

HDN Board Mentoring Programme

The HDN Board Development Programme increases the capability and confidence of individual Board members to fulfil their role, in the context of the current sector challenges and Regulatory requirements. Through the involvement of participants from different organisations, one-to-one meetings with a mentor and group development workshops, both mentors and mentees can share experience with others from within and beyond the sector. The programme builds up-to-date knowledge, networks, capacity and excellence in governance, while allowing each participant to develop their unique contribution.

Why do people become a mentor?

Mentors are experienced professionals of both Executive and Non-Executive Director levels, who share their time, skills and knowledge to support others – to support the sector. Often because of the support and inspiration they themselves have received earlier in their career, people want to “give back”.

Benefits of being a mentor include:

- Sharing their knowledge, expertise and experience
- Practicing and developing their coaching and mentoring skills
- Opportunity to gain a better understanding of people development
- Gaining insight into other organisations and learning from them
- Contributing to corporate social responsibility work

What we look for in a mentor

Experience of managing others is useful however, it is more important for a mentor to want to develop others, as is a strong commitment to valuing diversity. Some useful skills and qualities of great mentors are listed below – this list is not exhaustive nor is any one person expected to embody them all.

- Skills a mentor will find useful in a mentoring relationship include building relationships, listening, questioning, sensitively challenging, identifying options, setting boundaries or expectations, clarifying objectives, focusing, action planning, being creative and reflecting.
- Qualities of a helpful and successful mentor include being patient, giving encouragement, being open and honest, empowering mentees to lead sessions, creating a confidential space, showing an interest in the mentee, remaining objective and supporting to self-reflect.

Why do people become a mentee?

Mentees join the programme for many reasons these include:

- To gain confidence and understand governance more thoroughly
- To meet people from across the sector and share learning
- To gain insight from national partners including the Regulator of Social Housing, National Housing Federation, National Federation of ALMO's and TPAS.
- To understand good governance, finance, value for money, development, board dynamics, risk and assurance more widely

What we look for in a Mentee

- A committed to their own personal development, be open to the support, guidance and feedback of their mentor and to complete the programme.
- A commitment to valuing diversity to make the most of inclusive group workshops.
- Give thought to their objectives and prepare for meetings with their mentor appropriately. As well as being proactive when arranging meetings and following up agreed actions to make the most of the opportunity.
- Treat mentors with respect and prioritise meetings.
- To respect and consider fellow mentees, facilitators and other mentors participating in the group workshops to ensure all gain the most from each other and the programme.

Programme objectives and organisation benefits

The objectives outlined below are for all mentees. Individuals will also have their own personal objectives which they can address in their one-to-one meetings with their mentor.

1. Increase knowledge of what is expected of a Board/Committee member
2. Increase understanding of Board Governance
3. Improve confidence
4. Expand Housing Sector knowledge
5. Improve self-awareness and relationship building
6. Improve strategic thinking
7. Improve ability to challenge and ask the right questions

Participating organisations derive multiple benefits from mentoring, which include board members who are more knowledgeable, confident, effective and more diverse in thought and contribution.

Timings & Costs

The programme runs for a period of 10 months each year at different times in the North and South and includes a briefing session, four meetings with a mentor and four workshops. £1450 plus VAT for HDN Members and £1800 plus VAT for non-members per place.

What are the benefits for me as a Board member mentee...

“This has been a transformative process for me. I feel much more confident in my Board and Committee work, and my dealings with Staff. I have built a much better relationship with my Chair and CEO than previously. I have also started mentoring secondary school pupils and will be starting my own company in May 2017 as a direct result of increasing confidence and better understanding of good governance. Thank you so much!”

“It has helped considerably with my understanding of the housing sector and the role of the regulator. This was something I had absolutely no knowledge of before, so I feel much more confident in this now.”

“My mentor has given me new ‘ways of seeing’ Board information – how to interrogate reports, ask questions in advance but also as they occur at meetings, and how to present questions, showing my thought process”

“I now see my role as ‘raising the red flag’. I am prepared to speak up about the elephant in the room. If you don’t do this, that is when the organisation will get into trouble”

“I am thinking more about my ambassador role, and how to make my Boards more diverse”

The best thing about the programme...

“Understanding the HCAs role and the diversity/approach of other housing associations.”

“The vast knowledge of the mentors and trainers and the diversity of all mentees.”

“The course was informative and current.”

“The opportunity to hear from professionals who are expert in their field of housing.”

Overall...

“The programme was fantastic.”

“Nothing could have prepared me for how effective the course has made me.”

“Excellent programme that I recommend to all board members.”