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Libraries Connected Peer Mentoring Scheme – FAQs

**Who are Libraries Connected?**

Libraries Connected is a membership organisation comprised of every library service in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Crown Dependencies. They are partly funded by Arts Council England as the Sector Support Organisation for public libraries.

**What is the purpose of the Libraries Connected Peer Mentoring Scheme?**

The scheme is designed to complement the generous ad hoc support provided through the Heads of Service Network. Its purpose is to build resilient, strong, well-supported leaders by:

* Building/consolidating leadership skills of mentors and mentees.
* Empowering mentors and mentees: building confidence and courage.
* Supporting leaders who may feel/be isolated.
* Offering practical help e.g., capital projects, restructures, service transformation, working with Councillors, budgeting, technical knowledge etc.

**How does the scheme fit with Libraries Connected’s other learning opportunities?**

The scheme will build on the Heads of Service culture of mutual support, and it will further develop Libraries Connected’s Leadership Pathway for personal and professional development. In a time where we continue to experience change, having mentors to turn to is even more important. Indeed, increasingly people are creating their own ‘personal advisory board’ seeking different mentors to meet their various development and support needs.

**How has this scheme been developed?**

RedQuadrant has been commissioned by Libraries Connected to facilitate the development of this scheme. RedQuadrant has worked with a Reference Group of six Heads of Service to develop the aims of the scheme and the scheme structure.

**How much experience do I need to be a mentor?**

The experience you have gained in your personal and professional life has got you to where you are today. It is enough experience for you to be a mentor. Mentors often fear that they will not have enough experience to meet the expectations of their mentees. We would like to reassure you that the training day will give you the skills and confidence to be a mentor however many years you have worked, in libraries or outside libraries.

**Do I have to be from a library background to be a mentee or mentor?**

No! You should be a library Head of Service and managing libraries, but you do not have to be from a library background.

**Do I have to join the scheme in July? What if I wanted to join later in the year?**

This is a pilot scheme, running from July 2022 to January 2023. We are looking to make it sustainable for the next five years and will evaluate the pilot to make sure it evolves to meet the needs of HOS even better.

**What if I cannot get to the launch and training day in July 2022?**

We will be also running an online training (half-day) in July, but we would encourage you to try and attend the in-person event.

**What benefits will I get from coming to the launch and training day?**

You will meet and connect with all your colleagues who will be part of the pilot. You (whether a mentor or mentee) will have the opportunity to enhance your mentoring skills. You will be prepared to build a shared understanding of the framework of the pilot and of your mentoring relationship and anticipate issues which may arise. The day will prepare you to make the most of your mentoring.

**How will the matching work?**

Mentors will make a 2-minute video setting out a little of their experience and giving a sense of themselves. Mentees will see these videos on the launch day as well as have the opportunity to get to know all the mentors. At the end of the launch day, mentees will choose three potential mentors. Libraries Connected and RedQuadrant will then match people using these choices and the needs mentees have set out in their applications.

**Do the mentees and mentors have to meet in person?**

This should be decided between the mentors and mentees at their first meeting. In practice, we imagine most meetings can take place online, but some people may decide to meet in person occasionally.

**What happens if things go wrong between us?**

There is guidance in the scheme handbook, which we will give you at the launch. However, please be reassured that there is the support of a professional supervisor from RedQuadrant and staff at Libraries Connected.

**Can I apply to be both a mentee and a mentor?**

As we have only a limited number of spaces, you will be unable to apply as both a mentor and mentee.

**Is there any funding available to support my involvement?**

There is funding for your training and support. However, there is no funding for expenses to come to the launch day or attend meetings.

**What support is available?**

A launch day and training at the beginning of the scheme.

A scheme handbook including templates to guide you through the mentoring process.

Three themed drop-in sessions for mentors between July and December.

Ad hoc 1:1s with professional coach and supervisor between July and December.

**Do we have to stop meeting in January 2023?**

No, but if you are to continue meeting this must be agreed upon between the mentee and mentor in January.

**Will there be any kind of recognition that I can use professionally?**

Mentors will receive a Libraries Connected Peer Mentoring certificate at the annual conference in 2023.

**How will you evaluate this pilot?**

We have created a plan to evaluate the project. We may ask you to complete questionnaires during the project, but this is optional. The evaluation will be used to understand the impact of the scheme and evolve the scheme in the future.