



HOW-TO GUIDE

MENTORSHIP, SPONSORSHIP, AND COACHING FRAMEWORK

Executive Sponsor for race





Introduction

Fair access to opportunities, stretch assignments, good work and projects are key to enable talent to shine and employees to progress. Fair and equitable access to opportunity should be an employer's priority.

Executive Sponsors can enable and empower them through mentorship, sponsorship and coaching.

BITC has collected trends on the desire for mentorship and sponsorship with YouGov over a 10-year period from 2015-2024 and the evidence is the desire for mentorship and sponsorship is higher from people from Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse groups in the UK.

Evidence on mentorship and sponsorship

In 2015 and 2018, Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse workers (32%) were 2.3 times more likely to have a

mentor in their workplace than their white counterparts (14%).

However, in 2021 Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse employees (28%) were 1.6 times more likely to have a mentor at work than their White counterparts (17%) – showing a significant decrease in mentors for Black, Asian Mixed Race and ethnically diverse employees.

In 2021 the desire for mentors and sponsors was as strong as ever from Black African employees (54%), Indian employees (44%), followed by Pakistani employees (39%), Bangladeshi employees (37%) and Black Caribbean and Mixed-Race employees at (34%) and 20% of White employees said they want a mentor¹

Our Race at Work 2015, 2018 and 2021 survey trends have found that almost 1 in 3 Black employees in the workplace, 31% desire sponsorship² – higher than any other ethnically diverse group in the UK³.

¹ Race at Work 2021

² Black Voices Report 2020

³ Race at Work 2021

Evidence on the impact of job coaching

BITC runs a Job Coaching programme⁴ encouraging employees to support young people with applications and interview skills and some of the key actions that have been effective can be incorporated in the coaching dimension of this framework.

Through the BITC job coaching programme 51% of job seekers in the programme move into employment, education, or apprenticeships, 88% report improved skills and wellbeing after completing the programme and 98% report improved skills after completing the coaching sessions.

The strategic objective is to ensure that every young person and job seeker feels supported and has a clear pathway into work and fair access to the skills they need to thrive regardless of their background.

Our Inclusive Recruitment Campaign is working to remove barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups through the Opening Doors framework.⁵

⁴ BITC Coaching for Growth

⁵ Opening Doors Framework

The data collected by the government found that:

- 3% of white people were unemployed in 2022, compared with 6% of people from all other ethnic groups combined
- People from the combined Bangladeshi and Pakistani (9%), Asian 'other' (7%) and black (7%) ethnic groups had the highest unemployment rates out of all ethnic groups
- In every ethnic group, 16- to 24-year-olds were more likely to be unemployed than any other age group
- Out of all regions, Yorkshire and the Humber had the highest unemployment rates for people from the mixed (15%), 'other' (15%), and combined Pakistani and Bangladeshi (12%) ethnic groups.⁶

Executive sponsors can help to facilitate spaces for mentorship and job coaching for new hires within the organisation and through employee volunteering.

⁶ [Unemployment - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures](#)

A circle model and approach to coaching, mentorship and sponsorship

BITC launched a Cross Organisational Mentoring Circle programme in 2013 and following a Seeing is Believing Visit with business leaders in 2013, piloted unemployed mentoring circles in 2014 and 2018 with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentres⁷.

The GROW model of coaching can be adapted to support young people in their job search, interview preparation and successful induction into work.

All circle members can participate in this activity and employees can commit to mentor and coach at least one young job seeker to seek and secure work and to access the skills they need to help them to move successfully through the induction process and to examine a potential career pathway to progression for the future.

Employers can use the materials they already have to support circle participants and coach young people through the recruitment process with review of CV

content and mock interview practice and insights.

- Coaching is commonly applied in leadership development, career progression, personal growth, performance improvement, and team dynamics. It's distinct from mentoring, as it focuses on forward-looking solutions rather than just advice.
- Active Listening and Rapport Building to understand young person's needs.
- Upskilling which can include mock interviews and CV preparation and digital skills development.
- Confidence Building: which includes supporting and encouraging clients to recognise their strengths, transferable skills and build resilience on their job hunt and identifying career pathways.
- Where possible helping them to access opportunities through business networks

Partnership with Youth Futures Foundation

Business in the Community (BITC) has launched its Talent Unlocked

⁷ Race at Work 2018

partnership with Youth Futures Foundation, the national What Works Centre for Youth Employment.

Recent research from YFF found that 48% of ethnically diverse young people have experienced discrimination when seeking to enter the workplace. They are also more likely to be engaged in low-paid, insecure employment.

Compared to other forms of discrimination, ethnic discrimination presents the biggest barrier for young people entering work. ⁸

Build on action on mentoring already underway in your organisation

Action on mentorship and sponsorship from Executive Sponsors and line managers can also contribute to building talent pipelines and we know from our research that mentoring programmes and initiatives are already within organisations, and it is important that they continue

Business in the Community runs a Cross Organisational Mentoring programme for more than 10-years to support employers and employees across a range of sectors and organisations.

72% of the 238 employers participating in the BITC Race at Work Charter Survey 2023 responded positively to conducting reverse and two-way mentoring in their organisation.

Executive sponsors can lead a mentorship and sponsorship circle, and we need leadership and action from executive sponsors now and in the future, so that employees from lower socio-economic and ethnically diverse backgrounds can have their voice heard and included around key decision-making tables at different levels within organisations.

These circles can be designed to ensure that learning and insight and opportunities are passed on through managers to more junior employees.

⁸ <https://youthfuturesfoundation.org/what-we-do/flagship-programmes/talent-unlocked/>

Co-design and create with employees, participants and new talent

This approach can give leaders a framework on which to build their mentoring and sponsorship network. The details of the design will need to be tailored to each organisation.

You can agree with participants on what great sponsorship looks like, including roles, commitment required, and how to best leverage relationships in the circle and agree and facilitate regular forums for participants to share learnings & experiences.

It is also to agree conditions of exit, if for any reason the forum is not working for an individual or they cannot commit to the agreed framework and commitments. An agreed timeline is good, so that new people can be included, and individuals can focus on sharing what they have learned with more junior employees, young people, jobseekers or students.

If you have employee resource groups and employee networks include them in the design and encourage them to volunteer as job coaches for their own development and opportunities to inspire others as role models.

Some sponsorship and mentorship actions that leaders can commit to include:

- Facilitate regular sessions (timings to be agreed)
- Sharing insight and expertise and opening doors to expand personal networks where possible
- Encourage active peer networking within the circle among participants and alumni.
- Encourage participants to host circles of their own with junior employees and/or young job seekers.
- Set goals and targets⁹ to see results in progression and representation.

Agree practical mentorship and sponsorship actions

Mentorship can include offering guidance on work assignments, career decisions, professional dilemmas and can provide a fresh perspective to problems and challenges.

It can also provide a safe space for mentees and mentors to ask questions and discuss professional development and where mentors can act as a sounding board and share insights from their own experience.

For circles to succeed all parties need to

commit sufficient time and energy to nurture relationships to build trust and personal connection. Everyone wanting to participate in a circle needs to be willing to adopt this as a core commitment.

Expectations need to be managed also, and any objectives set need to be realistic and achievable. Talent within an organisation is progressed through access to stretch opportunities, high performance and delivery of tangible results.

Some practical **mentorship actions** an individual or circle can take include

- Sharing insights, learning, knowledge and experience
- Sharing information quickly that can otherwise take months or years to learn or obtain
- Signpost to additional resources and people he can help and advise
- Help members to build connections and expand personal networks
- Challenge and inspire each other to achieve more and overcome obstacles

Sponsorship is where a senior leader in an organisation is an active advocate to progress talented employees in their careers.

The sponsor is proactive and talks to other leaders about employee potential and helps to identify and create opportunities for progression at work.

Sponsorship can help to ensure the recognition and reward for achievements is fairly and accurately attributed.

Some practical **Sponsorship actions** a leader or circle can take include:

- Opening doors for talent and expertise to be showcased
- Sponsors open doors to senior networks they are connected to
- Sponsors use their voice to speak well of talent in rooms they do not have access to
- Sponsors put talented people's names forward for opportunities and projects
- Sponsors share their own experience of an individual's expertise and capabilities with their wider networks.

Progress can be reviewed through examining the data on representation at different levels within the organisation and across the key development and delivery work functions.

Mentorship and sponsorship are essential to career development and progression and there are some differences that need to be considered and managed.

A focus on building rapport, trust and connection within the sponsor and the circle is key to enabling the opportunities that sponsorship provides to be fully realised.

Some frameworks and insights for consideration for mentorship, sponsorship and coaching are in the appendix of this guide.

Additional resources

BITC Advisory team can help with beginning or improving data collection and mentorship and sponsorship models

The BITC Job Coaching Programme is designed to support individuals who are unemployed, underemployed, or inadequately employed.

The programme focuses on improving skills, well-being, and employment outcomes by providing structured coaching, practical resources, and a supportive network.

BITC's Wider Employment Support Initiatives include

- **Opening Doors Campaign:** Advocates for more inclusive hiring practices.
- **Regional Networks: Connecting job seekers with opportunities in their area.**
- **Safeguarding framework:** Ensures the wellbeing of both clients and coaches.

As part of the partnership, we are supporting a diverse range of employers to understand, develop and implement effective recruitment and retention strategies for ethnically diverse young

people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in an initiative known as the Pioneer Programme.

The programme will help employers to identify and tackle barriers facing ethnically diverse young people when trying to access employment, create supportive pathways and establish best practice for adoption across the wider workforce.

Appendix

Spotlight and amplify	Increase connections	Recognise and champion
<p>Open and create opportunities: actively nominate employees for inclusion in project teams, secondments, training and other development opportunities.</p>	<p>Facilitate introduction to networks: help the expansion of networks where individuals can make valuable contributions and make connections for their organisation and career advancement.</p>	<p>Support recognition for achievements and contribution. ensure that individuals receive credit for their ideas, contributions and achievements within the circle and wider organisation.</p>
Example of action	Example of action	Example of action
<p>Forwarding positive feedback or strong work products to other leaders in the organisation or firm.</p>	<p>Introducing them to other senior contacts within organisation, firm or in industry.</p>	<p>Speaking up during evaluation or promotion conversations, and or recommendation letters, referrals to Boards or high-profile project.</p>

Mentorship and sponsorship differences

	Mentorship	Sponsorship
Core focus of relationship	Coaching and giving advice linked to skill development / a specific topic.	Intentional advocacy for a junior employee's career advancement.
Potential risk	LOW Mentors are typically not personally impacted by a mentee's career outcomes.	HIGH Sponsors are required to put their 'reputational' capital at stake by advocating for a junior employee.
General direction of flow of support	TWO WAY Possible for 'reverse mentorship' to occur in cases where junior talent has greater expertise.	ONE WAY Senior individuals sponsor junior talent using their own influence.
Network extension	LOW Relationships are often limited to mentor and mentee only.	HIGH Involves engagement with program leaders and other individuals in sponsor's sphere of influence.
Organisational connections	LOW Mentors and mentees can belong to the same or different organisations.	HIGH Sponsors and sponsees tend to be within the same organisation.

Job Coaching using the Universal Skills Builder Framework

Coaching is a process of guiding and supporting individuals or groups to unlock their potential, achieve specific goals, and improve performance. It is a collaborative, solution-focused relationship where the coach helps the coachee gain clarity, build self-awareness, develop skills, and create actionable strategies for growth.

The Universal Skills Builder Framework can be used to shape and focus discussions.

	available to move forward towards the goal(s) identified
WAY FORWARD	What are the practical steps that can be taken to move forward.

GOAL	Setting and achieving specific, measurable objectives.
REALITY	Exploring the current situation, assessing where they are in relation to the goal, and what has been done so far to reach it.
OPTIONS	Discuss and explore what options and opportunities are