

The aim of the first meeting (or indeed the first few mentoring meetings) is to focus on getting to know your mentoring partner and discussing what you both understand the mentoring partnership to be about. Ideally, within the first few meetings you will be ready to document your partnership in the Mentoring Partnership Agreement. The first meeting (or first few meetings) could focus around **three key areas of discussion**.

Getting to know one another. Take some time to get to know one another on a personal and professional level. Questions and activities that can support you in this include:

- Share your resume with one another—it's a great way for you both to get a quick snapshot of your professional careers.
- Share your backgrounds—how you got to where you are now?
- Find out about each other's personal interests—do you have any shared hobbies? Sporting interests? Artistic interests?
- What have been your personal and career highlights to date?
- What's happening that is challenging in the next 12 months for you both?
- Who do you admire as leaders? Managers?
- What professional associations/organisations do you both belong to?

Finding out what you both expect from the mentoring partnership. It's useful at the very start of a mentoring partnership to find out your expectations of the mentoring partnership and each other. This is important to ensure that both of you have a shared set of expectations and that one or other of the mentoring partnership is not disappointed along the way. Questions and activities that can support you in this discussion include:

- How do you both view and define mentoring?
- What experience have you had in a formal mentoring partnership previously? What worked? Didn't work?
- How do you both see the roles of mentor and mentee? What do you both need? Expect from each other?
- How much contact do you perceive you will have? What are the logistics of your partnership?
- What is your shared understanding of confidentiality (scope and limits of) and boundaries of the partnership?
- What other support systems and relationships do you have and how will mentoring be complimentary to these (eg. mentoring vs manager, therapist, counsellor, coach, family, friends etc)?
- What are the potential conflicts of interest or challenges you might experience? How will you solve these?
- What topics of discussion are 'in' and what are 'out' in this partnership?

Discussing what the focus and objectives of the mentoring partnership will be. It's vital that in a formal mentoring partnership there is a focus and some clear objectives. While you don't need to have the *perfect set of goals*, you do need to have some way of measuring the impact and progress of your partnership. Questions and activities that can support you in this discussion include:

- What are the Needs, Interests, Concerns and Expectations (NICE) for the mentee?
- Where is the mentee at now in relation to career and professional development - where would they like to be in 12 months?
- What will have changed as a result of the mentoring partnership?
- Who else could meet the needs of the mentee - how will they be involved in the developmental plan?
- What are the key areas the mentee considers they need developmental support in?
- What is the current 'personal brand' of the mentee? What would they like it to be?

This list is not exhaustive but we hope you find it useful in gaining clarity and focus for the first meeting(s) as you get your mentoring partnership underway.