



Women in  
Flood and  
Coastal Erosion  
Risk Management



# THE WOMEN IN FCERM GROUP MENTORING PROGRAMME

INFORMATION FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES

# WIFCERM MENTORING PROGRAMME

**Welcome to the Women in FCERM (WiFCERM) mentoring programme. We hope this will be a really valuable and exciting process for you.**

**The mentoring programme is being run by the WiFCERM Committee with the purpose of supporting women working across the FCERM sector with their growth as professionals.**

**This pack should provide you with all the information you need about the programme, but please contact us at [WiFCERMmentoring@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:WiFCERMmentoring@environment-agency.gov.uk) if you have any other questions.**

## DEFINITION OF MENTORING

There are many definitions of mentoring. Within this programme, we define mentoring as: *“A reciprocal, collaborative relationship developed to share and discuss information for the purpose of the mentees’ growth, learning and career development. The mentor shares their knowledge and experiences with others to support the development of the mentee.”*

## BENEFITS OF MENTORING

Effective mentoring benefits everyone involved, both the mentor and the mentee, the mentees’ line manager, and the organisation as a whole.

For the mentee, mentoring provides a safe haven to explore personal, work and career issues. The mentor provides a sounding board for difficult decisions, an independent view to put things into perspective and someone to encourage and support you when things aren’t going so well. They can also become a role model for some personal goals the mentee wants to achieve. Mentees can progress faster and develop wider skill sets than un-mentored colleagues.

For the mentor, mentoring is a great opportunity to develop the skills of developing others, away from the confines of their own team. It provides a time for the mentor to reflect during the working day. Working with mentees can provide valuable insights about the mentor’s own experiences and team.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF GROUP MENTORING?

The WiFCERM mentoring programme offers a different mentoring option. It is a group based programme, based around specific topics which all of the mentees have chosen to develop or achieve personal growth in.

We believe that a group based mentoring approach gives mentees an opportunity to gain insight and support from a larger group of people. It also assists the development of a support network of people all working towards similar goals and looking to develop in similar areas.

## WHY IS IT FOR WOMEN ONLY?

Women in FCERM is a networking group of professionals set up to support and connect women working across the flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) sector. We are focussed on women and those who line-manage them, but this is within a broader context of striving for gender equality for everyone so our membership is open to all.

This group mentoring programme supports delivery of this aim. We want to provide women with an opportunity to get collective support through a different format of mentoring - it is about taking an alternative format available to women who may feel that the existing formats don't work for them. However, the programme is open to both male and female mentors.

The group mentoring programme will covers issues which women have highlighted that would like additional support and guidance to support their growth and career development.

## FEEDBACK FROM THE MENTORING PILOT

The feedback from the mentoring pilot programme was overwhelmingly positive. Even with significant external factors (flooding and COVID-19) influencing the ability to attend face-to-face meetings it was clear that there was significant benefits for both the mentors and mentees. The testimonials below outline some successes:

### Mentors

- “It was my pleasure to be as a mentor on this platform and really loved sharing my experiences with other women who face similar challenges and learnt from theirs. It was a very positive journey”.
- “Yes this was a positive experience. I have met new people from different walks of life, and found it rewarding that I made a positive difference to them.”
- “Having never done anything like this did push me out of my comfort zone but I found it an immensely useful and positive experience. I feel I have gained confidence in myself and my own skills and abilities”.

### Mentees

- “I just wanted to share the news that I have a new role in the EA. I’ve really benefited from your mentoring in the ‘Women in FCRM’ pilot so want to say a huge thank you……. We all seem to be driving forward with new opportunities and roles.”
- “I’d just like to say thank you for organising these groups, I’ve found it really beneficial and I hope we will continue to meet in the future…….I’ve really loved our group of women, it’s been interesting, emotional at times, and a great help.”
- “I hope you run more of these. This one has been really helpful. I was encouraged by my manager to speak at the cascade, in front of 30 people, which I think I would have attempted but I would have probably had a breakdown if it wasn’t for the guidance of this course to help me get through it! So I can say it’s been a success for me.”
- “I have gained confidence, practical skills and techniques and been put forward for a bonus which I wouldn’t have pushed for before these sessions.”

- “It has been a very positive experience for me. On the outside it may seem like not much I do has changed as I still have the same job and hours but my attitude and parental guilt has changed a lot and I owe my new found peace to this group.”
- “10/10 positive – I have formed a great relationship with the people in my group who have helped me identify some of my strengths. We have been able to have open conversations about how we feel our confidence affects us and talked about the barriers to further success. Together we have come up with ideas to help us achieve more professionally and harness the strengths we have to do this.”

## THE 2021 PROGRAMME

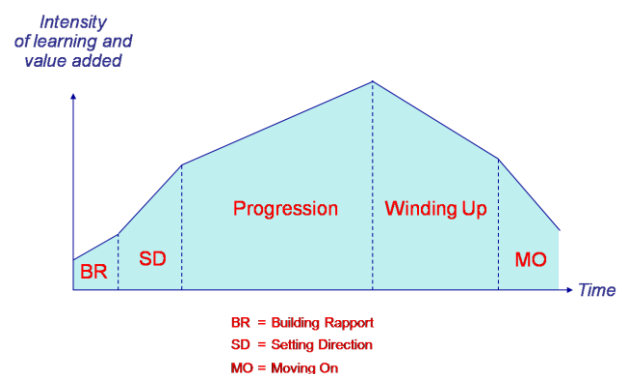
### HOW BIG ARE THE MENTORING GROUPS?

You will be part of a small group of 5 (1 mentor and 4 mentees) for your mentoring sessions.

This size group allows enough time for mentees and mentors to have in depth discussions and get to know each other. The objective is to provide you with a supportive group to comfortably share issues, advice and information, and gain insights which will help you progress towards your personal and professional goals.

### HOW WILL THE GROUP MENTORING WORK?

Mentoring relationships usually move along a pattern as shown in the diagram below:



Source: Clutterbuck Associates Training Material. Copyright 2002.

The initial emphasis is building and maintaining rapport and relationships with your mentor and fellow mentees so you feel comfortable, safe, supported and confident in sharing issues and concerns.

At your first mentoring group meeting, you will have the opportunity to share your thoughts and objectives about issues relevant to your topic. Your mentor will lead all of you through that discussion with everyone having an opportunity to share their own experiences.

This is an important stage which provides a firm foundation for the progression stage.

We advise that, where possible, you attend the first meeting in person, which will help you get to know the rest of your group, and establish those key relationships face-to-face. This first initial meeting will probably require 3-4 hours. We will consider any current government guidelines in these arrangements.

After this period, we advise that you meet as a group at least every 4-6 weeks. These meetings are an opportunity for you all to discuss any further issues, share progress on specific actions, and discuss other tools and techniques you have tried.

Previous mentoring groups have also successfully kept in touch through WhatsApp and MS Teams in between group meetings.

Once the mentoring has achieved its aims, it will be important to wind the relationship up mindfully and learn how to move on without the mentor – mentee relationships in place.

There is no set process for this; your mentor will agree with you and the rest of the group how you want to work together throughout the process, i.e. if you want to have ongoing contact, or if you want more meetings or support, WhatsApp group etc.

### WHAT ARE THE MENTORING TOPICS?

The group mentoring programme is a topic based mentoring programme. Although the conversation may vary over the mentoring period and deal with other topics the aim is to bring people together who want to develop in specific areas or have particular areas of personal growth or development they want to work on.

Therefore discussion will be focused around specific topics which are relevant to the mentor and mentees.

The mentoring topics which will be covered in the 2021 group mentoring programme are:

### Personal skills

- Personal Presence and Confidence – building and creating enough confidence and personal presence so you can go out there and do what you need to do brilliantly.
- Speaking in public/presentational skills – learning new skills and developing your confidence in presenting, public speaking and networking.
- Personal resilience – understanding and developing new skills to maintain and improve your personal resilience.

### Career progression

- How to get ahead in your career – sharing advice and experience on looking for, and taking forward, opportunities to progress your career.
- Developing as a line manager – supporting new line managers to develop the confidence and skills to become an effective, supportive and trusted manager.
- Becoming a good leader– understanding and learning from others about what makes a good leader (N.B: this is difference from becoming a good manager).

### Work-Life balance

- Being an older woman in the workplace – building confidence to continue your career development, share your wide experience and learn from younger colleagues.
- Work-Life balance – Advice, support and guidance on how to make the work-life balance work for you
- Part-time working and career development – Advice and guidance on how to progress your career.

### HOW LONG WILL THE PROGRAMME LAST?

We recommend that this programme will run for a minimum of 9 months. This allows for the relationships within the group to grow and develop, and for personal and professional objectives to be met. The mentoring groups can last longer if both mentors and mentees agree.

However, we do not recommend that one mentoring relationship last longer than 12 – 24 months as usually goals have been met within that period and a sort of comfortable dependency can develop which is not productive for either the mentor or mentee.

## WHAT ARE THE TIME COMMITMENTS FOR THE MENTORS AND MENTEES?

Both mentors and mentees will be expected to join an initial meeting (which should last a minimum of 1 hour), then continue to meet every 4-6 weeks throughout the programme period. However, the regularity and length of your meetings can be discussed as a group at the start of the programme, but we do encourage regular group meetings to help build relationships and check in on progress.

Mentors will need additional time between meeting to respond to, and act on, outcomes from the meetings.

**By signing up to be a mentor or mentee in this programme you are agreeing that will be able to make these time commitments. Please ensure you tick the relevant box on the Expression of Interest form.**

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR?

As a mentor, your role is to host and chair your group discussions. Mentors will listen to the issues, concerns, goals and experiences of the mentees. Mentors will actively encourage group discussions and sharing of experiences. You will provide independent advice, guidance, help, support and encouragement using their own valuable experiences. This will help mentees explore their thoughts and concerns and support them to work towards their own personal and professional goals.

Mentors can play different roles according to the mentee's needs. Some of the most important are:

- Sounding board – helping the mentee work through difficult decisions and weigh up alternatives
- Role model – an example to follow
- Challenger – someone to ask the difficult questions
- Career counsellor – helping the mentee build and implement a career plan
- Development advisor – helping the mentee build and implement a personal development plan
- Political advisor – explaining how an organisation or social system works; guiding the mentee through it
- (Critical) friend – sometimes just being there to listen and offer encouragement; at others, to provide the critical personal feedback, which would be difficult for the mentee to accept from a less trusted source
- Networker/ facilitator: helping the mentee develop

their own resources, from networks of other people, to knowledge of how to obtain finances and expertise.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MENTEES?

As a mentee, we also encourage you to provide additional support, advice and guidance from your own personal experiences to the rest of your group. Hopefully it will help you develop a network of contacts, dealing with similar issues, who will be able to offer continued support, possibly beyond the end of the mentoring pilots.

Essentially your mentoring group will offer a safe space, and time, for you to explore personal and professional issues.

# PREPARATION FOR MENTORING

It is important that both mentors and mentees take some time to prepare for the start of the programme. This will help ensure that the mentoring starts positively and constructively.

Mentees should consider their goals and objectives and discuss the programme with their line manager, maybe as part on ongoing training and development. However, this is not a requirement of being part of the programme.

Mentors should consider what advice and guidance they are able to share according to the topic they are mentoring on and how they will support the mentees to develop. No previous experience of mentoring is required by be part of the programme, and we can signpost you to some useful resources on mentoring if required.

## WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE AS A MENTEE?

The best place to start with deciding what you want to achieve as a mentee through the WiFCERM group mentoring programme is to analyse the gaps between where you are now and where you want to be. We encourage you to consider the following questions before your first meeting:

- What current issues, concerns do you have around your particular mentoring topic?
- What do you want to be different by the end of the mentoring pilot?

- How will you know when you have made progress or achieved your goal?
- What specific help do you want from your mentor (and mentees)?

**Please use these questions to complete the mentee Expression of Interest Form**

**HOW DO YOU WANT TO MENTOR?**

Great mentors are adaptable. They know when to be directive, pushing the mentees, and when to be relatively passive, letting the mentee control the relationship process. They also know when to focus on stretching and intellectual growth, and when it is better to provide support to nurture and help the mentee cope.

In preparation for mentoring it is important to consider the approach you wish to take, and think about your own strengths and weaknesses that arise around the topic you are mentoring on.

**WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MENTORING AND COACHING?**

It may seem like mentoring and coaching are similar, but they are not the same. Coaching is often used to help with a specific skill or to overcome a specific issue. A coach will use questions to help an individual recognise what they need to develop personally, either to more effectively reach a personal or work goal or to better deal with current work issues. A coach will assist, challenge and encourage, rather than direct, advise or teach. Coaching is about helping the individual work out what they need to do themselves to improve, and in the process what motivates them, and what gets in their way.

In comparison, mentoring is more about sharing information, guiding and advising. The mentor will use their greater knowledge and understanding of the work or workplace to support the development of the mentees.

While mentors may use the same skills and tools in their approach to mentoring, the relationship between a mentor and 'mentee' is different to that which will develop in a coaching relationship. Mentors can be more 'directive' and provide specific advice where appropriate - a coach would not offer their own advice or opinion, but help the individual find their own solution.

Some of the most important differences between coaching and mentoring are:

<b>Mentoring</b>	<b>Coaching</b>
Concentrates on the mentee sharing experience offering advice to the mentee.	Concentrates on asking questions to help the coachee explore and uncover their own thoughts and answers.
Ongoing relationships that can last for a long time. To be really successful, the mentor and mentee need to develop "rapport". They often become friends.	Relationship generally has a short duration. "Rapport" is not so important, although the client needs to be more comfortable with being open and honest.
Can be informal and meetings can take place as and when the mentee needs guidance or support.	Generally more structured in nature and meetings will be scheduled on a regular basis.
Agenda is set by the mentee with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare them for future rolls or specific skills development.	Agenda is set by the client and is focused on achieving specific, immediate goals.
Revolves more around developing the mentee professionally, particularly regarding their skills and their application to the specific work context.	Revolves more around specific personal development areas/issues perhaps related to behaviour, attitudes or self-awareness.
More long term and takes a broader view of the person. Often known as the "mentee".	Short-term (sometime time bounded) and focused on specific current development areas/issues.

(Reference: [Coaching vs mentoring - why the difference matters \(apm.org.uk\)](http://apm.org.uk))

**MENTORING CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

This code of behaviour sets out what both the mentor and mentees can expect from each other:

- Mentoring is a confidential activity, in which both parties have a duty of care towards each other.
- The mentor's role is to respond to the mentee's developmental needs and agenda; it is not to impose their own agenda.
- Mentor and mentees must respect each other's time and other responsibilities, ensuring they do not impose beyond what is reasonable.

- Mentor and mentee must also respect the position of third parties, such as line managers, or team colleagues.
- The mentees must accept increasing responsibility for managing the relationship; the mentor must willingly empower them to do so.
- Either party may dissolve the relationship if they feel it is not working for them. However, they have a responsibility for discussing the matter together, as part of mutual learning.
- The mentees are not obligated to follow the mentor's advice; but the mentee does have a responsibility to consider the advice given in as open a manner as possible.
- The mentor will not intrude into areas the mentees wish to keep "off limits" unless invited to do so. However, discussing these off-limit areas may help the mentee recognise how other issues relate to them.
- Mentor and mentees must be open and truthful to each other about the relationship itself, reviewing from time to time how it might be made more effective.
- Mentor and mentees share responsibility for the smooth winding down of the relationship, when it has achieved its purpose – they must avoid creating dependency.

**By signing up to be a mentor or mentee in this programme you are agreeing that you understand and will meet the stated code of behaviour. Please tick the relevant box on the Expression of Interest form.**

## WHAT BEHAVIOUR SHOULD MENTEES EXPECT OF THEIR MENTORS?

In effective developmental mentoring relationships, the mentee should expect:

- *Empathy* – while you may not have experienced exactly the issues that your mentee faces, you should demonstrate an interest in them and their development and a willingness to understand things from your point of view
- *Constructive challenge/ stretching* – the mentor will, when appropriate, push the mentee to think deeper, address uncomfortable issues and set higher personal ambitions. Many female mentees, in particular, report that their mentor encouraged them to go for and achieve promotions they thought were out of their reach
- *Sharing experience* – the mentor should use his or her own experience to provide guidance and advice; equally, however, they will be conscious that

what was right for them, may not be the best solution for you. Holding back on talking about their experience is something many mentors find difficult, but you should be aware that the important outcome is that the mentee finds a route forward that they feel comfortable with.

- *Confidentiality* – what is said between mentor and mentees is fully confidential, except in very special circumstances that may be defined by the program or by law
- *Friendship* – your mentee doesn't have to be your greatest friend ever. But you do need to offer them respect, trust and a degree of liking. It's hard to be fully open with someone you don't feel comfortable with
- *Help in understanding how the organisation works* – your greater experience and knowledge of people in the organisation can be critical in helping them achieve personal goals
- *Help in building networks* – whether the mentee is trying to get on the career ladder, to move up it, or simply wants to be more effective where they are, they need a variety of sources of help. A mentor can be an important gateway to these, either making introductions or helping them identify and contact people, who will be helpful to them.
- *Sounding board* – whenever the mentee needs to make a difficult decision, or rehearse a difficult conversation, the mentor can help think it through
- *Listening* – sometimes mentors help just by being there, when the mentee needs someone to talk to, who isn't directly involved in the issue.

The mentee should NOT expect:

- *Sponsorship* -- someone to put them forward for plum assignments, take their part in discussions about your career, and so on
- *Protection* – shielding them from learning from their mistakes; intervening in the relationship between the mentee and their boss/ teacher or other authority figure
- *Hands-on coaching* – doing the job of the mentee's line manager's or teacher
- *Therapy* – digging deeply into psychological and personality issues
- *Social work* – sorting out personal problems for them\*
- *A guru to follow* – mentors should be human, too!

\*Even where the mentor has the skills to provide professional counselling on, say, financial or marital

problems, to do so would change the role and the nature of the relationship. In general, mentors are expected to put the mentee in contact with other relevant professional resources.

## WHAT BEHAVIOUR SHOULD THE MENTOR EXPECT OF THEIR MENTEES?

The mentor deserves the mentees respect and consideration and both will be needed, if the relationship is to work well.

In particular, the mentee should:

- Recognise that the mentor's time and energy are precious, and should be used wisely
- Prioritise the mentoring group, please discuss and agree your involvement in the mentoring group with your line manager. This will help ensure you are able to commit to the process and give it the time and space it needs.
- At the same time, recognise that the greatest compliment to the mentor is to make use of their experience and wisdom – so they shouldn't be afraid to ask for a reasonable amount of their time. (What's reasonable will vary from programme to programme, relationship to relationship. It's usually a good idea to agree this at the very beginning of the relationship.)
- Prepare thoroughly for mentoring sessions – think through how to make use of the learning opportunity
- Be prepared to challenge the mentor constructively – they shouldn't take everything you say for granted.
- Listen to your views, but make their own mind up about what to do
- Offer you honest feedback about the nature and quality of the help they are receiving from you. (This is especially important if the relationship is not working and needs to be changed).

## FEEDBACK

We will be checking in with the mentoring groups to gain some feedback on your experiences so far, and whether we can improve the process of mentoring for Women in FCERM. This is a rolling programme and we hope to run further mentoring groups, starting later in the year. Your open and honest feedback will really help us with this.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

This pack should provide you with all the information you need about the programme, but if you have any further questions please contact us at: [WIFCERM-Mentoring@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:WIFCERM-Mentoring@environment-agency.gov.uk)