

WOMEN IN PORTS MENTORING PROGRAMME

Guiding Principles and Forms

Sponsored by

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

Our mission

Women are vital to the future of the UK ports industry. From operations and engineering to commercial, environmental, and leadership roles, women contribute every day to the success, resilience, and innovation of our sector.

But we know that women remain underrepresented in many areas — particularly in senior and visible roles — and that more needs to be done to ensure women feel confident, connected, and able to thrive throughout their careers.

That's why we are committed to creating a more inclusive, supportive and empowering environment for women working in ports. One where women:

- Have the **confidence and support** to grow and lead
- Are **visible and valued** at all levels
- Can **build networks** beyond their immediate organisations
- Feel part of a wider community of peers and champions

Mentoring is one way we're putting that commitment into action.

The new **Women in Ports Mentoring Scheme** offers structured, one-to-one support to help women navigate their careers, build confidence, and gain the tools and connections they need to succeed — wherever they are on their journey.

It's not just about guidance — it's about growing a vibrant, cross-sector **network of support**, providing women with access to mentors and peers beyond their usual spheres. And it's about ensuring men and women alike play a role in creating an industry that works for everyone.

We believe in the power of mentoring to transform careers — and to change the culture of our sector for the better.

WOMEN IN PORTS MENTORING SCHEME – PART 1

OVERVIEW

A joint initiative by the British Ports Association, Port Skills and Safety, and the UK Major Ports Group. The Mentoring Scheme for Women in Ports is a free, sector-wide initiative open to women working across the UK ports industry – including roles in operations, engineering, planning, commercial, environmental, and more.

Why mentoring?

The scheme is designed to provide pastoral support, guidance and encouragement to help women gain confidence, develop professionally, and take meaningful steps forward in their careers. Whether you're looking to progress, facing a challenge, or simply seeking advice from someone outside your usual network, mentoring can make a real difference.

What mentoring can help you achieve?

Mentoring is a proven way to:

- Expand your horizons
- Build your confidence and self-awareness
- Explore opportunities and set clear goals
- Gain clarity in complex or uncertain situations
- Feel supported and empowered in your career journey

What to expect from your mentor

Your mentor will act as a trusted, independent and confidential sounding board, offering insights, challenge, and support based on real experience. While mentoring is not a substitute for formal training or coaching, it brings a unique human element – a chance to learn from someone who's been there, who understands the sector, and who wants to help others thrive.

Who are the mentors

Mentors are experienced professionals from across the ports and wider maritime, logistics and infrastructure industries. They include both women and men – all of whom are committed to supporting the progression of women in ports and being active allies in improving gender balance across the sector.

Your commitment

The scheme requires commitment from both mentor and mentee. Setting clear goals early on and meeting regularly over a six-month period will help ensure a positive and productive experience. Guidance and support will be provided to help you get the most from your mentoring relationship.

For mentees, this scheme can help you to:

- Build confidence and resilience
- Develop skills and identify growth areas
- Find new ways of thinking and problem-solving
- Navigate workplace dynamics or transition points
- Connect with a wider network and raise your visibility

A flexible and supportive structure

This is a structured but flexible mentoring programme. Participants will be thoughtfully matched based on interests and objectives, with the freedom to shape the format and frequency of their conversations. Optional events and peer networking opportunities will also be offered to help strengthen connections across the sector.

How you can support the programme

We believe that mentoring has the power to grow and retain female talent across the ports sector, helping to build a more confident, connected and resilient workforce. We encourage ports and port-related businesses to support the Women in Ports Mentoring Scheme in ways that make sense for them—whether that’s by raising awareness of the programme internally, encouraging individuals who might benefit to apply, or offering colleagues the opportunity to act as mentors.

Talking to Your employer

We recommend that participants speak with their line manager or HR team, where appropriate, to explore how their involvement might be supported—this could include allowing mentoring sessions to take place during work hours or recognising the value of this professional development opportunity. That said, we understand that in some cases, it may not be possible or desirable to involve employers directly, and the scheme is designed to respect that. All mentoring partnerships are expected to be based on mutual respect and trust, with confidentiality at the core. To support this, we ask each pair to agree a simple confidentiality statement at the start of their mentoring relationship.

Participation in the programme can take place during or outside of working hours, depending on what works best for the mentor and mentee.

When things don’t go to plan

We know that even with the best intentions, life can sometimes get in the way. Workloads shift, priorities change, and despite everyone’s efforts, things don’t always run smoothly. If your mentoring partnership isn’t working out as expected — whether due to time pressures, a lack of connection, or any other reason — that’s okay.

We encourage mentors and mentees to raise any concerns directly with each other in the first instance. Open, respectful conversations can often help to reset expectations and get things back on track. However, if that doesn’t feel appropriate or doesn’t resolve the issue, please reach out to the programme support team (see page 6 for contact details of the support team).

We’re here to help. Depending on the situation, we may be able to offer guidance, help find an alternative arrangement, or suggest applying again in a future round. Our aim is to ensure that everyone has a positive experience and that support is available when it’s needed most.

EIGHT STEPS TO GET STARTED FOR A MENTEE

1. Think about what you want from mentoring

Take some time to reflect on what you hope to gain from being mentored. Is it confidence? Career direction? Support through a challenge? A broader network? Being clear on your goals will help make the experience more focused and rewarding.

2. Complete a Mentee Application Form

Tell us about yourself, your current role, your aspirations, and the kind of support you're looking for.

3. Submit your application

4. Send your completed form to the programme team. We'll use this information to match you with a suitable mentor based on your goals and interests.

5. Attend an introductory training/session

Before starting, you and your mentor will be invited to join a short session designed to help you both understand the mentoring process, set expectations, and frame how you will approach the partnership.

6. Receive your mentor match

We'll introduce you to your mentor via email and provide guidance on how to get started.

7. Arrange an introductory call

This first conversation is a chance to get to know each other, share expectations, and check that the mentoring relationship feels like a good fit.

8. Review the Mentoring Guidelines

You'll receive a short guide to help shape your mentoring relationship. Feel free to tailor or add any preferences to suit your needs.

9. Agree how you'll work together and start your journey

Discuss how often you'll meet, how you'll communicate, and what you'd like to focus on. Set clear goals and boundaries early on. Then, plan your first meeting and begin building a supportive, empowering mentoring relationship

WOMEN IN PORTS MENTORING SCHEME – PART 2

GUIDELINES

We've prepared this document to help guide both mentees and mentors through the mentoring process. However, the direction, content, and overall experience should be developed together by you both to ensure it meets your needs.

For Mentees

1. How long will I have a mentor?

The mentoring relationship should last at least six months, but can last up to one year. Participants are asked to commit to a minimum of six one hour sessions. You and your mentor should agree on the duration at the outset, including how often you will meet.

2. How will I be matched with a mentor

You will complete an application form detailing your goals and aspirations. The programme team will then match you with a mentor whose experience and background best align with your needs.

3. How should we get started?

- a. Define your mentoring goals clearly.
- b. Agree on the expected duration and frequency of meetings.
- c. Decide the format of meetings (face-to-face, phone, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.).
- d. Set an agenda or topics for discussion.
- e. Agree confidentiality expectations.

4. Next steps

- a. Develop a mentoring plan together.
- b. Keep a record of your progress and reflections.

5. Review

The programme team is available to support should any difficulties or concerns emerge. Please contact Alex Pepper at UK Major Ports Group or Angela Ward at Port Skills and Safety.

Alex Pepper – alex.pepper@ukmajorports.org.uk

Angela Ward – angela.ward@portskillsandsafety.co.uk

For Mentors

1. How long will I be a mentor?

The mentoring relationship should last at least six-months but can last up to one year. Participants are asked to commit to a minimum of six one-hour sessions. You and your mentee should agree on the duration and commitment at the start. If your availability changes, please notify the programme team and your mentee as soon as possible.

2. How will mentees find me?

Mentees are matched to mentors by the programme team based on their goals and your experience. Once matched, you will be introduced to your mentee to begin the relationship.

10 ways you can be a great mentor

- i. Be a positive role model.
- ii. Show empathy and understanding.
- iii. Help build on your mentee's strengths.
- iv. Listen actively and openly.
- v. Keep an open mind and be non-judgmental.
- vi. Be patient and supportive.
- vii. Believe in your mentee's potential.
- viii. Demonstrate a broad understanding of the mentee's role and challenges.
- ix. Introduce your mentee to useful contacts and networks.
- x. Provide clear, specific, and constructive feedback.

Registering as a mentor

If you're interested in supporting women to progress in the ports sector, becoming a mentor is a simple and impactful way to make a difference. Registering is quick and easy – just complete the Mentor Registration Form to tell us about your background, experience, and availability. By sharing your knowledge and insights, you can empower the next generation of women leaders and help build a more diverse and inclusive industry.

Confidentiality

Both mentors and mentees are expected to maintain confidentiality throughout the mentoring relationship. Any sensitive information shared should remain private unless agreed otherwise.

WOMEN IN PORTS MENTORING SCHEME – PART 3

APPLICATION FORMS – PLEASE USE THE ONLINE FORMS / THE QUESTIONS SHOWN HERE ARE FOR INFORMATION

MENTEE APPLICATION FORM – PLEASE COMPLETE THE [ONLINE FORM](#)

Welcome aboard! This mentoring scheme is here to support women in ports to grow, connect, and navigate their careers with confidence.

Please fill in this form to help us match you with a mentor who can guide and support you. Once submitted, the programme team will carefully review your details and make the best match based on your goals.

Personal Details

First name:

Surname:

Preferred name (if different):

Job title:

Employer name:

Is your employer aware that you have applied for the mentoring scheme? Y/N

LinkedIn profile URL:

Contact email:

Contact phone:

Preferred method of contact:

- Email ☐
- Phone ☐

About You

- Brief personal profile / bio (max 300 words):
(Tell us a bit about yourself and your role in the sector.)
- Why do you want a mentor? What do you hope to gain?
(For example: building confidence, career progression, networking, overcoming challenges.)

Preferences for Matching

Do you prefer to be matched with someone in:

- A similar field to yours
 - A different field for fresh insights
 - No preference
 - Would you be comfortable being matched with a mentor of any gender y/n
- What specific areas would you like mentoring support with?
(E.g. leadership skills, technical knowledge, work-life balance, visibility in the sector.)
- What are your career goals?
(Where do you want to be in 1-3 years? How can mentoring help you get there?)

- Where are you based? (City and country):
- Something about availability / hours etc?

Mentoring Preferences

Preferred meeting format:

- Phone ☐
- Skype ☐
- Zoom ☐
- Microsoft Teams ☐
- Other (please specify): _____

Are you willing to travel to meet your mentor?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

Have you read and understood the mentee/mentor guidelines?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

Is there anything else you'd like to share to help us match you effectively?

MENTOR APPLICATION FORM – PLEASE COMPLETE THE [ONLINE FORM](#)**Personal Details**

Full name

Current role and organisation

Email address

Phone number (optional)

About You

Where are you based? (City and country):

Briefly describe your career journey so far (2–3 sentences).

Why would you like to become a mentor for this programme?

What strengths, knowledge, or experiences can you share as a mentor?

Preferences for Matching

Are there particular types of mentee profiles you feel best able to support?

Do you have any preferences around mentoring someone from:

- The same field
- A different field
- No preference

Would you be comfortable mentoring a mentee of any gender?

Are there any factors we should consider in matching you (e.g., working patterns, language needs, preferred communication styles)?

What do you hope to gain personally or professionally from this experience?

Do you have any accessibility needs or other considerations you'd like us to be aware of?

Do you have a preference on when you could have your mentoring conversations? (Anytime, Weekdays, Evenings, I work shifts)

Is there anything else you'd like to share to help us match you effectively?

Mentoring Preferences

Preferred meeting format:

- Phone ☐
- Skype ☐
- Zoom ☐
- Microsoft Teams ☐
- Other (please specify): _____

Are you willing to travel to meet your mentor?

- Yes ☐ / No ☐

Have you read and understood the mentee/mentor guidelines?

- Yes ☐ / No ☐

Is there anything else you'd like to share to help us match you effectively?

WOMEN IN PORTS MENTORING SCHEME – PART 4

MUTUAL NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT TEMPLATE

Date:

Parties: (insert mentee name) and (insert mentor name)

1. Each party to this Agreement intends to disclose confidential information ("Confidential Information") to the other for the purpose of participating in the mentoring programme provided by [Mentoring Scheme Name].
2. Each party is referred to as "the Recipient" when receiving or using the other party's Confidential Information.
3. The Recipient agrees not to use the Confidential Information without the prior written consent of the other party (email is acceptable).
4. The Recipient agrees to keep all Confidential Information secure and not disclose it to any third party except to employees or advisors who:
 - o Need to know the information solely for the mentoring purpose;
 - o Are bound by confidentiality obligations equivalent to this Agreement.
5. The obligations of confidentiality do not apply to information that:
 - a) Is or becomes publicly available through no breach of this Agreement; or
 - b) Was already known to the Recipient without a confidentiality obligation prior to disclosure.
6. Nothing in this Agreement restricts disclosure required by law or competent authority.
7. Upon request, the Recipient shall return or destroy all records of Confidential Information received and confirm that no copies have been retained.
8. This Agreement does not grant the Recipient any intellectual property rights except the limited right to use the Confidential Information solely for mentoring purposes.
9. The confidentiality obligations will continue indefinitely from the date of this Agreement.
10. This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with English and Scottish law. The courts of England or Scotland shall have exclusive jurisdiction over any disputes arising from this Agreement.

Mentor Signature:

Mentor Name:

Date:

Mentee Signature:

Mentee Name:

Date:

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Seahorse Freight Association for kindly allowing us to base this mentoring scheme and its materials on their original programme. In particular, we are grateful to Robert Minton-Taylor for sharing valuable insights, templates, and thoughtful guidance which have greatly informed the development of this scheme. We also acknowledge the support Seahorse received from Women In Aviation and Logistics (WAL) and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) in drawing up their mentoring programme. Special thanks go to Laura Sutherland, whose inspiration led to the creation of a similar mentoring initiative for PR practitioners at the CIPR, and to Alistair McCapra, CIPR Chief Executive, for supporting the adaptation of their mentoring template.