



Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations

Report on GWSF Mentoring Service - October 2024

1 Introduction

1.1 This report provides a review of GWSF's Mentoring Service which was relaunched at the beginning of 2023, following a hiatus due to the Covid pandemic.

1.2 The Service is co-ordinated by Adele Fraser, GWSF's Mentoring Associate. Adele qualified through the Institute of Leadership and Management with a level 5 Diploma for Professional Management Coaches and Mentors in 2012.

1.3 Adele has also provided mentoring services on a voluntary basis through the Chartered Institute of Housing for over 10 years.

1.4 The information captured in the report is based on feedback from mentoring participants via their responses to a survey, roundtable discussions at our regular group sessions, and one-to-one conversations with members.

2 Background

2.1 In keeping with the volunteering ethos of the CBHA movement, the Forum's Mentoring Service is free, and is available to all members (both staff and committee) and delivered by members to members.

2.2 Since its relaunch in early 2023 we have seen a sustained interest in the service from GWSF members and a corresponding growth in participant numbers.

2.3 At present there are 26 mentoring participants and overall 15 mentor/mentee pairings have been matched successfully, some continuing with more than one person.

2.4 In relation to the staff/committee demographics of mentoring participants the former has consistently outnumbered the latter. 28 staff members have signed up since the start of the service, compared to 6 committee members.

2.5 This split has remained constant since the relaunch of the service. Interestingly, we also had more interest from staff members for the previous iteration of the service. At that time, when we explored why this might be the case, some committee members indicated that they felt they had other forms of support (including peer mentoring) within their associations.

2.6 We are still actively recruiting committee members and all our publicity about the service seeks to highlight that being involved in mentoring (as a mentor or mentee) outwith your own association can bring added benefits, as committee members who are currently involved have told us. These include - a wider understanding of the sector, and increased knowledge of how other associations do things.

3 Participant feedback

Information and support from GWSF

3.1 The overall feedback from participants on the information provided by GWSF at the beginning of the mentoring process was extremely positive, as was feedback on support throughout.

3.2 Most mentors and mentees felt that the application form was easy to access (on our website) and complete and that the mentoring page on the GWSF website was useful. They also indicated that communication via the GWSF office and with Adele was *'really good'*.

'It was very straightforward to sign up and I was kept in the loop throughout the process.'

3.3 Though one participant, who had been involved in the original service (jointly managed by GWSF and EVH) felt that they *'had to chase for updates since it's just been GWSF.'*

3.4 The group briefing sessions which have been held regularly throughout the life of the Mentoring Service proved to be extremely popular with participants for several reasons. These included: hearing directly from Adele about the principles of mentoring and how it works in practice; sharing mentoring experiences with other mentors; wider discussions about the CBHA sector.

'I definitely found the sessions useful...just hearing from other people and also from Adele - there's no 'one-size fits all' approach - it's up to the mentor and mentee to work out the best way for them.'

"it's such a benefit to hear how other associations do particular things, and these sessions provide an opportunity to hear about that, as well as hearing more about mentoring."

3.5 One participant commented *'I wasn't sure what was/is expected of me.'* in relation to being a mentor. In addition, some others indicated that they would have benefited from an initial induction session at the start of their mentoring journey. This is a useful recommendation which we have taken on board.

3.6 Some respondents highlighted that they were also keen for GWSF to provide more information on other mentoring programmes available in the sector (CIH and Share) and the potential *'read-across'* between our service and these others. This is another recommendation which we will implement.

3.7 A further recommendation from participants which we will take forward is signposting any members who are interested in more formal/accredited training in mentoring to the relevant organizations.

3.8 One participant suggested that we might consider using a system similar to the one used by MCR pathways to record mentoring interactions. However, having looked into this, due to our limited staff resources, it is not an option for us at this time.

The matching process

3.9 When it came to the matching process the feedback was resoundingly positive, with participants particularly appreciative of Adele's skill in making sure their match was suitable (either as a mentor or mentee). Furthermore, a big part of this was a result of the time taken by Adele to listen to what their requirements were.

'Adele really helped, by helping me to really articulate what I was looking for from a mentor, and what I wanted to get out of the process.'

"It was good [the matching process] - I understood the rationale of matching me with a new CEO with no operational experience and limited knowledge of one aspect of RSL activity."

The mentoring experience

3.10 Both mentors and mentees reported that their mentoring experiences were rewarding and helpful.

3.11 Mentors enjoyed sharing their knowledge and experience for the benefit of others in the sector.

"I think the mentee just wanted guidance and a voice out-with the organisation she works in to know she is going in the right direction. Mostly, reassurance for the mentee."

"We met to identify what the mentee might want from the arrangement. They felt they had a limited knowledge of one specific area of the business at a time when they were without senior cover in that area. I provided some advice and also some suggestions for reading in relation to housing allocations and then rent arrears good practice guidance."

3.12 We have been particularly pleased to note that several participants have indicated that they are happy to act as mentors on an ongoing basis. Indeed, some mentors have been involved in more than one match over the course of their involvement with the service.

3.13 Mentees felt that they had benefited hugely from their mentoring journey and gained new skills and insights, along with more confidence in their own abilities. All mentees' feedback highlighted the advantages of speaking to *'someone outside your own association, who can give you perspective, but still understands the issues you're dealing with.'*

"It has really helped me to see things more clearly and to just talk things through is such a big help. From a practical point of view - just to hear another perspective and tap into [mentor's] that experience."

"I'm getting involved now as a senior member of staff, for peer mentoring. But I know that there have been other points in my career when it would have been just as useful. So really...it can benefit all staff, in any position in an association."

“As an experienced committee member, there are still things that you want a bit of support with, and mentoring has been so helpful with that. And just hearing what [my mentor’s] association is doing on certain things, how they do things is also great.”

4 Moving forward

4.1 Crucially, we will act upon respondents’ recommendations for potential improvements to the service. Consequently, moving forward we will -

- Introduce a preliminary induction session where new participants can hear more (and ask questions) about the principles of mentoring and what becoming a mentor or mentee involves. One option is to develop this as an online induction briefing session in 2025.
- Supplement the information already available on the mentoring page of the GWSF website with additional materials which outline the points covered in the induction session.
- Clarify the relationship between the Forum’s Mentoring Service and other similar services which are available in the sector - including those delivered by CIH and Share.
- Signpost members who are interested in pursuing accredited training in mentoring to the relevant agencies who provide this.

5 Conclusion

5.1 The uptake from members for our Mentoring Service has been extremely encouraging and the feedback we have received from participants is heartening. We would like to thank all our mentoring volunteers.

5.2 We know that times are particularly challenging for the sector, and we believe that the service can act as a real support for both staff and committee members. Mentoring is also a valuable CPD tool.

5.3 In the first instance, we will share this report with the GWSF Board to keep them updated on the feedback we have received from participants. We will also continue to promote our Mentoring Service to members