



WOMEN IN PORTS MENTORING PROGRAMME

ADVICE TO MENTEES

Women in Ports – A joint initiative by the British Ports Association, Port Skills and Safety, and the UK Major Ports Group

The role of the mentee

As a mentee, you drive the mentoring relationship forward. That means setting the agenda, taking the lead on communications, and making the most of your mentor's time and experience.

Your mentor is there to support you — but it's up to you to be clear about what you want to explore, and to take responsibility for your own growth.

Here are a few key expectations for mentees:

- **Set an objective for each session**
Think about what you want to get out of each meeting — whether that's solving a problem, exploring a career move, or gaining insight into the sector. Your mentor can help you refine your goals, but it's up to you to shape the conversation.
- **Be open about how your mentor can help**
Don't be afraid to say what kind of support or feedback you're looking for. The more direct you are, the more useful your mentor can be.
- **Communicate clearly and honestly**
Share your hopes, challenges, and ambitions. The more your mentor understands your context, the better they can support you.
- **Follow through on agreed actions**
Respect your mentor's time by taking responsibility for any actions you discuss together — and be ready to share progress at your next meeting.
- **Own your development**
A mentoring relationship is a great opportunity to grow — but you get out what you put in. Be curious, reflective, and open to new perspectives.

YOUR FIRST MEETING WITH YOUR MENTOR

Starting a mentoring relationship can feel a little daunting — especially if you've never had a mentor before. But don't worry: great mentoring relationships develop over time. What matters most is showing up with honesty, curiosity, and a willingness to learn.

Here are some tips to help you get off to a great start:

- **Make the first meeting online**
Once you get to know each other you can decide whether you would prefer to continue online or have any in-person meetings.
- **Expect a few nerves — that's normal!**
Both of you might feel a bit unsure at first. Building rapport takes time — and that's okay.
- **Focus on getting to know each other**
You don't need to have an instant connection. Trust grows through shared conversations, reflections, and honesty.
- **Start building trust**
Share a bit about yourself — your interests, passions, strengths, or even challenges. You set the tone by being open.

- **Use conversation starters**

Questions like “What led you to your current role?”, “What’s something you’re proud of?” or “What’s been a key learning moment in your career?” can help get the conversation flowing – and you can ask your mentor about their experiences, too.

Guiding principles for mentees

Every mentoring relationship is different, but some key principles apply to all successful partnerships:

- **Mentoring is for you**

It’s a space for your personal and professional growth – led by your goals, shaped by your questions, and driven by your commitment.

- **Be respectful of confidentiality**

Trust is essential. Keep private conversations private, unless your mentor has given permission to share something more widely.

- **Create a safe, non-judgemental space**

Be open to trying new things, taking risks, and exploring new ideas. And be prepared to do the same for your mentor, too – great mentoring is a two-way street.

Bringing Your mentoring relationship to a close

When the formal mentoring period ends, it’s important to wrap up well:

- **Talk about the end** – don’t let the relationship simply fade out. Be open about whether it’s time to close or shift the dynamic.
- **Agree how to close** – will it end now or taper off gradually? Will you stay in touch occasionally?
- **Review next steps** – what’s still to be done and how will the mentee take it forward?
- **Reflect together** – share your thoughts on what worked, what you learned, and what you’d do differently.
- **Share Programme feedback** – provide feedback to the organisers on your experience, what you liked, what could be done better / differently next time
- **Say thank you** – express appreciation for the time, support, and insight shared.
- **Celebrate progress** – acknowledge the growth, achievements, and confidence gained.

Many mentoring relationships continue informally after the official end – built on trust, mutual respect, and shared experience.