



Association of Women Solicitors

Essential for Success

AWS MENTORING SCHEME MENTEE DOCUMENTATION

Thank you for contacting the Association of Women Solicitors mentoring scheme. We have prepared this documentation to:

- explain how the scheme works;
- explain how we find a mentor match for you;
- tell you about our Link articles which may assist you with the issues you face;
- help you prepare for the first and follow-up conversations with your mentor; and
- inform you about the evaluative study that we carry out on the operation of the scheme.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a one-to-one non-judgemental relationship in which an individual (the mentor) voluntarily gives of his/her time to support, advise or encourage another person (the mentee). The AWS mentoring scheme offers an opportunity for mentees to have two conversations with a mentor to discuss a specific issue.

Details about you and your request

You are requested to fill in a form with your contact details, professional background and your request for advice. Please put in as much information as possible, as this will help to give your mentor a clearer picture of your situation.

Please note that mentors do not provide legal advice on the issues raised, or offer work experience, job placements or advice about training contracts. Nor do mentors hold themselves out as offering psychological counselling, a life coaching service or a CV writing/business plan writing service. On the other hand, they are very willing to talk about general work-related issues and to offer their insights, experience and views.

What happens next?

The information that you provide in your form will be treated in confidence, and will be used by the scheme administrator in two ways.

Mentor matching

First, the administrator will locate a suitable mentor match within the database. If the request spans more than one issue, you may be put in touch with more than one mentor.

Your mentor will usually be a women solicitor who can advise either from her own personal and professional experience or from experience gained from managing others. Mentors are not trained consultants but are volunteers who give their time generously. As we advertise for mentors on a regular basis, we are able to find a suitable mentor in almost all instances. On those rare occasions when the database does not contain a suitable volunteer mentor, the administrator will attempt to find a mentor through the AWS National Committee.

You will be informed when a suitable mentor is found. The mentor will be given your contact details and will get in touch with you (we do not give out the contact details of mentors without their permission). If your mentor does not contact you within a period of 2 weeks, starting from the date you are informed that a mentor has been found, please let the scheme administrator know. We can investigate why contact has not been made and, if necessary, suggest an alternative mentor.

Articles database

Second, the scheme administrator will locate articles that have previously appeared in Link, the official journal of the AWS. We have profiles of successful women and articles on setting up your own practice, going for partnership, change management, stress management and much more. You will receive only those articles which most closely relate to your request.

Preparing for the first mentoring conversation

The first conversation may last up to an hour and is usually done by telephone. Please have a list of questions ready to ask your mentor.

In order to get the most out of the conversation, you may also wish to do a SWOT analysis of your current situation. This is a way of representing your Strengths and Weakness, together with the Opportunities and Threats you face in a simple grid. It is an audit of personal characteristics, professional background, and social and environmental factors.

A SWOT of a solicitor thinking of returning to work after a break could look like this.

SWOT Analysis	
<p>Strengths¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive past experience • Impressive references from last firm • Good communicator • Willing and able learner • Transferable skills from voluntary work 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of practice for several years • Not familiar with recent case-law
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend legal updating courses • Get mentoring assistance • Speak to recruitment consultants • Use past contacts 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juggling work with childcare • May have long commute • Worried about how to adapt back into an office routine

The SWOT can be used to raise various aspects pertaining to the main issue with the mentor.

First mentoring conversation

During the first conversation, keep a copy of the mentee form that you filled in, as the mentor may refer to it. Also, keep a copy of your SWOT analysis, which you may wish to send to the mentor in advance.

You may also find it useful to take notes during the conversation. At the end, discuss with your mentor whether there should be a follow-up conversation and if so, when that should take place. Some mentees feel that one conversation is enough, whereas others consider a follow-up could offer further benefits. Please keep all information received through mentoring conversations confidential.

After the first mentoring conversation

If, as a result of the conversation, you would like articles on a specific issue, e.g. distance-learning courses, please contact the scheme administrator. She will try to find an article that matches your request in the database.

You will probably find that just speaking to somebody about an issue can be beneficial in itself. Other conversations, e.g. what to expect at a Government Legal Service assessment centre, may generate a helpful list of tips and hints. Some mentoring conversations, however, may lead you to translate what was discussed into longer-term action-based goals. If so, you may

find it helpful to use the SMART model. This means that goals should be:

- Specific** what exactly am I going to do?
- Measurable** how can I measure success?
- Agreed** whose help/agreement will I need to see this through?
- Realistic** is this a sensible goal given my time/family/financial situation?
- Time-limited** by when should I have completed my goal/task?

A solicitor who has decided to return to work and also to change specialism, might find that her SMART analysis for further study to become an employment lawyer could look like this.

SMART GOAL	
Specific	Enrol on a course in employment law with [provider]. ²
Measurable	Will complete course and gain certificate/diploma/LLM which will give me new skills and enhance my cv. ³
Agreed	Will arrange childcare to have periods of uninterrupted studying. Will contact my bank to organise a loan to cover the cost of the course.
Realistic	Cannot realistically attend a class two evenings a week. Will do distance-learning course to fit round my personal schedule.
Time-limited	Will enrol on course within 2 months. Will complete the course by [date]. Will have applied to [X number] of law firms/sent my CV to [X number] of recruitment agencies after completion of the course.

Follow-up conversation

As with the initial conversation, the follow-up can last up to an hour and is usually done by phone. It typically deals with further questions from the mentee and/or the results of the mentee actioning a suggestion from the mentor.

Evaluative study

After a few months you will be sent a form that will ask you to evaluate the mentoring scheme on an anonymous basis. Please complete it and return it in the stamped-addressed envelope provided. We are required to justify our Law Society funding for the scheme and positive comments made and our own responses to constructive criticism are useful evidence of the importance of the scheme to its participants. Your filling in the form will help colleagues who may wish to use the scheme in the future.

¹ It is important when considering your strengths to back them up with examples and evidence. A claim of 'good communicator' could be substantiated by making reference to internal and external training sessions given to colleagues/clients.

² Instead of "I will do some kind of employment course".

³ Instead of "I will get to grips with employment law."