

JSCC Discussion Paper: Coaching

What is workplace Coaching and how is it different to Mentoring?

Coaching and mentoring are development techniques based on the use of one-to-one discussions to enhance an individual's skills, knowledge or work performance.

Mentoring, training, consulting and advice are all things that put **in** information and ideas. A mentor tends to offer more technical and experiential advice and has skills and experience you are looking to develop yourself. This can be an informal arrangement through 1-1 meetings with a line manager, or a more formal arrangement such as our Reverse Learning scheme.

Coaching in contrast, pulls **out** the knowledge, skill, thinking, goals and commitment of the individual being coached. Coaching provides a dedicated space to work one to one with someone who can help you to make progress on your work goals. These may be about progression in your role, building your confidence, managing or improving relationships or any other aspect. Whatever your goal, your coach will work with you in a non-judgemental way to explore options, look at your current perspective on things and facilitate your thinking about what actions you want to take. A coach is not there to tell you what to do but can help you think things through in ways that you couldn't on your own.

Coaching at North Herts Council

The Council has a well-established internal coaching network who offer a high standard of coaching support and coaching has been used at North Herts for several years now. Our in-house Coaching Network are all ILM qualified and are required to take part in supervision and continuing professional development to ensure they have a high level of organisational understanding.

Coaching is one of the key leadership and management tools used by organisations to support and improve individual and organisational performance and here at North Herts Council it has been used for several years as an alternative to more traditional methods of training, to support staff through organisational change and as a developmental tool. Coaching can cover a wide variety of development areas and can support people to think through challenges and opportunities.

Some examples of situations where coaching is a suitable development tool include:

- Helping competent technical experts develop better interpersonal or managerial skills
- Developing an individual's potential and providing career support
- Developing skills and capability
- Developing a more strategic perspective after a promotion to a more senior role
- Handling conflict situations so that they are resolved effectively.

In a constantly changing environment there are considerable demands on Learning and Development. As such coaching and mentoring are potentially cost-effective development tools. Using internal coaching or developing the coaching skills of managers can provide a cost-effective method to enhance skills, knowledge and work performance.

How the Council continues to develop coaching as an alternative to more traditional methods of Learning and Development.

Whilst the culture and acceptance of coaching is established within the Council there is always more to do in terms of people taking the opportunity to be coached. The in-house Coaching Network are working hard to continue to raise the profile of coaching and to promote its benefits.

There are barriers that can inhibit the success of coaching, including individual resistance, time pressure and perception of it being a remedial tool, these barriers are addressed regularly at the group.