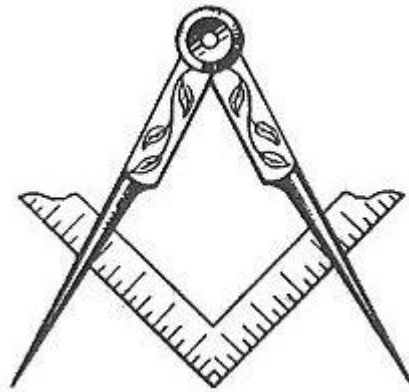




# Mentoring Guide

An overview of the mentoring process



West Lancashire Freemasons

PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF WEST LANCASHIRE

“Furthering your Masonic education through mentoring”

# 1. Why Do We Need Mentors?

Consider the following statement from a brother who was questioned why he had tendered his resignation within two years of joining.

*"I didn't really know what I was joining, but I knew that my Proposer was a decent and honourable man and he always spoke so highly of Freemasonry. My first night was overwhelming and I'm still not sure what it was all about. I remember everybody was very friendly, so much so that I was struggling to remember everybody's name. My Proposer was an active officer in the Lodge, but he made sure he had plenty of time to look after me that night.*

*Everybody was asking what I thought of it all and a few said that it would make more sense if I quickly visited another Lodge in the area, so that I could watch the ceremony from the sidelines. My Proposer said that this was a great idea and he would give me a ring to arrange it. Well, everyone was busy and I never managed to visit before the next meeting. The next meeting was a little confusing, as I was asked to leave quite soon in the ceremony and I had to sit in the dining room. I had a good chat with the Stewards (and a pint!), but before I knew it everyone was leaving the Lodge room and it was time for the meal.*

*I had to spend the rest of the evening with people I didn't know. They were very nice but I felt as if I couldn't really ask them the questions I wanted to, maybe I didn't even know which questions to ask. My wife and grown up children showed interest at first, but when I couldn't answer their questions their interest soon waned.*

*I'm afraid the rest of my short Masonic career was a bit like that, as I never got to do much visiting and I went through all my degrees without really understanding any of them.*

*Then as soon as I had reached my Third Degree, someone asked me if I wanted to join something called Chapter. It was at this point I stopped and asked myself what I was doing.*

*I was in something that I didn't really understand, nobody had the time to tell me what was going on and I was being asked to get involved further. That was when I decided to leave. I'm in business and when my company takes people on, we make sure that they are looked after until they know their way."*

## **Learning Points**

Look at the key points from the previous statement:

- a) He didn't really know what he was joining
- b) He was not sure what the first night was all about
- c) Nobody assisted him to arrange any visits to other Lodges
- d) He was confused when asked to leave the next meeting (probably a 2nd or 3rd degree ceremony)

- e) He felt embarrassed with his lack of knowledge
- f) He became a Master Mason without understanding the previous ceremonies
- g) He did not have the answers to his families' questions
- h) He was then asked to join Chapter, without any understanding of what he had already joined

We must ask ourselves the question "*Does any of this happen in my Lodge?*" If we are truthful with ourselves, we may not like the answer.

This is where Mentoring may help. Mentoring is an established developmental tool that has long been used in business, to help both new starters in their work inductions and to motivate and develop existing employees to help them fill their true potential.

## 2. What is Masonic Mentoring?

The textbook says: "Mentoring is a fundamental form of human development where one person invests time, energy and personal know-how in assisting the growth and ability of another person"

Masonic Mentoring is the same - a more experienced brother invests time, energy and Masonic experience in assisting a new brother to enjoy his Masonry to the full.

Not everybody wants the same from their Masonry. The main thing is to ensure that our newer brethren are enjoying their masonry so much that they not only wish to stay, but also wish to take an active part.

Although a mentoring programme may be primarily aimed at new candidates and we often refer to 'newer brethren', it should also be used to encourage others who have stopped attending their Lodge as well as those who attend regularly, but whose Masonic development appears to have stalled.

Whilst any mentoring scheme must inevitably be tailored to the needs of the candidate, it is not only the candidate who will ultimately benefit. In the longer term, great benefits will also accrue to the Lodge in terms of continuity, by ensuring active younger men are available, and more importantly, ensuring a pipeline of brethren who are actually willing to take office !

### **3. What Does a Mentor Do?**

We all know of brethren who are fully active in many degrees and those who just enjoy the social side. It is the role of a Mentor to let brethren find their own level of participation and to support them in doing so. In this way, they will be encouraged to maximise their participation and will remain enthusiastic about the organisation they have joined.

If any Candidate does not wish to embark on a path of continuous Masonic development, he should not be rushed. To be taken through each step of the learning process slowly will, in many cases, ultimately achieve better results.

It is important that the Candidate feels comfortable in his Masonry. At first he will have many questions and concerns that are at a quite basic level, such as when do we meet? What do I wear? etc. These basic questions should be answered before any attempt is made to introduce him to the more 'involved' aspects of Freemasonry.

The diagram below explains the levels of development stages:



4. How can I advance ?

3. Do I really belong here ?

2. What should I do next ?

1. What is expected of me ?

Essentially this means we should cover the most basic areas first.

# 4. The Mentoring Relationship

When carried out properly, the relationship between a Mentor and the Candidate will be constantly changing as the candidate develops his understanding and engagement within the Craft.

The role of a Mentor is much more than just a teacher, he is an advisor, coach, confidential counsellor and sounding board. In fact, the role of a teacher will only exist during the initial stage of the process. There is a lot to learn for a new mason and there will be times when a Mentor must sit down and impart knowledge, perhaps by explaining a section of ritual or the role of a specific office. However, this is really just the basic part of the mentoring process which will probably occur mainly at the start of the relationship. True mentoring will come when a candidate starts to manage his own learning and is guided along this path by his Mentor.

Great teachers share their knowledge and make learning enjoyable and effective. Firstly, they inspire people to want to learn. Secondly, they provide implementation tools that work. Thirdly, they help people to integrate their learning into their daily lives.

Once the basic knowledge has been grasped, the relationship will develop into one of coaching. Good coaches often take three steps.

- 1) encourage people to build on their strengths.
- 2) equip people to tackle areas of improvement.
- 3) enable people to achieve ongoing success.

Good coaches also recognise that different people have different learning styles.

A mentor will also act as an advisor - a provider of specialist knowledge or advice on how to deal with a certain situation. To be able to carry out this role, the mentor must have credibility with the candidate and hold their respect. But how do you gain such credibility and respect? Several tips are worth bearing in mind. Firstly, be true to yourself. Secondly, be clear on your strengths. Thirdly, be clear on your limits.

A candidate may also look upon their mentor as a role model. Role Models are people we admire. They provide examples that we may wish to copy and emulate. Teachers for example can have a profound impact on us if they are inspiring and bring their subject to life. Positive models at work, for example, teach us about 'the things you should do to be successful around here'.

A Mentor may also be asked to perform the role of counsellor. The classic method is to create a safe environment, practice listening skills and be non-directive. Providing the Mentor is a good listener, the person is often able to find their own answers to the problem.



# 5. Skills and Qualities of a Mentor

## 5.1 Observational Skills

Keeping a watchful eye on your Candidate will provide useful indicators on how he is settling in to his masonry.

- Does he join in with the brethren, or is he often to be found standing apart on his own?
- Does he appear interested in the proceedings of the Lodge? His body language will tell you this. Is he looking at what is happening and does he appear to be focused on the ritual, or does he appear inattentive, look blank or easily distracted?
- Facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye signals, body movements all transmit a message. Body language often speaks louder than words - we may say one thing, while our bodies say another.

## 5.2 Questioning Skills

Mentors need to bear in mind that their primary role is to help and encourage their Mentee to develop. This cannot be achieved if they create pressure or confusion by incorrect questioning.

There are two main types of question - open and closed. A closed question is one that may be answered by a simple 'yes' or 'no' and usually begin with 'do you', 'are you', 'have you' and

so on. It may also be a question to which a respondent is offered a choice of alternative replies, such as 'which of the following options do you prefer?'

On the other hand, open questions are aimed at provoking an extended 'free' response and might start with 'what', 'where', 'which', 'why', 'how' or 'when'.

Closed questions can be used:

- a) Where a straightforward 'yes' or 'no' is enough
- b) To gather or verify information
- c) To confirm understanding of facts
- d) To confirm agreement or commitment
- e) To get a decision where there are a number of alternatives.

The repeated use of closed questions needs to be avoided, because a series of such questions can become wearying on the respondent and can quickly turn a discussion into an interrogation.

A more difficult skill to develop, but one that is essential to guiding and supporting a learner, is to use open questions that enable the Mentor to:

- a) Establish rapport and put the other person at ease
- b) Free up the other person to answer as they choose and in their own words
- c) Encourage uninhibited feedback

- d) Help explore opinions and values in more detail
- e) Create involvement and commitment
- f) Check out understanding more comprehensively.

For example, if you wanted to ask a Candidate about the merits of the Festive Board, you could say 'Do you think the Festive Board is a good idea?' This invites a simple 'yes' or 'no' response. If you had phrased the question 'What do you think are the good and bad points about the Festive Board?', then you would invite a response that would require the Candidate to express an opinion. The benefits of using appropriate open questions are evident.

### **5.3 Listening Skills**

It is the ability to listen 'actively' that separates the good communicators from the poor. This involves really concentrating on the message being transmitted, by trying to understand not only what is being said, but how and why it is being said.

Success as a Mentor depends, to a large extent, on the ability to concentrate effectively on what is being said, often for long periods. You may well make the other person feel unimportant or not valued if they sense you are not paying close attention to their ideas or considering their feelings.

When in discussion, listen for a note of confidence or hesitation in a Candidate's voice. This will indicate whether he

really understands the topic or is still yet to grasp what is being discussed. Confidence, and other emotions, will most probably be expressed as much in the tone of the response as in the actual words themselves.

A successful Mentor who does possess the above techniques will soon discover they are very useful, as they will quickly enable him to gain a true picture of the Candidate's strengths and abilities. By doing so, the Mentor will be able to start making judgments on how the Candidate may be able to contribute towards the lodge, if he so wishes. For example, does he have a flair for public speaking, an ability to form relationships quickly, is he an organised person?

By identifying such skills, the Mentor may see the potential for a future Secretary, Charity Steward, DC etc.

## **6. Who Should be a Mentor?**

In ideal circumstances a Mentor would be:

- a) Someone who the Mentee can relate to and establish a natural rapport.
- b) A knowledgeable Mason
- c) Someone not currently holding an office in the Lodge, or at least not an onerous one demanding their presence during the meeting or at the meal afterwards.

- d) Someone not likely to be encumbered with a time consuming office for some years to come, as mentoring may be required for a relatively prolonged period.
- e) A member who regularly attends lodge meetings and rehearsals, with sufficient spare time outside of normal Lodge attendance to meet with the new brother regularly.
- f) Someone who lives not too far from the brother for whom he has become responsible making it easier to meet and forge a friendship outside as well as inside the Lodge.
- g) Outgoing, with a friendly personality.
- h) Someone with a proven track record of being helpful to new and inexperienced brethren.
- i) Enthusiastic about his Freemasonry.
- j) A good communicator.
- k) Of a similar age profile to the Candidate.

Whilst it would be helpful for a mentor to possess all of these qualifications and personal characteristics, they are listed only for guidance, as it is highly unlikely such brethren are available in many Lodges. Time constraints alone, resulting from offices held in the Lodge, may make it impossible for many Proposers and Seconders to fulfil the task.

Compromise will frequently be needed and when it is, priority should always be given to those characteristics which will result in the development of a lasting friendship between Candidate and Mentor. If the Mentor is of a similar age profile and is a

good communicator with an outgoing and friendly personality, the mentoring is more likely to prove successful. Any perceived lack of detailed knowledge on the part of the Mentor can be easily addressed with the support of the Lodge or Chapter Mentor and training or support can, upon request, be made available at Provincial level.

## **Support for the Mentor**

As a Mentor you have your own training and development needs and whilst you will be expected to treat the experience of mentoring as a learning curve for yourself, you may well need advice and support to do this.

- a) Who would you consider as being your Mentor? Identify at least one other person to whom you could turn for advice in the absence of a Lodge Mentoring "Coordinator".
- b) Get to know other Mentors. Talk to them about your experiences and problems.
- c) Do not be afraid to refer to a member of the Provincial Mentoring team.
- d) Attend any Mentoring workshops or seminars organised by the Provincial Mentor and benefit from the shared experience.

# 7. The Mentoring Process in Action

It is important to meet with the Candidate before and after each degree ceremony to put him at ease and to answer any questions he may have. Regular meetings thereafter will assist in the implementation of a development programme which allows the Candidate to achieve his goals.

The amount of time necessary will vary considerably from Candidate to Candidate according to their level of self-confidence and the amount of research they may have undertaken privately.

As a Mentor you should:

- a) Ensure you are seated next to the Candidate during the Lodge meeting.
- b) Ensure you are seated next to the Candidate at the Festive Board and introduce him to others present
- c) Be prepared to visit the Candidate at his home (if invited to do so) and keep in contact outside of Lodge meetings.
- d) Accompany the candidate at all times when he is required to leave the Lodge Room. This is a very useful time for answering questions and explaining what has happened.
- e) Explain Freemasonry, its structure, Offices, symbolism, ceremonies, and demonstrate the correct manner of saluting.

- f) Take interest in the progress made by the Candidate, congratulate him on his progress and encourage him to develop it still further.
- g) Help the Candidate to learn the Ritual, not just the words, but more importantly, their meaning.
- h) Encourage the Candidate to play a full part in the life of the Lodge, both ceremonially and socially.

There are different stages in the overall process of Mentoring:

### **7.1 Getting started**

The first meeting should be a time to get to know one another, building rapport and sharing experiences outside Freemasonry. Discuss when and where you will meet in future and how you will communicate. Talk about the expectations you both may have and especially the level of confidentiality.

### **7.2 Laying the Foundation**

As the partners get to know each other, it is possible to establish what each expects of the other. As Candidate and Mentor get to know more about each other, so trust is established and a point is reached where discussion can take place openly and honestly.

### **7.3 The Progressive Stages**

The Mentor helps the Candidate to increase his knowledge and acts as a confidant and motivator. During this phase he devotes



more time to focusing on the provision of detailed information relating to all aspects of Freemasonry.

It is essential the Candidate appreciates he may speak with you at all times in the strictest confidence. He will hopefully recognise you not only as his Mentor, but also as his friend.

Do not adopt an overtly direct style of questioning and try not to encourage yes/no answers. Listening techniques are just as important as questioning techniques. Naturally, the Candidate will gain confidence over time and if you find he is doing more talking than you, you are probably well on the way to achieving your goal.

Should you at any time feel your relationship with the Candidate is becoming strained in any way, you should seek guidance from the Lodge or Provincial Mentor.

## **7.4 Practical Activities**

The Candidate has a great deal of information to assimilate and you have access to a wealth of support material via Solomon ([solomon.ugle.org.uk](http://solomon.ugle.org.uk)) to utilise.

Controlling access to the support material is perhaps one of your most important tasks, for the process must be governed by the Candidate's ability to digest the information and not by any wish on your part to proceed quickly to the next stage.

In the event of non-attendance of the Candidate, you should try to make contact as soon as possible. There may be good

reason for non-attendance, owing to family or business commitments and your enquiry should certainly not appear to imply criticism of any sort. The best approach is always the most genuine one, asking after his health, saying he was missed and that several of the brethren asked after him.

## **7.5 Mentor's Check List**

Upon joining Freemasonry your Mentee will have some basic questions which must be answered. The Mentoring process can assumed to be in 4 key stages, each with unique requirements that need addressing.

### **7.5.1 Stage 1**

At first he will be a little bewildered, but he may shortly be asking

*"How often do we meet and when?"*

*"Who is who?"*

*"What is a Warden, Deacon?"*

*"What are the fees used for and how often do I pay them?"*

*"What am I expected to wear ?"*

*"Who provides the regalia?"*

It is important that these very simple domestic questions are raised and answered at an early stage.

### **7.5.2 Stage 2**

Stage 2 is where he needs to understand the relationship of the Three Degrees and the symbolic meanings of each as he

completes them in turn. This is a great opportunity for the Mentor to help him understand what is going on around him. Sit with him in the Lodge room and retire with him if he has to leave the lodge room during a higher degree.

### **7.5.3 Stage 3**

By Stage 3 the Mentee will be asking himself "*Do I fit in?*" or "*Is this for me?*" The answer to these two questions will be "yes" only if the first two stages have been satisfactorily completed.

This is when the Mentor asks if he wants to be involved in performing part of the ceremony and confirms that he is taking part in the social side of his Lodge activities.

### **7.5.4 Stage 4**

By Stage 4 a Brother should be enjoying his Masonry, having struck a happy balance between his home/work and Masonic life and wishing to progress further. Such progression could be aimed ultimately perhaps at becoming Worshipful Master or possibly instead towards an active role such as Charity Steward, Treasurer or Secretary. It may however be his wish for a more passive role and it is essential that he is not driven towards a progression for which he currently has no desire to attain.

## 8. Correlating Feedback

It is important you ask yourself *"Is it working?"*, but as communication is a two-way process, you should encourage him to talk about himself. Remember, you may at this stage be the only person he feels he can talk to in confidence.

Hopefully his initial impressions of Freemasonry in general and of the Lodge in particular will be positive ones. However, it would not be surprising if within that generally positive framework there are also some negative areas and, if so, it should not be too difficult to identify the specific problems and address them.

In the event that feedback from the Candidate is generally negative, then of course you have a problem of a very different kind. It is essential to try and work out what has gone wrong before you start making decisions and you could confer with other Lodge Mentors or The Provincial Mentor with a view to establishing the best course of remedial action available.

It may be that, despite your best efforts, the Candidate does not feel Freemasonry is for him. Alternatively, it may be that the relationship between you and the Candidate has not developed as it should and the appointment of another Mentor may meet with greater success. In such circumstances, you should not feel embarrassed for it takes two people to form a

meaningful relationship and although you may well have done everything you could to make it work, it naturally will not do so unless your efforts are reciprocated.

## 9. Conclusion

If the Mentoring Programme is followed, the Lodge will have a new member with a clear understanding of the fundamentals of Freemasonry and who will have met and enjoyed the company of members of the Lodge. By joining the Lodge of Instruction, if one is available, he will have become involved in the ritual and ceremonial proceedings of the Institution more quickly than may otherwise have proved possible. He should therefore be in a position to thoroughly enjoy his Freemasonry. In short, by looking after, taking care of and instructing the new Brother, the Lodge has gained a valuable new addition to its membership and the Craft in general is strengthened.

## APPENDIX A - The role of Mentor

The role of Mentor is the key position within the whole Mentoring process. It is the Mentor who imparts his knowledge, spends time with the Candidate, and guides and supports him throughout his Masonic journey. By helping him

take the correct first crucial steps, you will be guiding him on a path that will change his life, and the lives of those around him, for the better.

The responsibilities of a Mentor are great, but the role is also, in many ways, an easy and enjoyable one. Mentoring is not rocket science. It is simply a process of spending time with a Candidate and exposing him to information in a controlled manner, i.e. small understandable chunks that he can easily digest, whilst making sure he starts to understand what is happening around him.

Once he has basic Masonic knowledge, the focus will change from 'Teacher' to 'Mentor'. This may involve some elements of counselling, acting as a confidential advisor and being a role model. These are all things a Mentor will have done successfully many times before, but probably thought of it simply as "friendship".

It may be helpful to maintain an Individual Record, especially if the additional assistance of brethren other than the Mentor are enlisted at any time.

## **APPENDIX B - Mentoring Duties**

It is the responsibility of every Lodge to look after its members. The Mentor has a vital role to play, as it is his responsibility to

ensure that the Mentoring process works effectively in his Lodge.

The Lodge Mentor should ensure that a personal Mentor is appointed for every Candidate. To do so he must;

- a) Be fully aware of the Mentoring process, what it is trying to achieve and what 'success looks like'.
- b) Make sure that all the members of his Lodge are aware of Mentoring and what benefits it will bring to their Lodge.
- c) Ensure Mentors fully understand the aims and objectives of the programme and attend any training courses or workshops available.
- d) Match the right Mentor to the Candidate. This will of course vary according to the size of Lodge membership and the availability of suitable Mentors. It would be helpful to be involved at the early stages of a candidate's application to the Lodge. This will allow him to start thinking of a suitable match.
- e) Never disregard the Proposer or Secunder, as they may have the ability to fulfil the role. Above all they will probably know the Candidates personality and personal circumstances more than any other lodge members.
- f) Take time to ensure the Candidate and Mentor form a good initial relationship. Do they sit together both in the Lodge and at the Festive Board?

Most importantly make sure that this is all done in good heart and with fun. Mentoring exists to help develop good masons and support your Lodge. If it works, everyone wins, and the Lodge Mentor has the enviable position in making that happen.

## **APPENDIX C - The Proposer & Secunder**

When looking at the role of the Mentor, an obvious question to ask is: *"Isn't that the role of the Proposer or Secunder?"*

Some Candidates are fortunate to have a Proposer or Secunder who has not only a sufficient level of knowledge, but also the time and ability to pass that knowledge on to the Candidate.

However this is not always the case, and care of the Candidate may be inadvertently neglected, for example:

- a) They may have an active office in the Lodge that prevents them from spending quality time with their Candidate.
- b) They may still be at an early stage of their own Masonic career, without the required level of knowledge to be able to answer the Candidate's questions.
- c) They may be unable to attend Lodge meetings on a regular basis, for reasons of family or business commitments.

It is clear from the above, that the relationship between the parties will very much depend on the knowledge, skill and



availability of the Proposer or Secunder. If they are able to do so, one or both of them they may be able to be the Mentor themselves. Alternatively, it may be that they and the Mentor work together, or it might be left solely to the Mentor to provide independent support and guidance.

But no matter how the relationship develops, the Proposer and Secunder must always maintain a close relationship with their Candidate. They are often the reason that he joined the Craft and their enduring friendly relationship with him will only further enhance the work of the Mentor.

## **APPENDIX D - Evaluation & Review**

The mentoring programme will only achieve its aims if it operates within an organised structure. This includes a defined process of monitoring and evaluation. Everyone involved in the scheme should be involved in this review process to ensure ongoing continuous improvement.

By its very nature, this role will involve continuous review as the Mentor and Candidate will be meeting on a fairly regular basis to review progress.

### **Personal Mentor**

It is the responsibility of the Personal Mentor to give feedback on progress to the Lodge Mentor (unless the Lodge Mentor is

actually the Personal Mentor !) This will include how the mentoring relationship is progressing with the Candidate and will contain such points as:

- a) How often do they meet and have they met after each of the degree ceremonies?
- b) Does the Candidate make any positive/negative comments about any aspects of the Craft?
- c) Has the candidate taken part in any ritual or shown interest in doing so?
- d) Are there any recognisable skills that the Candidate has that may be useful to the Lodge in the future?
- e) Is the Candidate visiting other Lodges or attending any social events?

The Mentor can also give feedback on how he personally feels about the role he has agreed to undertake: does he enjoy it; has he had any good success; any best practice to share etc

The frequency of these review sessions will depend upon the Lodge Mentor, but should ideally occur at least once a year.

### **The Lodge Mentor**

Reviews will involve both objective and subjective methods. Subjective evaluation will typically come from discussions with Personal Mentors on the Candidates progress. This will mainly focus on the nature of the relationship between the Candidate

and his Mentor. More objective measurement can be made by taking note of a number of criteria for each candidate, such as:

- a) Number of attendances
- b) Progression in Lodge, if appropriate
- c) Number of Provincial seminars attended
- d) Number of visits made to other Lodges
- e) Attendance at Lodge of Instruction (if appropriate)

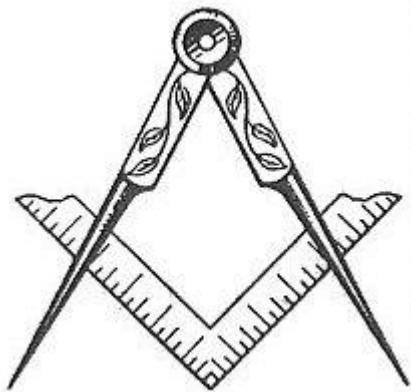
A degree of uniformity is necessary when adopting the criteria to be used, if a Provincial or national picture is to emerge. Whatever criteria are being used should be open and transparent and agreed by all parties. The same criteria should be used for each candidate in the Lodge and across Lodges in the same Group wherever possible. Judgements should be supported with evidence. What should also be made clear is that these criteria give a judgement on the process and not on the person.

If the process is working well, it should result in a Candidate attending regularly, showing interest in the ritual, wanting to move on, eager to learn, asking questions and obviously enjoying his masonry.

Ideally the Candidate should be asked to indicate what he would like to do and the level of support he will expect, examples include learn parts of ritual, visit another Lodge, help in fundraising, etc.



**Masonic Mentoring is about Making a Difference  
"...it calls on you to afford assistance and instruction to  
the Brethren in the 'inferior' Degrees."**



Stewart Cranage

Provincial Grand Mentor

07955 603492

[mentor@provinceofwestlancs.org](mailto:mentor@provinceofwestlancs.org)