

NW ADASS EDI Network Reverse Mentoring Guide



Background

During 2022 NW ADASS Executive asked the Programme Office to explore regional work on Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Our Future Workforce Board recognises that the adult social care workforce and the communities we serve have different experience within their careers, and of accessing care and support. These experiences can often reflect inequalities within UK society and can and should be improved.

Bernie Enright (Director, Manchester City Council) agreed to act as NW Strategic Lead for EDI, supported by the Manchester Principal Social Worker, Jolaade Anjorin.

The Future Workforce Board agreed to focus on:

- Race and Ethnicity, particularly focusing on anti-racism, in part learning from the achievements and experience of the NW NHS BAME Assembly.
- The internal council workforce for health and social care.

We launched this work at the October 2022 NW ADASS Annual Conference, hearing from poet Lemn Sissay and colleagues working on anti-racism from Manchester and Coventry City Councils.

Many DASS's pledged to start Reverse Mentoring Schemes in their Local Authorities at the Annual Conference in response to what they heard. Reverse mentoring was identified as having the potential to positively impact the culture of the workplace and experiences of BAME ASC staff. Despite this, there are limited resources available on how to effectively implement reverse mentoring. The NW ADASS EDI Network recognised this issue and have, in collaboration with Manchester City Council, designed a guide for Directors and Senior Managers with tools and resources to provide a starting point in this process.

What is Reverse Mentoring?

Reverse Mentoring enables people in senior positions (the mentee) to learn from and understand issues from the perspective of people in less senior roles from under-represented groups (the mentor). At the same time, less senior people are exposed to new ideas, experiences and networking opportunities. The key role of the mentor will be to provide an insight into the difficulties and barriers they may have faced. This provides opportunities to explore how the more senior leader could learn from the mentors experience. As a result, they may adapt their leadership approach to ensure they are more inclusive and appreciative of the diversity of their workforce¹.

Four stages to start Reverse Mentoring in your Local Authority.



¹ NHS: A Guide to Reverse Mentoring as part of anti-racism toolkit

Step 1. Evaluate



Take some time to evaluate where your LA is at.

The following steps and questions can help guide your thinking:

- What is the shape and composition of your workforce? What does your data tell you? Do you collect data about this?

- Does your workforce reflect the area and communities you serve?

- What EDI initiatives/programmes/training are already in place?

- How successful have these been? Why or why not?

- How do your staff feel about EDI? Is EDI embedded in the organisation?

- Communicate and share your plans about Reverse Mentoring within the organisation.

Step 2. Prepare



Now you understand where your organisation is at, you can use your findings to begin the practical steps required to create a Reverse Mentoring Scheme:

- Decide what your aims are for delivering reverse mentoring in your LA.

For example, in Manchester this was to:

- ❖ Help challenge engrained views on what talent looks like.
- ❖ Breakdown stereotypes and biases.
- ❖ Help improve diversity in middle and senior grades.
- ❖ Provide a unique opportunity for mentors to share insights and experiences.

- These aims can then inform how you implement reverse mentoring in your LA.

It is also important to have practical resources on hand for people who are interested or plan to take part (visit [Appendix 1](#) for more information).

- Prepare a briefing session for each party with accompanying resources. This could be run in-house or by external providers. This way both individuals enter the relationship knowing what is and isn't expected of them.
- For mentors, guidance on how to structure a session can increase their confidence entering into the relationship.
- Training for mentors on how to tell their story in a constructive way is also valuable, as it means that mentees will have something to take away from each session.

- Provide ideas for ice breakers for the first session to help mentors and mentees get to know each other and create a relaxed environment.
- Both mentors and mentees should have access to a mentoring log to record contact hours, keep track of conversations they have had, goals they have set, and actions they have committed to (See Appendix 3 and 4 for an example mentoring and reflection log).

Other top tips before you begin:

- Ensure reverse mentoring is well embedded into the Council's overall coaching and mentoring offer.
- Mentors should be carefully selected to ensure that they can share their story in a constructive way, avoiding the sessions becoming an opportunity to "rant" or solely to air their complaints.
- Equally, it can be a big step for someone to put themselves forward as a mentor for a senior manager and they may need individual or group support.
- It is important that line managers are on-board with the process and the time commitment required.
- Mentees must also be fully invested in the process and not simply "ticking an EDI box".
- Keep the cohort small. Depending on resource and capacity this could mean no more than 12 mentors and mentees.

Step 3. Implement



Once you have completed Step 2, it is time to implement Reverse Mentoring in your Local Authority.

Matching

- Ask potential mentors and mentees to fill in a form about themselves and their role.
- Take into account people's preferences.
- Allow mentors to have some choice over their mentee.
- To ensure a balanced power dynamic it may help to select individuals from different Directorates.
- Remember – there is no science behind a good match!

Once matched, it is recommended each party sign a **contract** confirming:

- ❖ When they will meet.
- ❖ How often they will meet.
- ❖ The length of each session.
- ❖ Confidentiality.

(For example, Manchester's Reverse Mentoring Scheme involved meeting for one hour every month for 6 months. See Appendix 2.)

Once the relationship is set up, it is worth considering the following:

- Given the sensitive and personal nature of Reverse Mentoring, flexibility is key. Be respectful and understanding of mentors if they do not feel able to share their experiences at the previously arranged time.
- Ensure a clear method for evaluating the relationship is in place.
- Reverse Mentoring is a relationship and sometimes they don't work out. Remind those involved that this is ok.
- Each party should have a contact they can go to if they no longer wish to continue the relationship.

Step 4. Review



Outcomes for a process like reverse mentoring can be difficult to quantify however it is important to find ways to measure it.

- Ask mentees to fill in a survey before and after the process to see what they gained from the experience and how they feel about it.

Based on questions used by Manchester, some ideas are:

- ❖ How well do you understand what it's like to be a Black, Asian Minority Ethnic worker at your organisation?
 - ❖ How well do you understand how to best support Black, Asian Minority Ethnic workers at your organisation?
 - ❖ Do you feel you are more informed about race in the workplace?
 - ❖ What have you learned?
 - ❖ What are you going to do more of or differently going forward?
 - ❖ How will you link this to your workforce equality objectives to shape and influence your service?
 - ❖ Any other comments?
- The lead for Reverse Mentoring in your organisation should also meet with mentors following completion of the scheme to hear what went well or not so well from their perspective.
 - This learning can inform and improve the experience for the next Reverse Mentoring cohort.

- When done well, reverse mentoring can benefit the mentor through **new skills and perspectives**.
- Meanwhile, the mentee can gain a valuable **insight into company culture**, values, business strategy and can **tap into years of sector experience accrued by the mentor**.

We've added a "[Resources to help you](#) section" so you have quick and easy access to all the materials available to support you.

Resources to help you

General Guidance:

[Reverse mentoring: seeing things differently - Civil Service \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

['Reverse mentorship': How young workers are teaching bosses - BBC Worklife](#)

[How reverse mentorship can help create better leaders | The Way We Work, a TED series - YouTube](#)

[Co-production | WMADASS \(wm-adass.org.uk\)](#)

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/north-west/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2021/05/A-Guide-to-Reverse-Mentoring.pptx>

[5 Common Pitfalls of Reverse-Mentoring Programmes, and How to Avoid Them. \(inclusivegroup.co.uk\)](#)

Places to look for data about your community and workforce:

- ONS Population Data: [Population estimates - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/population)
- Skills for Care WDS: [Local area information \(skillsforcare.org.uk\)](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk)
- Skills for Care ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment): [ASYE \(skillsforcare.org.uk\)](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk)
- Skills for Care WRES (Workforce Race and Equality Standard): [Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard \(skillsforcare.org.uk\)](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk)
- Social Work Health Check Survey Report. [National summary report of the employer standards survey for registered social workers 2022/23 | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk)

Appendix 1. Manchester's Mentoring Pack

Reverse mentoring is senior leaders being mentored by a more junior colleague who, from a diversity and inclusion perspective, is different from them in some way, and therefore experiences their career differently. As a mentor your aim is to empower mentees to identify and make positive changes in their areas that promote equality.

Our Vision

Manchester City Council's aim is for Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic staff to share their lived experiences as Mentors, with leadership who will be Mentees. It is also an opportunity for both to learn from one another, exchange skills and expertise and having exposure to different areas of the organisation.

Why are we doing it?

Providing a safe space to explore with their Black, Asian Minority Ethnic staff their lived experiences whilst working for the Council.

Increasing cultural awareness levels within MCC (Manchester City Council) senior leadership teams.

The aim is to create improved racial equality which will lead to meaningful change within the whole organisation.

Benefits to you

Get to know colleagues you may not usually interact with. Develop more confidence in engaging with senior leaders.

Improves communication about diversity in the organisation.

Gives insight into the culture and behaviours of the organisation.

Develop mentoring skills and experience.

Reverse mentoring can offer challenge and support to established hierarchies.

Make equality the responsibility of all leaders and managers in Manchester.

Leaders reflect on what they have learnt and developing actions that lead to addressing imbalance.

Opportunity to influence key council decisions / strategy.

What will this look like for me

- You will be able to commit to a mentoring relationship.
- This could range from a minimum of 4 and up to 6 sessions within the mentoring period.
- One session per month.
- The length of a session is up to 1hr.
- You are available to attend any required mentoring training session (tbc).
- Flexibility to meet with mentee in a mutually agreed setting.
- Support from your line manager.
- Being able to bring your whole self and sharing insight into your individual experiences and observations.

Confidentiality – Role and Responsibilities

- ∕ The relationship is confidential.
- ∕ It is important that the mentor / mentee from the outset discusses the scheme with their line manager to ensure their commitment and support to the mentoring relationship.
- ∕ The relationship is an equal partnership.
- ∕ Mentee must commit to the process through protecting time with the mentor.
- ∕ Both must be open to having difficult conversations with shared goals of improving race equality within the council.

Evaluating the scheme

The scheme will be evaluated in several formal and informal ways. Everyone taking part will be asked to give feedback on their experience through questionnaires and or discussions so that the scheme can be further developed.

First Session Activity - Tree of life

With your mentee, both complete the Tree of Life, using drawing to fill an A4/A3 size piece of paper (30 mins) - labelling each part of the tree to represent the various parts of yourself as follows:

Fruits - Your gifts/skills

Leaves - The things that give you strength

Branches - The aspirations you are working towards

Trunk - Your values

Roots - Your formative experiences/background

Spend 5 minutes each presenting your tree.

Reflect together.



Making It Work

Who makes a good mentor?

The ideal mentor is someone who has:

- € A good understanding of the organisation
- € A genuine interest in developing other people and the ability to facilitate learning
- € A good track record of motivating staff
- € Lived experience of Black Asian Minority Ethnic colleague within the council
- € Sufficient time to develop the relationship
- € Well-developed interpersonal skills
- € An open mind and flexible attitude
- € An action – orientation towards problems
- € Able to ‘tell truth to power’

What happens if things go wrong?

If either or both parties feel that the mentoring relationship has irretrievably broken down, the partnership may be ended. Every effort will then be made to find an alternative mentor / mentee if it is requested.

What support will I have?

This programme will potentially involve uncomfortable conversations between participants.

Mentors will be supported via training and the Talent & Diversity Team, who are leading on the programme across the Council. The team will be providing regular check ins to ensure the wellbeing of mentors.

To speak to a member of the Talent and Diversity Team, HROD (Human Resources & Organisation Development). If you contact T&D at [email] in the first instance, with the subject heading Reverse Mentoring and provide your telephone number. We will contact you to capture your information and consider the most appropriate course of action, signpost, or advice.

Or you have the option of contacting the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for support.

Appendix 2. Manchester's Mentoring Contract

The purpose of this agreement is to develop a mentoring relationship between us to share the Mentor's experiences and improve the Mentee's opportunities to reduce racial inequality. The sessions will explore topics around race specifically but also an opportunity for both to learn from one another, exchange skills and expertise and have exposure to different areas of the organisation.

Ground Rules:

a. Confidentiality

In signing this contract, you agree that any private shared information within the sessions will remain private in line with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).

b. Commitment

You are committed to attending sessions and training as required.

c. Honesty

The purpose of the programme is to create an environment where honesty is a key factor.

d. Openness

The success of the programme will depend on openness by both the Mentor and Mentee in a safe environment.

The sessions should not be used to address personal issues within the Service.

e. Trust

The development of a trusting relationship between the Mentor and Mentee will ensure the understanding of equality and diversity becomes embedded within the structure of Manchester City Council.

f. Frequency

Monthly – dates to be agreed in advance at initial session for a minimum period of between 4 – 6 months.

g. Number of sessions.

To be agreed between both parties. A minimum of 4 is required.

- h. Length of sessions
45 minutes to 1 hour
- i. Location
To be agreed between both parties. Either virtual or face to face and a mutually agreed location.

As a Mentor/Mentee in signing this contract you agree to abide by the rules set out above and participate in the whole programme.

Mentors will be supported via training and the Talent & Diversity Team, who are leading on the programme across the Council. The team will be providing regular check-ins to ensure the wellbeing of mentors.

To speak to a member of the Talent and Diversity Team, HROD (Human Resources & Organisation Development). If you contact T&D at talent@manchester.gov.uk in the first instance, with the subject heading Reverse Mentoring and provide your telephone number. We will contact you to capture your information and consider the most appropriate course of action, signpost, or advice.

Signature Mentor

Date

Signature Mentee.....

Date

Appendix 3. Manchester's Meeting Log (optional)

| |
|----------------------|
| Date: |
| Time and location: |
| Areas discussed: |
| Any follow up steps: |

Mentor signature:

Mentees signature:

Date, time, and venue for the next meeting:

Appendix 4. Manchester's Mentor Reflection Log

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| Overall, how did the session go? |
| How well did I listen? |
| How well did I share my stories? Did my mentee hear what I wanted? |
| Any feedback received from mentee? |
| How well did I give feedback? |
| Based on my reflection and feedback received, what do I need to improve for the next session? |