

# **LABOUR STANDARDS: Apprentice and Mentor Policy 2022**

## Document Owner: Head of Mears Learning

<b>Summary</b>	This document sets out Mears Group policy and procedure on Apprenticeships and Mentors
<b>Approved by</b>	Workforce Development Group
<b>Date approved</b>	
<b>Date reviewed</b>	17 March 2022
<b>Review period</b>	Annually
<b>Version/Reference</b>	
<b>Links to other policies</b>	Recruitment and Selection Disciplinary and Grievance Data Protection Safeguarding Policy Security Vetting Policy Succession Planning Policy Performance Management Policy Pay and Bonus Policy
<b>Author / Owner</b>	Heather Hughes

**CONTENTS**

1. INTRODUCTION
2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
3. POLICY SCOPE
4. CONTEXT
5. LEGISLATION & GUIDANCE
6. THE MODERN SLAVERY ACT 2015
7. PURPOSE OF MENTORING PROGRAMME
8. ROLE OF A MENTOR
9. ROLE OF MEARS LEARNING
10. ROLE OF LINE MANAGER
11. SELECTION PROCESS OF A MENTOR
12. CRITERIA FOR MENTOR BONUS
13. TRAINING FOR A MENTOR
14. CRITERIA FOR APPRENTICE BONUS
15. COMPLETING AN APPRENTICESHIP
16. COMPLAINTS
17. FURTHER INFORMATION

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This policy provides guidance to all employees on the process expected for apprentices, mentors as well as line management where appropriate. It applies to all parts of Mears Group with the exception of the Care business and should be read and applied in conjunction with other associated policies e.g. Recruitment and Selection, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Safeguarding, Security Vetting, Learning and Development policy, as well as other Group policies that can be found on Connect.

The policy covers apprenticeships programmes through Mears Learning and does not apply to other mentoring relationships such as coaching and mentoring as part of succession planning.

## **2. AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this policy is to set out the roles and responsibilities of the mentor and apprentice in order to ensure success whilst they are learning new skills and knowledge to enable them to be productive and achieve their apprenticeship qualifications.

The following guidelines will provide mentors and line managers with the information necessary for them to conduct a positive and meaningful mentoring relationship.

## **3. POLICY SCOPE**

This Policy applies to all parts of Mears Group. This policy applies equally to internal candidates (i.e.those already employed by Mears) as well as external candidates being considered for employment as an apprentice.

## **4. CONTEXT**

This policy works in conjunction with a number of other policies, procedures and working practice which are as follows: -

- Data Protection
- Recruitment Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Succession Planning Policy
- Pay and Bonus Policy

## **5. LEGISLATION & GUIDANCE**

This policy has been written with regard to the following legislation:

- Children and Young Person Act 2008
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

## **6. THE MODERN SLAVERY ACT 2015**

Equality, diversity and inclusion is important within Mears and forms part of our Company Policies and practices. As part of the checks in place within this policy, the aim is to help safeguard against human trafficking and individuals being forced to work against their will.

## **7. PURPOSE OF MENTORING PROGRAMME**

To provide advice and encouragement on all aspects of the job role including the working environment including on the job training. Supporting the apprentice throughout their apprenticeship, providing structure towards feedback, opportunities and support, ultimately facilitating successful completion of an apprenticeship with Mears.

A mentor should identify and plan learning opportunities for the apprentices to learn or practice new skills and knowledge in line with the requirements of the apprenticeship programme as well as supporting the company's operational requirements.

Facilitating discussions and an environment that supports and addresses:

- The company's culture and values
- Personal performance issues
- Technical advice and support
- Constructive feedback on quality of work, timekeeping and behaviour

## **8. ROLE OF A MENTOR**

Mentoring is a relationship with an apprentice that is outside line management which is of a confidential nature.

It is a role that supports aspects of personal development of an apprentice from a practical day-to-day perspective. Helping them settle into their job whilst learning new skills and knowledge.

The allocation of an apprentice will be a minimum of 6 months, to allow sharing of information about a mentor's role, as well as providing guidance, motivation, emotional support and role modelling.

To ensure that the apprentice is progressing in a timely manner through the apprenticeship programme and meeting objectives set by the training provider and line management at branch. A mentor should provide guidance enabling and empowering the apprentice to develop their own strategies to deal with day-to-day work once qualified in line with Mears Red Thread.

The role of the mentor is not the same role as a line manager; however it is expected that the mentor will assist in providing feedback to the line manager to allow for meaningful performance discussions in line with the Performance Management Policy. On occasion, the mentor may wish to direct the apprentice to line management, Mears Learning, the designated Safeguarding Manager or Human Resources for further support. It is anticipated that the mentor should be able to deal with most day-to-day queries and activities involving an apprentice.

## **9. ROLE OF MEARS LEARNING**

The apprentice mentoring scheme within Mears Group is overseen by the Head of Learning with the support of the Mears Learning Department.

Mears Learning will ensure that the mentors complete appropriate training before and during undertaking the mentoring of an apprentice. Ensure that mentors are supported throughout the process of being placed with an apprentice. As well as complete audit checks on the

completion of appropriate apprentice reviews, not only from a quantity aspect but also quality aspect.

As there is a significant investment into apprenticeships across the Group, Mears expect for most apprenticeships to be completed successfully, however this is not always the case. Therefore, Mears Learning may investigate where there is a high turnover of apprentices and provide recommendations to branch as appropriate.

## **10. ROLE OF LINE MANAGER**

It is important that whilst the apprentice is assigned a mentor that the manager also ensures that they support both the apprentice and the mentor(s) throughout the programme. This includes ensuring appropriate learning opportunities as created for the apprentice and where this is not possible this is highlighted to Mears Learning as soon as it becomes apparent for appropriate arrangements to be made in a timely manner.

Obtaining and participating in regular performance feedback sessions is crucial to ensure the success of an apprentice. Where there are unsatisfactory reports of the apprentice's attendance or progress from either the mentor or training provider, it will be the responsibility of the line manager to convene a meeting with the apprentice and mentor to discuss further. By having constructive feedback sessions this will enable the apprentice to be able to improve and be clear on targets and levels of achievement required moving forward.

Training and coaching should be arranged and provided by the line manager as and when appropriate, so they are fully aware of what is required of them within their role.

For more details on roles and responsibilities please refer to the Mears Group Apprenticeships - Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities document from Mears Learning.

## **11. SELECTION PROCESS OF A MENTOR**

As a mentor plays an extremely vital role within the Mears Apprenticeship programmes it should not be taken lightly on who is appointed as a mentor. It is essential that the mentor should not be the line manager of the apprentice and it is best practice that a mentor is selected and appropriately trained in advance of the start date of the apprentice.

Individuals who should be considered for a role of the mentor could be someone who has expressed a wish to go into line management, however unfortunately there is not yet a vacancy or they may themselves require development beforehand. By aligning an individual who has not previously had sufficient experience as a line manager, the opportunity of being a mentor may assist in providing some experience of basic management skills and therefore support the Group's overall succession plan.

An employee may have expressed a wish to become an apprentice mentor as opposed to a manager as a result of wanting to assist with the development of the future of Mears.

Any individual considered for an apprentice mentor role must be matched appropriately with skills, experience and performance to allow a successful apprenticeship and mentor relationship.

The mentor must have achieved at least a performance rating of 2 within their latest Performance Review Appraisal and will ultimately be agreed by the General Manager.

The appointment of a mentor must be mutually agreed between the appointed mentor and the line manager.

During the time in which an apprentice is placed with a mentor, they will be eligible for a bonus if they support an apprentice for 3 continuous months in the following areas displayed below.

First 3 months of an apprentice's service with Mears, the mentor must ensure that mandatory training has been successfully completed by the apprentices as detailed in the below table.

Trade Apprentice	Time Scale	Office –Based apprentice	Time scale
Completion of the Mears Group Colleague Induction	1 <sup>st</sup> day of employment	Completion of the Mears Group Colleague Induction	1 <sup>st</sup> day of employment
Health and Safety Awareness for Operatives	1 <sup>st</sup> day of employment	Health and Safety Awareness Office and Branch based staff	1 <sup>st</sup> day of employment
Asbestos Awareness ELearning	1 <sup>st</sup> week of employment	Information Security Fundamentals ELearning	1 <sup>st</sup> week of employment
Information Security Fundamentals ELearning	1 <sup>st</sup> week of employment	Display Screen Equipment ELearning	1 <sup>st</sup> week of employment
Working at Height ELearning	1 <sup>st</sup> week of employment	Mental Health Awareness ELearning	1 <sup>st</sup> week of employment
Electrical Safety ELearning	1 <sup>st</sup> week of employment	Safeguarding and Prevent ELearning	1 <sup>st</sup> week of employment
Safeguarding and Prevent Awareness ELearning	1 <sup>st</sup> week of employment	Policies and Procedures	1 <sup>st</sup> month of employment
Mental Health Awareness	1 <sup>st</sup> week of employment	Completion of the 1, 2 and 3 month probation review	
Alterations to Property Gas Reg 8 ELearning	1 <sup>st</sup> week of employment		
Policies and Procedures	1 <sup>st</sup> month of employment		
1-day SHE awareness course	Before 3 <sup>rd</sup> month of employment		
Completion of the 1, 2 and 3 month probation review			

The targets detailed below should be met throughout the full duration of the apprenticeship:

1. Ensuring at least 90% college and work attendance is met. Liaising with colleges and assessors throughout the apprenticeship programme	Being aware of attendance/absenteeism. Reporting absenteeism to Mears Learning. Having contact with the apprentice to check attendance
2. Engaging with colleges and training providers to ensure that apprentices are progressing and to find out what actions need to be completed.	Able to inform the line manager about what the apprentice is studying at college, able to find suitable activities in line with the college topics and apprenticeship standard
3. Provide statements of competence- which are required as part of the portfolio building	Producing statements to confirm apprentices' competencies, setting objectives and areas for improvement. Ensuring the apprentice is on target with college objectives
4. Ensure photographs are taken showing apprentices doing the work	Assist the apprentice by taking photographs during specific tasks that relate to the qualification
5. Arranging or working with Mears Learning to find appropriate work experience, if Mears cannot provide the full range of work tasks required for the qualification	If the apprentice needs specific work experience, in conjunction with the line manager and Mears learning to address work experience needed.
6. Checking that all mandatory and refresher training has been completed as highlighted in this policy i.e. SHE awareness, mandatory safety elearning, etc	Ensure that the apprentice attends regular toolbox talks and accesses the digital toolbox talks. Attendance sheets should be submitted to Mears Learning via Service Now.
7. Looking for opportunities for the apprentice to get a wide range of work experience	
8. Involvement in the completion of the apprenticeship	
9. Workday and systems are kept up-to-date and utilised correctly	Ensure all onboarding steps have been completed by both mentor and apprentice and Workday is regularly updated (i.e. up-to-date contact details)
10. Ensure attendance of any other training courses that has been organised as part of the apprenticeship programme	
<b>11. Ensure that risk assessments and Coshh assessments are completed and understood by the apprentice</b>	<b>If the apprentice is under the age of 18, risk assessments should be sent to the apprentice's parents/guardians for signature – Signed documents should be sent through to Mears Learning</b>

Upon evidence of the above targets being achieved and sign off from Mears Learning, the mentor may be eligible for a £250 bonus payment for each 3-month period that they support. Separate documentation will be sent to each mentor each year in line with the company Pay and Bonus Policy. It will be the responsibility of the line manager in agreement with Mears Learning to transact this payment on Workday for a payment to be made.

It may be required from time to time for an apprentice to be placed on a fortnight of work experience with another employee or potentially a third-party company, such as a subcontractor. Where this occurs, it would still be expected that the currently assigned mentor would remain in place.

This would also mean that the individual providing the work experience would not be entitled to the bonus payment as indicated within this document as they would not qualify as an apprentice mentor.

### **13. TRAINING FOR A MENTOR**

It is key that the same level of basic training is delivered to each mentor of apprenticeships to ensure a consistent and to a high-quality standard.

Mandatory courses to be completed by no later than 1 month of being allocated as a mentor:

- Introduction into mentoring
- Safeguarding and Prevent
- Mental Health

Optional additional courses to assist with being a mentor:

- Performance management
- Assessor qualification/ awareness course
- Mentoring and coaching qualification
- Appraisal training

### **14. CRITERIA FOR APPRENTICE BONUS**

It is recognised when an apprentice first starts, financial assistance in the first few years could really assist with the cost for requirements to become a fully qualified professional at the end of the apprenticeship, such as driving lessons, tools etc.

Therefore, Mears will pay a one-off payment of £250 between the first 12 to 20 months of employment subject to the following criteria is met:

- 90% attendance at college and work.
- College work is on target.
- Performance Appraisal score of at least 1.
- No employee relations sanctions (live or expired) during apprenticeship.
- No concerns raised regarding timekeeping.

The bonus payment will be subject to tax and national insurance and payment of this bonus will ultimately be at the discretion of Mears Learning.

### **15. COMPLETING AN APPRENTICESHIP**

Where an apprentice has yet to complete some modules and this has not been possible due to type of work available in line with the apprenticeship, it may be agreed that the apprentice contract may be extended. This should be in agreement with Mears Learning in order to ensure effective management of apprenticeships across the Group.

An apprenticeship will only be considered as being completed when the End Point Assessment certificate has been received by Mears Learning from the apprentice, therefore a line manager must not offer a fully qualified role or transact this on Workday until this has been completed and approval has been obtained by Mears Learning. Therefore, it is expected that in the event the line manager wishes to the apprentice to carry on working until the apprentice is able to apply to a qualified role, they may extend the current apprenticeship fixed term contract.

There will be no mentor bonus applicable where an apprenticeship has been extended due to the reasons above.

Every effort will be made to effectively resource plan to allow recruitment opportunities for apprentices when they have come out of their time of learning. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to retain apprentices in a qualified role and where there are no roles available after an apprenticeship programme has concluded, the apprentice's contract will end on the date of their fixed term contract.

Alternatively, if there are vacancies that an apprentice may be able to apply for, it would be expected that the apprentice is assessed appropriately.

## **16. COMPLAINTS**

In the event that the apprentice, mentor and or line management relationship is not working locally at branch, in the first instance this should try to be resolved locally wherever possible. If all parties concerned are unable to resolve this locally, it should be referred to Mears Learning who may consider re-allocating the apprentice to another mentor.

## **17. FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further information on the roles and responsibilities of important key parties for an apprenticeship within the Group, please see the Mears Group Apprenticeships - Stakeholders Roles and responsibilities document from Mears Learning.