**COMBAR MENTORING SCHEME - FAQs**

***1. What exactly is mentoring?***

* Mentoring is a voluntary relationship, in which a mentor provides advice and support to a mentee on an independent and confidential basis.
* The relationship can be long-term one, or it can be confined to advice and support on a specific topic. It is up to the mentor and mentee to decide what suits them best.

***2. How much time will I be able to spend with my mentor (or commit to my mentee)?***

* There are no set rules or requirements: participants can meet as frequently, and for as long at a time, as they like. This is a matter that should be discussed and agreed between the mentor and mentee at an early stage, and kept under review as the relationship progresses.

***3. Will our discussions be in confidence?***

* Subject to the matters set out in the following bullet point, information contained in your mentoring application form, and discussions with your mentor, will be completely confidential. Successful mentoring is based upon trust and confidentiality.
* Applicants should however be aware that the Bar Code of Conduct imposes certain reporting obligations on barristers who have reasonable grounds to believe there has been serious misconduct by another barrister (see Rules C66-C69 and Guidance gC95-g102), which can include assault or harassment. The Bar Council has confirmed that these rules continue to apply even in a confidential mentoring relationship. Accordingly, if your mentoring application form discloses such matters, or you raise such matters in discussion with your mentor, members of the Matching Committee, or your mentor, may (as appropriate) come under a reporting obligation which overrides the confidentiality in respect of such matters.
* In the event you have experienced serious misconduct by another barrister, you may wish to contact the Bar Council’s confidential E&D helpline: <https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/policy-representation/policy-issues/equality-diversity-and-inclusion.html#:~:text=The%20Bar%20Council%20offers%20a,number%20is%20020%207611%201426>. The Bar Council also operates an online tool, “Talk to Spot”, to allow members confidentially to report incidents of inappropriate behaviour: <https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/support-for-barristers/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/talk-to-spot.html> .

***4. How will my mentor / mentee be chosen? Can I ask for a particular mentor/mentee?***

* There is a Matching Committee which will match mentors with mentees. They will do so based on the information in the application forms each have provided. The more information provided by each in their forms, the better the chance of a successful match.
* You cannot ask for a particular mentor/mentee.

***5. Should I have a mentor/mentee who is not in my chambers?***

* Individual COMBAR member sets may have their own internal mentoring programmes. For the purposes of this scheme, COMBAR is seeking to match mentors and mentees who are not in the same chambers.

***6. What if I don't want / like the mentor/mentee I am allocated? Can I change?***

* Yes. If either the mentor or mentee (or both) do not consider that the mentoring relationship is working, they should inform the Chair of the Mentoring Committee (details available on the COMBAR website) and the Matching Committee will seek to find an alternative mentor/ mentee.

***7. What sort of topics can I discuss with my mentor/mentee?***

* No topics are off limits. The application forms contain an indicative (but not exhaustive) list of the sorts of topic that we anticipate may be of interest or concern to mentees. We do however ask prospective mentees to note the matters set out under Question 3 above.

***8. Will I be given a mentor/mentee from a similar background/same gender?***

* The mentee application form contains a box for Additional information to assist the Matching Committee when pairing mentors and mentees. If a mentee would like a mentor to have particular characteristics (for example, to be of the same gender or from a similar background), they should say so in that box and the Matching Committee will take that into account.

***9. Will I be given a mentor/mentee who practises in the same field as me? What if they are a competitor?***

* Unless the mentee has indicated on their form that they would like a mentor from a different practice area (because for example they want to change practice area), mentors and mentees are likely to be matched with those practising in a similar field.
* Generally the mentor is likely to be a more experienced lawyer than the mentee and therefore unlikely to be a direct competitor.

***10. What if my mentor can't help with the issue I have?***

* The mentee should contact the Chair of the Mentoring Committee (details available on the COMBAR website) and the Matching Committee will seek to find an alternative mentor who can help with the issue identified by the mentee.

***11. I have experienced serious bias/prejudice/harassment etc. Is the mentoring scheme the right way to address this?***

* Mentoring may be one among several helpful ways of addressing these problems. However, applicants should be aware of the Matching Committee and any prospective mentor’s reporting obligations and may also wish to consider other forms of assistance, including the Bar Council’s E&D Helpline and its Talk to Spot App. Further details on these matters are set out under Question 3 above.

***12. Will remote mentoring arrangements be put in place?***

* It is up to the mentor and mentee to decide how they wish to meet. Given the current restrictions due to Covid 19, it is anticipated that the majority of mentoring relationships under the scheme will take place remotely (at least initially). Remote mentoring also has the advantage that geographical limits do not prevent a mentor and mentee from being matched.