



## ***Steps to Success: the SLA Mentoring Scheme***

### **Introduction**

Steps to Success: the SLA Mentoring Scheme was originally suggested by an SLA member as an idea to support newly appointed school librarians by putting them in touch with an experienced school librarian. This may not be in the same geographical area as nowadays virtual mentoring by email/phone/Skype/Facetime works well. The SLA thought it was such a good idea that we decided to produce documents to help individuals set up a mentoring relationship and to hold a register of potential mentors and mentees. The scheme is open to all SLA members. It is not intended to duplicate CILIP mentoring which is for the purpose of supporting candidates through chartership, revalidation or fellowship nor is it intended as a substitute for the invaluable practical advice and training provided by local School Library Services.

The SLA will act as facilitator to match potential mentors with mentees and provide contact details. The SLA hope this provides the structure needed for a successful mentoring relationship to develop. However mentoring is a private partnership between two people and it will be the responsibility of the mentor and mentee to ensure its eventual success. Both the mentor and mentee will have the opportunity to develop skills, gain knowledge and experience all of which will enhance their individual development and effectiveness in their respective posts.

Any individual interested in taking on the role of mentor or mentee would be well advised to seek support from their employer. It may be that you will need to ask for time away from work or to claim for expenses. Even if this is not the case many employers will be pleased to see an employee taking the initiative for their own development. We regret that the SLA is unable to reimburse any expenses.

The role of the SLA in the process will be:

- To make initial introductions between mentor and mentee.
- To maintain a record of all mentoring partnerships.
- To gather feedback and carry out an evaluation of the Process
- To continue to review and develop the mentoring tools

### **A Definition of Mentoring**

Mentoring is about helping someone to develop. It is a relationship designed to build confidence and help the mentee to take increasing initiative for their own development. The mentoring process can be described as:

*A formal voluntary arrangement where an experienced individual provides one-to-one support and encouragement over a period of time to another person in order to assist them set and achieve goals; develop their skills; manage their own learning and development and maximise their potential to become the person they want to be.*

ROGER COURTNEY **A Guide for the Journey** Volunteer Development Agency 2000

*Mentoring includes coaching, facilitating, counselling and networking. It is not necessary to dazzle the protégé with knowledge and experience. The mentor just has to provide encouragement by sharing his enthusiasm for his job.*

DAVID CLUTTERBUCK **Everyone needs a mentor** CIPD 1991

A useful way of understanding what mentoring is all about is to see it as a relationship and not an activity. An effective mentor does not insist that you do everything they tell you but they will support your own development and learning and use their experience to help you build your confidence so that you can determine your own future career path.

It may be helpful to have a look at some common misconceptions about mentoring. Mentoring is not teaching or instructing someone in the right way to do things. It is not talking to a friend outside work and it is not going to someone for counselling, although a good mentoring relationship may contain elements of these when it is appropriate.

### **The Potential Benefits of Mentoring**

Although a mentoring relationship is usually focussed on developing the mentee there are many potential benefits for the mentor including:

- The opportunity to reflect on your own personal development
- A sense of increased job satisfaction from talking about your role and experiences
- The opportunity to develop and improve your interpersonal skills
- The satisfaction of nurturing new talent
- A sense of an improved professional standing amongst your peers
- The chance to develop a meaningful relationship with a fellow librarian

The mentee can gain many benefits including:

- Advice and guidance from an experienced colleague
- An increase in self confidence
- Access to new contacts in the sector
- The opportunity to plan for their own career development
- The chance for some candid feedback on ideas and actions

The mentee's school can benefit by:

- The mentee's development of a skills bank
- A more focussed employee
- A planned work programme
- Increased efficiency in the mentee
- An improvement in the mentee's morale
- A low cost staff development and CPD