

P O W E R f u l W O M E N

POWERful Connections:

A Brief Guide for Mentors

Introduction from Baroness Sandy Verma



It gives me great pleasure to introduce you to POWERful Women's mentoring programme, POWERful Connections.

In case you have not come across us before, POWERful Women was originally founded by myself and Laura Sandys in June 2014, when I was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Energy & Climate Change. A little while after arriving at DECC in 2012 I found myself wondering: where are all the women and why is it that so few seem to be reaching the top of the energy sector?

As time went by, I found that many others, across the industry and across the political spectrum, shared this growing concern. Since launching, the initiative has continued to build momentum. Many people like yourselves recognise that, in order to face the challenges of the future, and meet our obligations to the public and society, the energy sector needs to have a better gender balance. So that we can have the right people, with the right talents in the right places.

POWERful Connections aims to help women navigate their way to the top table and overcome the barriers to progression. It does this by matching aspiring future leaders with the most senior and influential people in the sector – CEOs, board members, executive directors: our “POWERful Connections” - who provide guidance and support over a six – nine-month period.

Our hope is that the programme will play a part in changing the energy sector in a way that is long-lasting and to the benefit of everyone. We hope that those taking part will enjoy and learn from the experience and that the programme will help our mentees to take forward their next steps towards the top table.

We are looking forward to hearing your feedback so that we can continuously improve the programme and to seeing the careers of our mentees develop. If you are not involved in POWERful Connections now, but want to be in the future, please do get in touch!

Baroness Verma

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Introduction

What is POWERful Connections?

A key element of the POWERful Women initiative, POWERful Connections pairs some of the most influential people working in energy today (our ‘POWERful Connections’) with female professionals who are aspiring to move into senior leadership positions within the next 5 years.

It aims to give leaders of the future support in taking their next steps by giving them one-to-one time with those who have already trodden the same path and are now at energy’s top table. Powerful Connections is about matching the experience of one person with the potential of another.

Applicants who wish to be mentored on the programme will need to identify the areas of your career progression and personal development you want to work on with a Powerful Connection. You will also need to be prepared to ‘own’ the process, making sure that you use the time on the programme well by preparing in advance for meetings, coming with ideas and taking time to reflect on the issues and action points coming up in discussions. You will need to be open and honest about strengths and weakness and willing to be challenged on your current thinking and approach to career development. The aim is to help equip you with some of the tools you will need to move on to the next stage in your career, and an action plan for taking your next steps.

POWERful Connections is not a ‘traditional’ mentoring programme – those who are partnered under the scheme will usually meet three or four times over the six-to-nine-month period, and so the relationships we are setting up will be short term (though we hope that those involved will want to stay connected). However, for ease of reference and clarity about the nature of the relationship we have stuck with the term’s ‘mentor’ and ‘mentee’ throughout the guide.

About this guide

This guide describes how POWERful Connections works from the perspective of the mentor (the ‘POWERful Connection’). It gives guidance on who does what and when, as well as explaining what we think POWERful Connections should be about for participants and the value we hope they will get from it.

We know that many of those involved in POWERful Connections will have previous experience of mentoring or being mentored, coaching, or being coached, challenged, or supported by others. For this reason, we have kept this guide brief, and structured it in a way that will hopefully give you guidance where you need it but allow you to dip in and out where you are simply looking for clarification or ideas. We hope that it will provide you with a useful structure for working together.

Becoming a POWERful Connections mentor

Joining POWERful Connections

POWERful Connections is about working together across energy to achieve positive change, so we want senior and influential people from across the energy sector, both women and men, to join us as POWERful Connections mentors and get involved.

To become a POWERful Connections mentor, you will need to be working at CEO, Board or Executive Director level in energy. You will understand the challenges senior professionals face and the nature of the working environment in energy. You will also have experience of people and project management, strategy, and leadership, together with an understanding of the issues of diversity and inclusion.

You will be willing to set aside a few hours of your time over six to nine months to work with one or more mentees.

Your commitment

If you decide to become a POWERful Connections mentor, we will be asking you to commit to mentoring at least one - and ideally two - individuals over a six-to-nine-month period. Your mentees can be internal to your organisation, or external, from another part of the energy sector (you will be asked to specify which you would prefer in the *Mentor Profile form*).

We would expect you to give each of your mentees a minimum of three hours of your time over the six to nine months, but the way in which you meet with your mentees, how often, and whether all meetings are in person, by telephone or virtual will be very much up to you and your mentee to decide.

We also hope that, in due course, you will be willing to consider being a mentor on a repeat basis.

If you would like to talk more about POWERful Connections and what your commitment as a mentor would involve, please contact the POWERful Women Project Manager - contact details are on the back page of this guide.

Who would I be mentoring?

Mentees on the programme will be senior women currently working in energy who intend to continue to develop their career in the sector. To become a POWERful Connections mentee, they will need to show that they

- have a minimum of 15 years' work experience, at least 5 years of which has been in energy
- already hold a senior management position in energy, and
- aspire to become a director, board member, or take on some other senior leadership position within the next five years or so

Your mentee's commitment

As a senior professional, we know your time is precious and so as part of their application to join the scheme prospective mentees will need to show that they have thought carefully about the areas they would like to develop as part of POWERful Connections and what benefit they would gain from collaborating with a mentor.

POWERful Connections is about achieving real change, so we also ask mentees to

- work on an action plan during the scheme and after it has ended
- make a commitment to in turn mentor at least one other women in energy within 12 months of completing the scheme
- provide us with updates on how their career develops

The matching process

To make sure that we have sufficient information to match you with potential mentees, we will ask you to complete a brief *Mentor Profile Form* and send us your biographical information or a CV. (Copies of the form are available from the POWERful Women Project Manager using the contact details at the back of this guide.)

Prospective mentees will also be asked to complete a *Mentee Application and Profile Form* which asks them about their experience to date, their aspirations and the areas they would like to work on with a POWERful Connection.

Once we have received completed forms and made any necessary checks, we will begin the process of matching POWERful Connections mentors with potential mentees.

We will normally send you outline details of one or more potential mentees. We will then give you a few days to consider who you would be willing to take on. To ensure that there are no issues of business sensitivity, if you have indicated in your *Mentor Profile Form* that you are willing to mentor people who are external to your company, we will normally try to send you details of mentees drawn from a different part of the energy sector to your own.

Once we have heard from you, we will go back to any individuals you have indicated you would be willing to mentor and provide them with outline details about you and your offer. When both of you have confirmed that you wish to go ahead, we will provide you with contact details, and ask your mentee to contact you to arrange a date for your first meeting together.

The POWERful Women team will also be in touch with you both over the six-to-nine-month period to see how things are progressing and to offer any assistance.

Topics for discussion

The topics for discussion will be up to you to decide, working with your mentee - chances are they will evolve over time as your relationship develops and you begin to develop new perspectives and strategies and reframe the way forward.

As part of the Mentee Application and Profile form your mentees will already have identified some of the areas they would like to work on. These might include some of the following

- **Career decisions**
Clarifying and prioritising their career aspirations and positioning themselves for moving forward; developing their skillset; moving out of their comfort zone; developing the experience and track record required for board level positions
- **Promoting yourself:**
Developing a network; promoting your brand; ways of creating opportunities and making an impact beyond your immediate sphere
- **Leadership style**
Developing a personal style as a leader and strategist
- **Working as a professional woman in the energy sector:**
Strategies for steering their way through the corporate world; overcoming or reframing potential barriers and setbacks to progression; challenging stereotypes; dealing with difficult people, management dynamics and work politics
- **Personal issues**
Overcoming personal barriers to progression and identifying opportunities; confidence; personal presentation; making an impact in the boardroom; work life balance as a senior professional; understanding personal working style, strengths, and areas for development

Working together - roles and expectations

As a POWERful Connections mentor, you are making a commitment to offer a defined period of help and support to one or more senior women with potential, based on your experience as a senior energy professional.

You will begin setting the groundwork for your relationship with your mentee in your first meeting, and your relationship will also develop over time, but it is important to start out with a clear understanding of what you should expect from your mentee and what they can expect from you.

What should you expect from your mentee?

You should expect your mentee to

- be committed to the process
- bring ideas to each session and come prepared so that you can both make the most of the time you have together
- reflect on what has been discussed at each meeting
- carry forward any action points you have agreed
- be open and honest about their strengths, weaknesses, successes, and failures
- recognise that moving forward may involve them taking risks or moving away from their comfort zone

In practical terms, it will also be your mentee's responsibility to arrange meetings. These should ideally be fixed in advance over the six-to-nine-month period you will be working together.

Not all meetings necessarily have to be in person – virtual meetings are completely acceptable. However, we recommend that you meet in person whenever you can, especially at the beginning of your relationship, as this helps with establishing rapport and feeling at ease in one another's company.

What will your mentee expect from you?

As a mentor you should be respectful of the challenges your mentees face, but optimistic about finding realistic solutions.

Your mentee will expect you to

- have an open mind, listen to them, and focus on what they are saying rather than imposing your own views
- be motivating, encouraging and constructive
- be open and honest and share your own experiences with them
- explore issues with them and, where necessary, challenge them on their current thinking
- help them understand any developmental needs
- help them identify next steps to achieve their goals, and prioritise
- keep all information disclosed in your meetings, and during your relationship strictly confidential

Your mentee should not expect you to

- have all the answers –you can only share the benefits of your own knowledge and experience
- tell them what to do – as a mentor, you will help your mentee explore issues and, where necessary, reframe their options, but the process should be 'owned' by your mentee. The choices they make are for their development and career: these choices are theirs and theirs only
- do all the work. You are there to listen, support, guide, and challenge, to help your mentee in their development. You are not there to do all the thinking.

Getting Started

The first meeting

Once the details of who you will be mentoring have been confirmed, the next step is to arrange a time to meet. It will be your mentee's responsibility to set up the meeting (but if you have a PA, please make sure they know the name of your mentee, why they will be calling and that they have your permission to make time in your diary).

The aim of the first meeting is to begin to get to know one another, set the scene and establish how you will move forward together.

Establishing the relationship

Ideally you should meet in a setting where you can both relax, and you can be sure that you will not be interrupted.

As it is about starting off a new relationship, the first meeting may feel like a social occasion in nature. It should be used to find out more about one another, your backgrounds, how you got to where you are, and might include a little about your interests and passions outside your working life.

You should move on to discussing how your mentee sees their current position, where they would ideally like to get to in the next five years or so, and the specific areas they have indicated they would like support and guidance. You should also discuss how you will work together on these areas over the six to nine months of POWERful Connections.

Setting the ground rules

It will be particularly important to establish some basic ground rules during your first meeting so that you are clear about your relationship and the way you will work together. The mentor and mentee should discuss

- how you will work together over the coming 6-9 months:

As a POWERful Connections mentor, you have agreed to spend a few hours of your time with your mentee over a 6–9-month period but the scheme is not intended to be prescriptive – how this is arranged, timings and length of meetings is very much down to you and your mentee to agree.

For example, will all your discussions be in person, or will some be virtual? How (and how often) will you communicate between meetings and how many meetings will you have? When is the best time for you to meet? How long will your meetings last?

- how you will approach issues such as confidentiality:

A good mentoring relationship depends on openness, honesty, and trust and so the simple default position should be 'what is said in the room, stays in the room.' The issues that POWERful Connections focus on are about working life and relationships,

personal development and effectiveness and so there should be no reason discussions should enter business sensitive areas.

At the end of the first meeting, you should recap on any action your mentee has agreed to take ahead of the next meeting. You should also agree a date for your next meeting.

If it does not feel right...

Within the POWERful Connections scheme, we will do our best to match mentors and mentees who are a good ‘fit.’

However, it is important that you are open and honest with one another. Having met with your mentee, it is possible that you may feel that, for one reason or another, you will not be able to work well together. An outcome of your first or early meetings may therefore be that one or both of your do not wish to move forward with a mentoring relationship. Sometimes two people do not click; this is perfectly normal and is a better outcome than struggling with a relationship that is not working.

If you have doubts about the relationship, please discuss this with your mentee during or after the meeting. If you agree not to continue, please contact POWERful Women to let us know that relationship will not be going forward.

We will endeavour to arrange for your mentee to be paired with another mentor, and to offer you an alternative mentee, but please be aware that this may not always be possible.

Moving forward

Developing your discussions

Ideally no topic should be off limits during mentoring sessions, and your mentee should expect to be challenged as well as supported.

The issues you decide to work on together should fall out of your discussions as your relationship builds over time. Often, they will be about

- building confidence in particular areas
- determining options in each situation and managing consequences
- making tough decisions, and strategies for maximising success in the pathways they choose
- creating new opportunities and broadening their CV
- making the most of their strengths and working on their perceived weaknesses

Often your role as a POWERful Connections mentor will involve gently moving the process and discussion on, as well as probing further into areas which may need to be explored to help your mentee move forward.

Open questions can be particularly helpful here, as they tend to encourage deep thinking and reflection, as well as helping your mentee learn and understand an issue without feeling intimidated. Useful examples include questions like

*What do you think the problem is?
Why do you say that?
Why do you think you chose to [do x] ...?
What if ...?
Is there any way to ...?*

It will be important to suspend judgment and listen to what your mentee is really saying.

At the end of each meeting, you should recap on the issues that have been raised and any actions agreed.

Action planning

In the confusing words of Yogi Berra, '*if you do not know where you are going, you might wind up somewhere else!*'

We recommend that your mentee should begin working on an action plan with you from the beginning of the process.

Action plans are an intrinsic part of leadership and business management and so will be familiar to most people at varying levels of complexity. In terms of your mentee's personal and professional development an action plan is not set in stone but can give focus to their activities and help them identify any gaps they need to fill to move forward, as well as helping them commit to actions within a timescale.

At its simplest, your mentee's action plan should be a simple statement of their objectives, broken down into sub objectives, as necessary. They will then need to identify the steps they need to take to get there – their strategy – prioritise and set dates.

The goals set will need to be realistic and achievable - it may be useful to suggest mentees map out several paths to their goals. It will also be helpful to explore problems your mentee may face and discuss how they can overcome them, which may in turn help identify further actions which need to be included.

You should review progress and seek to refine the action plan at each meeting with your mentee.

Wrapping it up

POWERful Connections is intended to provide 6-9 months of one-to-one support for your mentees.

At the end of that period, it will be very much down to you and your mentee to decide whether you wish to continue to stay connected in any way. Some mentors and mentees will decide to draw at least the more formal part of their relationship to a close, but we hope that most mentors and mentees will stay in touch and that mentors will continue to follow their mentees' careers and celebrate in their successes.

At the final meeting, you should review your progress with your mentee and discuss the actions they will take forward after the relationship has ended.

As part of our evaluation of the scheme, the POWERful Women team will ask you and your mentee to complete a short questionnaire to ask for your feedback on the programme. We will also contact your mentee twelve months after completing the programme to see how their career has moved on.

More about mentoring - useful resources

There is a wealth of information on mentoring currently available. We have found the following publications and websites helpful in the preparation of this guide.

The Mentoring Pocket Book – Geoff Alred and Bob Garvey

The Art of Mentoring - Mike Pegg

A Practical Guide to Mentoring - David Kay and Roger Hinds

Mentoring Works! <http://mentoring-works.com/>

Contact POWERful Women

For more information about POWERful Connections and POWERful Women please contact:
info@powerfulwomen.org.uk

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Or visit our website www.powerfulwomen.org.uk