

Mentoring facilitation guide for Lead Digital Mentors

After you have delivered the full day of 'Digital Mentoring: Helping your community Be Connected' training to Digital Mentors, you will provide them with two hours of follow-up support as part of a mentoring process.

Mentoring the mentors is an opportunity to embed the knowledge they gained during the training day, and check in to see how they are incorporating those new skills to support learners through Be Connected sessions. It also gives the Digital Mentors a chance to ask any follow-up questions they may have and reflect on their own practice.

This facilitation guide includes 6 half-hour activities you can pick and choose from as starting points for your mentoring sessions.

You can deliver the 2 hours of mentoring either individually or as part of a group. You can also choose to split up the 2 hours into shorter sessions, so that it best suits your community of Digital Mentors.

During the sessions, you may find it beneficial to share your own experience and anecdotes, or those of other Digital Mentors you have worked with. Anecdotes are a good way of making learning memorable and relatable, and can prompt Digital Mentors to share their own experiences.

We suggest using anecdotes after the Digital Mentor has had a chance to reflect on their own practice. Remember, if you're sharing stories from other people, be sure to respect their anonymity.

Activity 1: SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis can help a Digital Mentor better understand their strengths and manage their weaknesses, as well as identifying opportunities for growth and eliminate threats that could keep them from moving forward. Ask the Digital Mentor to divide a paper into four quadrants and write one of the four headings 'strengths', 'weaknesses', 'threats', and 'opportunities' in each. An example is on the next page.

Begin by identifying strengths. These are the traits or skills that set them apart from others. Questions to ask could include:

- How do your experience, skills, training or other expertise help you in your role?
- What would the people you work with or support say about your strengths?
- What achievements are you most proud of?

The next step is weaknesses. This part examines the areas in which they need to improve. Questions to consider include:

- Where are your experience, skills or training lacking?
- What might the people you work with say are your weaknesses?
- What do you avoid because you lack confidence, eg digital skills you shy away from supporting or talking about?

For the opportunities section, they should look at the external factors they can take advantage of to help them. Questions to examine include:

- How could other people help you?
- What technology would help you do things better?
- What could you learn more about to feel more confident with?

Finally, they should look at any threats to their role. This part accounts for the external factors that could hurt them in their role. Questions to consider include:

- What obstacles do you currently face in your role?
- Are there any upcoming new digital services / products that you're not supporting?

Talk through the results with the Digital Mentor. Help them identify actions they can take to use their strengths to address their weaknesses, and ways to convert threats into opportunities. For example, they might need to learn a new skill, practice more with a particular website, participate in relevant online communities or revisit items from the initial training day.

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---------------|------------|
| | |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| | |

Activity 2: Three things

This session gets the Digital Mentor focusing on the positives, acknowledging what could be better, and identifying where to make improvements. You will ask the Digital Mentor to consider three questions about the support they've been providing, and give three answers for each question.

The reason for asking for three things is to provide a focus for the Digital Mentor. Asking people to think of 'anything that's gone well / bad / can be improved' can lead to them just suggesting one thing for each, or even not suggesting anything. Requiring a small, specific number of things encourages them to reflect more.

What's gone well?

Ask the Digital Mentor to think about ways in which their support has gone well. Why do these things stand out? Examples might include:

- A session in which learners were highly engaged
- Positive feedback from a learner
- Resources that were popular with learners

What's gone not so well?

Has anything not gone to plan or been challenging? This could be how they feel about the support they've provided, the way learners have reacted or technical issues. For example:

- A session that just didn't seem to work like they'd hoped
- Situations or questions they weren't sure how to deal with
- Issues with equipment

What can we change?

Explain that the 'we' may include the Digital Mentors, Lead Digital Mentors and Good Things Foundation. This includes possibly fixing things that didn't go well, plus anything that can be improved on. This might include:

- More activities for learners to practise with
- Providing resources in different languages
- Better mobile WiFi connectivity

Activity 3: The road to success

This approach uses three conversational steps to move Digital Mentors from theoretical perfection to practical success.

1. Help Digital Mentors identify what success looks like

"If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there."

- Cheshire Cat, Alice in Wonderland.

Helping people picture what success looks like is a great starting point for any development initiative.

Ask Digital Mentors, "If you could wave a magic wand and things went perfectly, what would it look like?"

'Things' relates to the support they provide in their role, be it a group session, one-on-one support, etc. This activity encourages the Digital Mentors to describe the positive, tangible, detailed things that success looks like. It also helps you to understand how they define success and what they place value in, eg their own abilities, empowerment of learners, development of new resources.

2. Help Digital Mentors identify what's already working

It's often easy to focus on what's not working, what problems we need to solve and what challenges we need to overcome. It's good to step back and focus on what's already working; you have a valuable role in helping Digital Mentors achieve this.

Ask, "If you imagine a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is the picture of future success you just described and 1 is the worst it has ever been, where are you today?"

Even a very low score (apart from 1) suggests some positives. Discuss what good things happened to give this score. Identify what they can use from what worked to make improvements and how they can replicate that success. Keep the conversation focused on the positives, no matter how much the Digital Mentor might want to talk about negatives.

3. Help Digital Mentors produce ideas and alternatives for making progress

Encourage people to reflect on any similar challenges they, or others, have tackled in the past and what or who might be able to help.

Ask, “Have you ever faced something similar? If so, what helped then? Who else do you know that has dealt with a challenge like this, and how might they be able to help?”

This gets the Digital Mentor thinking about how previous experiences can be applied to drive future improvements. It also reminds them that they aren’t working in isolation; there are other Digital Mentors who might be in similar situations and they might all be able to help each other.

Activity 4: Open questions

Help the Digital Mentor focus on a time bound outcome while highlighting areas that may require growth or change. This may reveal how the Digital Mentor wants to continue developing in their role, or fundamental changes they need to make in order to achieve their goals.

"What do you want to be doing differently by the time of our next session?"

- "What are the things you need to achieve this?"
- "Who do you need help from?"
- "How will you know it's worked?"

It is likely that the Digital Mentor will have gained new skills, improved existing skills and had a number of other learning experiences since you last spoke with them.

"What have you learnt from your experiences since our last session?"

- "What do you wish you'd known earlier?"
- "How can you share this information with other people?"
- "If you could give other Digital Mentors one piece of advice, what would it be?"

You spoke with the Digital Mentors in the training day about helping people overcome their barriers. They may have faced their own barriers whilst delivering their own training.

"What are the barriers you are facing?"

- "How are these affecting the quality of the support you're providing?"
- "What have you tried to overcome them"
- "What have you learned from trying to solve these problems?"

While not technically a question, prompting the Digital Mentor for more detail can help them reflect more on events and identify potential improvements. Use this to follow-up on something the Digital Mentor mentioned previously, in this or an earlier mentoring session.

"Tell me more about..."

- "How do you feel about that?"
- "What could you change as a result?"
- "How could the learners experience be affected by that?"

Activity 5: Group mentoring session

Creating opportunities for Digital Mentors to connect with other people in the same role is a great way to promote learning from the experience of others. It also helps them appreciate that they aren't working in isolation and encourages the sharing of best practice.

Your goal in using this as a mentoring session is to guide the group discussion, encourage participants to share their ideas, and problem solve issues that arise as a team.

Start with some open questions. Ask everyone to answer each of the following questions. Some follow-up questions are provided to help you to get them to expand on their answers.

"What information from the training session have you used when digital mentoring?"

- "Why did that stand out to you?"
- "How has it changed your approach to digital mentoring?"
- "How have you adapted or improved on it?"

"What have you learnt from your experiences since our last session?"

- "What do you wish you'd known earlier?"
- "What one tip could you share from what you've learnt?"
- "What online resources have you found most useful / popular?"

"What are the barriers you are facing?"

- "How are these affecting the quality of the support you're providing?"
- "What have you tried to overcome them?"
- "What have you learned from trying to solve these problems?"

It's good to get the group talking about the positive outcomes they have achieved, and share practical ideas of how digital mentoring can work in practice with each other. Ask participants to each share one story (2 mins in length maximum) about a person they've supported or session they have delivered, covering:

- What inspired the person to learn?
- What techniques did they use to support them?
- What Be Connected resources did they use?

Throughout the session, listen for options to encourage team problem solving and add collaborative group activities. For example:

- "Has anyone else experienced a similar problem? How did you overcome it?"
- "That's an interesting problem that it sounds like a number of you are experiencing. Let's brainstorm some solutions together."

Activity 6: Observation and feedback

Watching a Digital Mentor delivering a session with learners is a great way to gather information you can offer feedback on. This might be highlighting things they do well, so that they can keep doing them, or making them aware of things they can improve on. And, learning doesn't have to be one-way; you might also learn things from what they do that you can use in your own delivery or can share with other digital mentors.

It's best to arrange a session to attend with the Digital Mentor and explain why you will be attending in advance. This reassures them that you're not trying to catch them out or take them by surprise.

Take notes during the session and keep your feedback until the end after all learners have left. Resist the urge to contribute or comment during the session as this can lower the learners confidence in the Digital Mentor. Even if they say something that's not quite right, keep it for feedback afterwards and allow them to correct it next time.

Here are some things to look out for:

- Regular use of 'filler words' (eg "um," "OK," "like," or "you know"). Often people don't know they're using them until someone mentions it.
- Does the Digital Mentor talk all the time or give the learners time to think, ask questions and practise?
- Use of tech jargon without explaining/reminding people what the jargon means.
- The pacing of the session: are learners being rushed, sitting there waiting, or is everyone being engaged throughout?
- Anecdotes that helped learners relate to the subject.
- Peer to peer support. This suggests the Digital Mentor has encouraged people to help each other and isn't trying to do it all themselves.
- Record learning, not just teaching. No matter how good or bad the mentoring is, if the participants are learning what they need to, then the session is being successful.

Giving feedback is a skill. Like any skill it can take practice to get comfortable doing it effectively. Here are a few pointers that can help:

- Ask the Digital Mentor how they thought the session went. This encourages them to reflect on their own delivery.
- Recognition is a powerful motivator. Praise can also get people to relax. It's important to recognise the positives as well as any areas for improvement, so always begin with the positives.
- Try and make the feedback focused on how the learners are affected. This can also make it less personal. Eg rather than saying "You talk too much," consider, "When someone's talking a lot it can be difficult for others to take in everything they're saying. Pausing and giving learners time to process new ideas can be very effective. Next session, try adding in some pauses and see how the learners respond."
- Allow Digital Mentors to put their point of view across and take note of explanations or mitigating circumstances.
- Concentrate on what the Digital Mentor can do about the feedback and how they can improve.