



Stepwise Mentor Guide

Thank you for your willingness to consider being a Mentor for Stepwise. This guide will help you to understand more about Stepwise, how it works, and the place of mentoring and the mentor's role within the programme.

Introducing Stepwise

Stepwise is a discipleship development programme created by the United Reformed Church. It is designed for people of all ages and backgrounds and aims to deepen discipleship and help people grow in faith as they walk the way of Jesus together with others.

As a programme of learning and discipleship development Stepwise participants will be exploring and enriching their personal faith journey, discerning where God's call on their life may be leading, preparing for a new direction, or developing a specific role within their community or church. For further information visit www.urc.org.uk/stepwise.

The emphasis of Stepwise is on participants engaging in learning opportunities and development experiences rather than that of a traditional course. As a mentor you play a crucial part in how participants experience Stepwise and progress through the programme.

The heart of your role is to be an ongoing support, sounding board and critical friend.

Introducing Mentoring in Stepwise

One key aspect of Stepwise is that all participants have a mentor who will be alongside them on their Stepwise journey.

Stepwise mentors are people who are trusted in their local community and church. They have the ability to listen, to ask appropriate questions at the right time, to affirm participants on their journey through Stepwise and to help them to explore where Stepwise is leading. A mentor is someone who is willing to pray for the participant and pray with them too.

The mentor is there to support a participant in reflecting upon their learning and their discipleship development and helping them to make connections with their life experience. The question "how is God at work in what I am learning and doing?" is a major part of Stepwise and mentors are there to guide participants as they reflect on this.

Participants are actively encouraged to keep some kind of reflective journal. The different forms this can take are detailed in the participant notes and it will be helpful if mentors can encourage participants in this work.



What kind of person makes for an effective Stepwise mentor?

Here are some of the attributes of an effective Stepwise mentor...

- They are a good listener: someone who can listen to God as well as the participant.
- They will be interested in the aims of Stepwise and therefore in producing missional disciples, believing in the participant and in God's transformation of this person.
- They will not be prescriptive or directive.
- Someone who has the ability to see and accept the other person as 'other'.
- Has empathy towards people who are different.
- They will be open to learning themselves and showing that in their attitude.
- Someone who will pray for and pray with their participant.
- Someone who can maintain confidentiality and respects boundaries.
- They are open to other theological perspectives.
- They are appropriately humble and willing to be accountable themselves.

In practical terms what does a mentor have to do?

Mentors and participants will need to meet either in person or online (via Zoom or another video app). How frequently these meetings happen, and at what stage in the programme, will depend on the Stepwise stream being followed. In Faith-filled Life (the opening stream), mentors and participants will meet three times – which usually works out at about once per month. The other streams are longer so there will be more mentoring meetings (perhaps up to 12) but these will still be approximately monthly. It is suggested that mentoring meetings last no longer than 45 minutes.

Do mentors need to do any preparation?

Yes, a little, but this will help mentors and participants use the time set aside for mentoring meetings most effectively. There are briefing notes for mentors to read before each mentoring session which help mentors understand the topics that participants are exploring in their individual learning and group sessions.

What support is available for mentors?

Mentors will be supported locally by those responsible for Stepwise in each Synod. This might include local meetings of mentors for support and encouragement. There will also be support available through the Stepwise team at URC Church House.

In addition, mentors and participants are asked to enter into a Mentor/Participant Agreement at the beginning of their Stepwise journey together. This agreement provides a framework for the mentoring relationship, establishing healthy boundaries and expectations on both sides. A copy of this agreement is included in Part 2 of this guide.

Where can I find out more?

Contact the Stepwise team at Church House:

David Salsbury, Stepwise Programme Manager: david.salsbury@urc.org.uk

Marion Brown, Stepwise Programme Assistant (Tue – Thurs): marion.brown@urc.org.uk
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www.urc.org.uk/stepwise

Part 2: Stepwise mentor / participant agreement

The purpose of our meeting together is to help you, as the participant, to explore how you are applying your learning through Stepwise to your life.

As Christians together, we will uphold the values of Stepwise:

- Willingness to growing with God, with prayer at the heart of what we do.
- Being inclusive.
- Being mission-focused.
- Willingness to be open, honest and appropriately vulnerable.
- Seeing Stepwise as part of a journey.

Duration

- The duration of the period covered by this agreement will be affected by the nature of the Stepwise stream with which you as the participant is engaging. The agreement is renewed on a stream-by-stream basis.
- The completion of a stream provides a natural point at which to review the agreement. One individual is not bound to be a participant's mentor throughout the whole of their Stepwise journey.
- We will meet in person or remotely, as seems possible to each of us, for up to 12 sessions per year. Unless predetermined by the nature of the stream, we will agree the frequency between us. The usual length of a meeting is 45 minutes.
- We will review the agreement after the second session and decide then if our meetings are serving the intended purpose.
- If either of us feels that the relationship should be brought to an early close we will seek to part on good terms, and the participant will seek a new mentor through the same mechanism as was used originally.

Ground rules

- Either of us may feel that it would be useful to invite someone to assist us as mentor or participant in the meetings. This will be arranged with the knowledge of the group facilitator, and for a clear reason. e.g. the need for a British Sign Language interpreter or other translator.
- The content of our conversations will be shaped by the nature of the particular stream being pursued. There may be occasions when a report by one or both of us is expected from our meetings as part of the assessment processes of Stepwise. This will be known in advance of our meetings.
- The conversations between us will remain confidential unless either of us feel unsafe or unprotected during our meeting.
- We will be courteous and respectful of one another by being punctual and polite with one another, preparing for meetings as necessary, honouring the commitment to meet, and giving advance warning if the meeting has to be rescheduled.

Safeguarding

- We will meet in a place and/or mode which is safe and appropriate for both participant and mentor. This will not normally be in one of our homes, and not after 9pm at night. The venue arrangement can be reviewed if either of us expresses concern for its suitability.

- If either of us is under the age of 18 or an adult-at-risk we will not meet one-to-one and never in either of our homes or online. Instead the meeting will take place in an appropriate public space and in the presence of a trusted, responsible adult who will accompany us on our mentoring journey. For those under the age of 18 this arrangement will also be with the agreement of parents/carers of the child/young person and supported by a signed consent form. A consent form template is included in Good Practice 5, the URC's Safeguarding Guidance and Policy document. This form is available from your church or Synod safeguarding officer or on the URC website: visit www.urc.org.uk and search for safeguarding.
- In case either of us has reason to believe that someone other than the two of us is at risk of serious harm it is the mentor's responsibility to inform the relevant safeguarding staff of the church or synod.
- If there is any concern that either of us has been seriously hurt or is in danger of being harmed, the emergency services should be called on 999.
- DBS/PVG checks will be expected in some cases, e.g. where a mentor meets with a participant under 18 (25 in the case of children with a physical or learning disability) or with adult participants who have care and support needs.