

# ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN BARRISTERS

## MENTORING SCHEME: AN OVERVIEW

Practice at the Bar is a rewarding and stimulating career, but one which is also often challenging on both a professional and personal level.

Part of the AWB's role historically has been to run a successful Mentoring Scheme for its members, offering an opportunity at varying career stages for analysis, reflection and action on work-related issues by talking informally to another barrister who can offer advice and support in order to try to assist the Mentee to achieve success in their work.

The scheme is ever-popular as we try to assist our members with difficult issues currently facing both the self-employed and employed Bar, and hence to ensure that as many members as possible have the chance to give and receive mentoring support we have reorganised our Mentoring Scheme to offer two conversations with a Mentor to assist a Mentee with one particular issue at a particular time. This now mirrors the scheme run by the Association of Women Solicitors.

We recognise that those who receive support at a specific stage in their careers are also keen in turn to help others: if you are over five years' Call and are prepared to become a Mentor, please read the Mentor Guidance Documentation sheet and fill out the form.

### **What can AWB mentoring offer me?**

Our Mentoring Scheme promotes an informal and confidential connection through which one barrister (the Mentor) voluntarily gives of her time to support, advise, and encourage another barrister, student or pupil barrister (the Mentee).

### **On what issues can I ask for advice?**

Over the years, AWB Mentors have most frequently been asked for advice about:

- obtaining pupillage or tenancy in a Chambers
- starting out in professional practice
- considering a move from the self-employed Bar to the employed Bar and vice-versa
- combining a career with a family and structuring an effective maternity leave
- moving Chambers or changing specialism
- applying for silk or a judicial appointment.

We aim to put members/Mentees in contact with other members/Mentors who have dealt with these issues during their own careers and who can assist from personal experience.

### **Are there any issues that the scheme does not cover?**

Mentors will not give you:

- legal advice on any matter raised
- work experience
- a pupillage or tenancy
- a CV/application-writing service, although a Mentor may offer tips as to a useful methodology
- any form of medical or psychological counselling.

For assistance on these issues that are not covered, you may wish to contact:

- your Inn of Court
- the [Bar Council's Equality and Diversity team](#)
- the [Bar Council's Ethics helpline](#)
- [LawCare](#)

### **How does the scheme operate?**

Our Mentoring Scheme offers two conversations with a Mentor to help a Mentee with a particular issue at a particular stage of her career. Our volunteer Mentors will listen to you and offer constructive and occasionally frank advice gained from their own experience of life in practice at the Bar, which may include recommendations of referral onto other organisations that might also assist with the issue.

Our Mentor database is designed to represent a cross-section of barristers of different ages, practice areas and viewpoints but who share the common desire to support other barristers in their careers.

The first conversation may last up to an hour and is usually done by telephone. A second conversation, if believed to be beneficial, is aimed as a follow-up discussion to the first conversation and takes place at a time of the Mentor and Mentee's choosing. If both the Mentor and Mentee agree, meetings can take place face-to-face. Fuller details of the intended structure of the conversations can be found in the Mentee and Mentor Guidance Documentation.

### **How do I apply for Mentoring assistance as a Mentee?**

Please read the Mentee Guidance Documentation and then complete the relevant application form. The form seeks a summary of your professional background and your queries so that the AWB Committee can match you with a Mentor. It is vital that you identify as clearly as possible the issue about which you are seeking mentoring support in order that we can best match you with a suitable Mentor. The information that you supply on the form is kept strictly confidential to the AWB Committee.

*References in our Mentoring paperwork to "she" and "her" should not be seen as preventing our male members from joining the scheme!*