Development: Reverse mentoring

Harnessing BAME talent: A guide for UK employers
Reverse mentoring is a tool to encourage learning and knowledge sharing on the topics of race and ethnicity between employees at different levels of seniority within an organisation.

In a reverse mentoring programme a BAME employee, (the mentor), is matched with a more senior white employee (the mentee), so that the mentor can share their experiences of what it is like for BAME employees to work in the organisation. This sharing of knowledge can help to inform policy and leadership decisions in an effective and mutually beneficial manner. In return, the mentee offers advice about career progression and assists the mentor to develop and progress.

Key pointers for a successful scheme are similar to those for the other types of intervention, but specifically include:

- **Set clear objectives for what you hope to change through the scheme:** For both participants and the wider organisation.

- **Agree the participant commitment:** It is generally good practice for participants to commit to meeting for at least six months and to meet at least six times during his period.

- **Publicity:** Use a range of methods, setting out objectives and expectations and benefits to both parties.

- **Trust:** Reverse mentoring requires the trust of each party and a willingness to learn from each other. The goal should be to push participants beyond their comfort zones and encourage them to try new ways of thinking, working and behaving. Consider how you will prepare both parties in this respect.

- **Matching:** It helps to know a little bit about each participant and not to pair people from the same team. This enables both parties to speak freely outside of the management line.

- **Training:** Mentors in particular, may not feel confident challenging a senior colleague. Providing them with some tools and guidance on this can be helpful.
**Confidentiality:** The relationship should be private so avoid disclosing who the participants are unless both parties consent. Within the relationships, participants operate under the assumption that conversations are confidential unless otherwise agreed.

**Regular touch points:** Mentors may need more support than mentees, so it will be useful to provide a contact for on-going queries and to provide opportunities for periodic review.

**Relationship challenges:** Not all pairings will be successful and this is to be expected. If challenges occur, the contact point should assess if there are ways to broker a way forward and if not facilitate a clean, no blame conclusion to the pairing, assessing whether there are options for an alternative match.

**Assessing outcomes:** at the end of the six-month period, it will be useful to capture the outcomes of the scheme.