



AVM Mentoring Scheme: Summary Evaluation Report, September 2019

In January 2019, AVM launched a six-month pilot mentoring scheme. The hope was that AVM members would be able to support each other in their professional development, to problem solve, and to further develop the volunteer management profession.

To evaluate the scheme, participants were asked to complete surveys. Six mentors and seven mentees participated (65% response rate). Many also fed back qualitative comments either over the phone or via email, which have been used to evaluate the scheme. Identity of mentors and mentees has only been disclosed where AVM has been given permission.

What the scheme looked like

Run entirely online, the scheme was accessible to mentors and mentees from all over the UK. 12 mentors and 12 mentees signed up to the scheme, and there were 10 successful matches. The scheme was advertised in January 2019, and ran from February to August 2019.

Getting going, and the matching process

AVM ran two webinars to introduce the scheme; one for mentors and one for mentees. We also then ran an online (Zoom) speed-networking event, rotating mentees around mentors in breakout rooms, giving everyone the chance to break the ice and begin to get to know each other.

A self-matching approach was used, in the hopes that this would lead to a better match for both mentors and mentees. A Slack group was set up to further facilitate relationship-building and matches between mentors and mentees.

On the whole, feedback was positive about the self-matching approach:

“I thought it was fantastic, really really helpful to chat to people and open up those conversations. I definitely felt that I got better at summarising as I went through more and more conversations.”

“I was dreading it beforehand but I actually thought the breakout rooms and speed dating bit worked well.”

“Great opportunity to establish chemistry and suitability.”

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“I felt it was really important for the mentors/mentees to match themselves, and in fact more so for the mentees to seek out what they are looking for. A bit like the Bumble dating app, its putting the ‘power’ of the relationship where it needs to be, for them its with women, for us its with the mentees.”

Though some did report some difficulties with the process:

“It was difficult to make a final decision about who to ask to be my mentor, I changed my mind from my initial first choice - based on the profiles, once I had done the speed-dating exercise and then again when I had spoken with some potential mentors.”

Overall it's concluded that a self-matching approach is preferable to AVM decided the matches between pairs.

Once pairs had been agreed, it was over to mentors and mentees to decide frequency of meetings, time place, aims and structure. AVM recommended a minimum of one meeting per month.

So, what was the impact?

100% of survey participants said they were extremely or very satisfied with the scheme, and all said they would recommend it to others.

Career progression and professional development:

The vast majority of participants agreed *“participation in the AVM Mentoring Programme has enhanced my career progression and/ or professional development”* and comments included:

“My mentor helped build my confidence, drive and motivation to help me gain a new role”

“I joined the mentoring scheme during a time of great professional - and personal - upheaval. I was changing roles and the mentoring scheme really did help me to gain confidence in my abilities...and move my career forward. I am so pleased that I took part”

*“I was transitioning in to line-management at the time of the scheme and I would say this mentor relationship had a direct (and positive) impact on how I approached this and will continue to evolve. In fact, her “solution-based thinking” and “reflective practice” theories/lines have almost become my **own** personal brand strapline in the organisation... It has become my default in many situations; usefully in successes but most increased my confidence in difficult situations.”*

- Calleigh-Marie Lawrence (mentee), Volunteer Support Executive, The Charity for Civil Servants

Increase in volunteer management skill and knowledge

About half of the survey respondents said they felt their volunteer management skills and knowledge had been improved through the scheme. Experiences of the pairs seemed to vary considerably, with some meeting once p/ week, others, less than once p month. Also, the aim of mentees varied considerably – this may explain why only some felt their skills and knowledge increased. Comments included:

“My experience has been totally positive. My mentor has vastly more experience than me in Volunteer Management but we both have the same challenges.”

- David Little, Volunteer Coordinator at Carlisle Carers (mentee)

“I thoroughly enjoyed being a mentor. I got to work with someone whose experience gave me new insights into the current workplace. Their challenges made me think in new ways about the best way to support them as they found their own solutions. I’d definitely do it again and would encourage others to mentor a colleague as well.”

- Rob Jackson, Rob Jackson Consulting Ltd (mentor)

“the ‘mentor/mentee’ relationship can and should switch - plenty to be learned down what can be a two-way street”

- Shaun Crummey, Head of Volunteering, Absolutely Cultured

Increase in motivation, satisfaction and wellbeing

The majority of participants reported an increase in their own motivation or feelings of satisfaction as a result of participating in the scheme. Comments included:

“[M]y mentor had the fantastic ability to help me realise that much like Dorothy and her ruby slippers, in my most of issues – I had the answer myself. She was a highly skilled, very empathetic yet matter of fact, confidence-boosting and insightful professional. I have definitely emerged from the other side a more rounded individual both in and outside of the workplace.”

- mentee

Improved leadership and management skills of both mentors and mentees

The vast majority of participants agreed that their problem-solving and leadership skills had been improved as a result of participation in this programme. Comments included:

“It was a huge learning curve in what it means to be a manager. I realise I’d be judging myself very harshly for someone early on in management. I learnt a lot about my strengths but also how management relationships are so dependent on the person you manage, not just your

style.”

- mentee

“I have enjoyed being a mentor for the AVM programme...It has also enabled me to hone my skills in a different format and environment. Whilst I am a line manager and have been for over 10 years, acting as a mentor has helped reconnect with the fundamentals of supporting someone as they explore their career goals and helping them set appropriate milestones. So another tick for skills development.”

- Jenny Betteridge, Strategic Lead Volunteering, Sport England (mentor)

Other outcomes:

We think other outcomes of the scheme have included a strengthened network and community of practice for volunteer managers, with many commenting on how they valued the social side of the scheme, and wanting to continue their involvement in the networking activities carried out throughout the scheme.

Finally both mentees and mentors have commented on how their employers have valued the scheme.

What's next?

The AVM Board have agreed that this scheme should continue, are staff and volunteers are currently considering how to take it forward. If you would like to express your interest in taking part in future mentoring schemes, please register your interest on our website.

Thank you

The pilot was led by Angela Wilson, AVM Director and Head of Volunteering at MS Society, along with Jo Gibney, Head of Business Development at AVM; Helen Birchall, AVM Membership Administrator; Sarah Merrington, AVM Director...to name just a few. The development and roll out was owned and led by many AVM members, and all of the benefits of the scheme were possible because of the generosity of time of the mentors, and energy and motivation of the mentees.

To all who have been involved:

“Thank you too for the team who devised and delivered the scheme, I would recommend it immensely to others”

- a mentee of this pilot