



Western Circuit Women's Forum: Mentoring Plus

1. The WCWF is proud to have set up the first Circuit-based mentoring scheme, which is run by Selena Plowden QC and Caighli Taylor. Every female barrister on the Western Circuit under 10 years call has been allocated a female barrister over 10 years call as a mentor. That is about 70 pairs. We were very proud to have been nominated for the 'Mentor Scheme of the Year' award at the South West Mentoring Awards 2019.
2. Circuiteers over 10 years' call were invited to volunteer to be mentors, and we had such an enthusiastic response that we had a surplus of mentors. Mentees were not asked to put themselves forward, but, rather, were allocated a mentor and invited to withdraw from the scheme if they did not welcome it. We matched younger women with a mentor in the same practice area, in different chambers but in the same town where possible.
3. The WCWF is of the view that there is still very much a place for our current mentoring scheme. The current scheme has created many valuable relationships in which mentors and mentees get to know each other and discuss their goals and issues over time. More generally, it has cultivated a feeling amongst junior women barristers that they are supported and have somewhere to turn to when the need arises.
4. The WCWF also provides a 'Super-Mentoring' scheme where anyone on the Western Circuit can get in touch with us if advice or help is needed with anything related to career progression, including applying for judicial posts and silk.
5. We propose to add to this with a new panel-based scheme which will run alongside: 'Mentoring Plus'. Mentoring Plus will quickly deal with specific issues such as harassment, unfair treatment, parental leave/breaks, wellbeing, applications and career progression. The scheme will be open to all women barristers and pupil barristers on the Western Circuit, regardless of call. We plan to launch Mentoring Plus following a two-week Consultation Period. If you have any views on our proposal, set out in more detail below, please contact wcpf@westerncircuit.co.uk

Volunteers

- We will seek barrister volunteers from a wide range of call years and practices to form a Mentoring Panel of 8 to 10 practitioners from across the Western Circuit.
- All volunteers will receive free mentoring training and meet together with the WCWF to discuss the aims of the Panel.

Applications

- Anyone with a question would apply using a form from our website and submit this to a secure email address.
- Any applicant will be able to decide which administrator to send their form to who will then anonymise the request.
- Mentoring requests will be reviewed on a monthly basis with a fast-track scheme in place for urgent requests.
- Requests will be forwarded to the Mentoring Panel categorised into a topic or topics.

Mentoring

- The Panel will discuss the request and decide at least two panellists who would be best placed to respond.
- The mentee will be informed of the possible mentors for the final decision of who they would like to assist them.
- The mentor and mentee will liaise separately to discuss the query or issue raised by the mentee.
- The general expectation would be that no more than two 'meetings' or discussions would be necessary but if more are needed then the WCWF administrators should be contacted.