



## June/July

Hello and welcome to your latest network chairs' newsletter. This quarter we:

- have a short update on funding for networks
- hear about a network-based mentoring pilot run by Partners in Care in the South West
- hear about a network for deputy managers run by St Giles Hospice in the Midlands.

If there's something you'd like to see in next quarter's newsletter or you have a story to share, speak to your locality manager or email [rm.networks@skillsforcare.org.uk](mailto:rm.networks@skillsforcare.org.uk).

Best wishes,

Christine Burkett - Head of area (North West) and Networks lead

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## Funding for networks

Firstly, I'd like to say a huge thank you to all of you for submitting your expressions of interest in May to continue running your networks.

We were heavily oversubscribed and whilst this meant some difficult decisions in terms of funding, it was also fantastic to see the interest and enthusiasm in these networks continuing.

Most networks will have now received a successful letter, stating that subject to final sign-off from the Department of Health & Social Care you will receive your grant shortly.

We have your grants set up on our system so that, as soon as we are able to, we will issue your grant letters. Until then, if you have any questions please contact either your locality manager or [rm.networks@skillsforcare.org.uk](mailto:rm.networks@skillsforcare.org.uk).

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## A network-based mentoring scheme

**Last year Partners in Care: Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole, used a grant from the Workforce Development Innovation Fund to introduce a peer-led mentoring project. Kate Blake, Team Manager at Partners in Care, tells us more.**

Our project sought to enhance and extend the reach of the well-established registered managers networks that we support. We discussed the idea of peer-mentoring with registered managers locally and identified three key impacts:

- experienced managers would be offered valuable continuing professional development (CPD)
- isolated or less experienced managers would be better supported to increase their confidence
- most importantly, both of these outcomes would lead to people needing care and support benefiting from a more motivated and skilled workforce.

We recruited mentors and mentees through the networks that we currently support, as well as through our close links with a local Care Association. The mentors were provided with training around the role of the mentor, listening skills and leadership styles. We also brought the mentees together for a session before they were paired with their mentors; this proved to be an important step in getting mentees fully engaged and giving them the confidence to establish a relationship with their mentor.

To help us pair mentors and mentees we asked each party for some basic information about their service, experience to date and what they felt they had to offer or gain. We also looked closely at geographic location. Whilst a mentoring relationship can be established via phone, we found that a face-to-face introduction allowed people to build trust and a rapport more quickly.

We continued to support mentors and mentees throughout the project, with an experienced mentor visiting each pair at least once and staying in touch with them.

As part of the mentoring process, mentees identified an area they wanted to focus on and feedback from mentees has been exceptional:

***“My mentor has helped me reflect on my practice. I have found it really inspiring and motivating. I feel very fortunate to work with somebody with so much experience”*** – a mentee who wanted to increase her knowledge and confidence in her role, with a particular focus on conducting supervisions.

Another mentee, preparing for her CQC registration interview said her mentor had – ***“been brilliant, so supportive, I am so thankful for all her help with my CQC registration. It’s been great to speak to somebody outside of the home who understands my role and goes through the same challenges as me.”***

Mentors also benefited, telling us about the value of the opportunity to reflect on their own practice and the chance to learn from their mentees.

In terms of lessons for other networks, some of the key themes we identified are:

- early input to ensure that mentees are clear about the parameters of the mentoring relationship and feel able to fully commit is important; this might include helping them to negotiate time away from their services
- close attention to detail at the matching stage will pay dividends
- using mentoring agreements and monitoring relationships helped to identify any issues and keep each party on track
- work with people to ensure they have the confidence to take part is important.

This project has provided an invaluable opportunity for peer-led support and was an excellent way of extending the support available through our networks. Moving forward, it has been really exciting to hear mentees talk about a desire to become mentors and mentors wanting to continue in that role.

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## **A network for deputy and aspiring managers in the Midlands**

**In 2018 St Giles Hospice received a small grant to help them establish a network for deputy managers. Theresa Barker, Head of Education and Training, shares what they did.**

The aim of our project was to develop a network for deputies, team leaders and seniors which would provide the peer support, sharing of good practice, reflective time and opportunities for professional development needed to meet the challenges they face day-to-day. At the heart of this was a desire to increase skills, confidence and competence, in turn improving service quality and person-centred care.

We promoted the opportunity to the registered managers involved with the existing network that we supported, offering them the opportunity to invite their deputies to join the new network.

The project attracted 20 deputies and team leaders, who all committed to attending five network meetings over a five-month period. Meetings were delivered on a Friday afternoon between 1-4pm and they were arranged so that the group could meet for lunch before the session started.

We set ground rules for the network at the first meeting and throughout the project the facilitator and the group created a safe environment to explore issues and challenges openly.

Alongside the opportunities for support and reflection, each meeting had a specific learning session. Over the five sessions, deputies and team leaders covered:

- culture
- leadership
- support and wellbeing
- new initiatives in the sector.

Feedback from deputies and their managers was excellent and the initial five meetings were such a success that a 'community of learning study day' was arranged. Members of the group presented on three changes in practice they had been involved in within their organisations over the previous six months. This got wider attendance from other managers, deputies and stakeholders; resulting in celebrating achievements, networking with new colleagues and sharing learning.

I'm delighted to say that the network has been such a success that we have arranged for the group to continue meeting (although less frequently) and we hope to publish more information about this project with Skills for Care in late 2019-2020.