effective mentoring scheme, in order to provide the most appropriate support and structure. The Administrator may ask Mentors and Mentees to complete a non-attributed questionnaire.

Who do I contact for further information?

If you would like further information about how the Scheme works, please feel free to contact:

Janet Bignell QC at Falcon Chambers Tel: 020 7353 2484.

Email: bignell@falcon-chambers.com

Francesca Compton, Administrator, Chancery Bar Association Email: admin@chba.org.uk

Tel: 07791 398254