

Lay Mentor Guidelines

Introduction

- Rabbinic Staff in US Communities are supported by a number of professional and voluntary colleagues. In particular, the Chair of the Community usually has responsibility for line-managing Rabbinic Staff (meaning both Rabbis and Rebbetzins).
- The United Synagogue, together with the Rabbinic Council ('RCUS') and the Rebbetzin Representation Group ('RRGUS') of the US, believe that mentoring relationships are an important support to Rabbinic work and can improve relationships with other colleagues. Therefore, where for whatever reason no professional mentoring is in place, a volunteer 'Lay Mentor' operating under these Guidelines may be appointed.
- Working separately from Line Managers, and without the 'official' responsibility of a Line Manager, the Lay Mentor can help Rabbinic Staff establish and improve their personal relationships, and mitigate harm arising from disagreements. The Lay Mentor's role is fully defined and described below.

The Role of the Lay Mentor

- The role of the Lay Mentor is:
 - to be **available** to Rabbinic Staff;
 - to **listen** sympathetically to them;
 - to **advise** them, when requested;
 - to **inform** their understanding of the employing Community; and
 - to seek, impartially, to **improve relationships** between Community Stakeholders; while always
 - acting in the **best interests of the Community** as perceived by the Lay Mentor.
- The Lay Mentor should take a proactive stance in communicating with Rabbinic Staff as often as appropriate.
- The Lay Mentor should avoid argument, partisanship, or taking on any advocacy role in a formal meeting between parties in disagreement.
- The Lay Mentor must maintain the absolute confidentiality of Rabbinic Staff. This applies to the affairs of the Rabbinic Staff themselves, the affairs of the Community, and anything pertaining to individuals, whether they are Community members or not.
 - Rabbinic Staff can waive this requirement, but must do so voluntarily and expressly.
- The Lay Mentor cannot be compelled by anyone to convey information between individuals; Lay Mentors are not 'go-betweens'.

Who can be a Lay Mentor?

- Each Rabbi or Rebbetzin can each only have one Lay Mentor at a time.
- Any candidate for Lay Mentor must be a member of the Community of at least one year's standing, must not be a Rabbi, and must not be on the Executive, or married to someone who is.
 - Where possible, a candidate for Lay Mentor should not be a member of the Synagogue Council.

How are Lay Mentors appointed?

- Rabbinic Staff should carefully consider the suitability of potential Lay Mentors.
- Within three months, each Rabbi or Rebbetzin should give to the Executive, the name of at least one person who they feel could be an effective Lay Mentor to them (a Rabbi and Rebbetzin married to each other can choose the same person to be Lay Mentor for both of them).
 - A Lay Mentor may not mentor two Rabbis, nor two Rebbetzins; nor a Rabbi and Rebbetzin who are not a married couple.
- The Executive should discuss the recommendation(s) of the Rabbi or Rebbetzin.
- The Executive must either:
 - *agree* one recommendation by a Rabbi or Rebbetzin; or
 - *refuse* all recommendations and inform the Rabbi or Rebbetzin that they need to make at least one alternative recommendation; and

- if the Executive make two consecutive refusals of recommendations by one Rabbi or Rebbetzen, then the Executive must notify the RCUS of this, at which point the RCUS will be responsible for resolving the appointment of a Lay Mentor for the Rabbi or Rebbetzen.
- After agreeing a recommendation, the Executive should ask the 'potential Lay Mentor' whether they would like to be Lay Mentor to the Rabbinic Staff who recommended them.
- The potential Lay Mentor can take up to a month to decide whether they wish to be appointed Lay Mentor.

Other Parameters

- For the duration of their role, the Lay Mentor must have a valid Standard DBS check; it is the responsibility of the Community to secure this.
- Before taking up the role, a Lay Mentor must complete basic Safeguarding awareness training as provided by the United Synagogue. The US Safeguarding team will arrange this. Refresher training will be required every three years, or earlier if requested by the US Safeguarding team.
- The confidentiality requirement described above does not apply where a Lay Mentor receives information that raises a Safeguarding concern, whether about a child, young person, or adult at risk. In such cases, the Lay Mentor must not attempt to investigate or manage the concern themselves. They should contact the United Synagogue's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Claudia Kitsberg, Director of Safeguarding and Welfare (ckitsberg@theus.org.uk) promptly, and in any event the same day. The DSL will advise on next steps. The Lay Mentor should make the Rabbinic Staff member aware that they are doing so, unless the DSL advises otherwise.
- A Lay Mentor is not required to keep formal records of their conversations with Rabbinic Staff. However, where a Safeguarding concern has been raised or referred, the Lay Mentor should make a brief note of the date, the nature of the concern, and the action taken, and retain this securely. The US Safeguarding team can advise on how to do this.
- The Executive cannot unilaterally end the Lay Mentor – Rabbinic Staff mentoring relationship.
- Rabbinic Staff can unilaterally restart the process of appointing a Lay Mentor after a previous Lay Mentor has ended their role.
- The HR Department can remove a Lay Mentor unilaterally without notice or explanation.
- A Lay Mentor cannot be the Line Manager for Rabbinic Staff, and must not report to anyone in the Community without agreement from the Rabbinic Staff; such agreement must be volunteered and not requested by their Line Manager, nor by anyone else.
- Formal HR responsibilities remain with the HR Department.