Registered Managers' Supported Year Pilot

Final report

Executive summary

September 2019

Jude Teicke with Dora Blake

Executive Summary

Background

The overall aim of the Registered Managers' Supported Year pilot was to test a model of support for new registered managers based on a combination of Skills for Care resources and guidance. It ran from April 2018 – April 2019.

The pilot was run in five geographical areas and contained several different elements:

- Bespoke face to face meetings (three in each area)
- Action Learning Sets (in four of the five areas) or mentoring (in one area)
- Webinars focused on specific topics or resources (seven were delivered over the course of the pilot)
- Voluntary completion of a reflection log
- Gap analysis and Personal Development Plan. Participants rated themselves against all the items in the MIS and their personal results were then fed back to them in the form of a report designed to help participants develop a Personal Development Plan (PDP).
- Participation in a Registered Managers' Network
- Membership of Skills for Care.

Pilot evaluation

The pilot was evaluated with a view to answering the following questions

1. To what extent did the pilot successfully achieve its aims and objectives?
    a. What were the key outcomes achieved by participants?
2. Which elements of the support were the most effective?
3. What was the impact of the Action Learning Sets and are they appropriate for this population of registered managers?
4. How satisfied were participants with the pilot?

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach which included baseline and follow-up skills assessments to measure distance travelled; surveys capturing views on the pilot processes; focus groups; feedback from the pilot team and analysis of secondary data.

Participant profile

65 participants were initially recruited to the pilot and nine formally withdrew.

Participants' motivations for taking part focused on improving their confidence and having access to a support network. Participants were optimistic about what the programme could offer, appreciative that the offer seemed to plug a gap in career development and that it had come at just the right time for them. Despite recognising that they had much to learn, participants acknowledged that with support they could thrive. Many felt that they had been 'doing the job' in other roles for some time and just needed the extra developmental input that the pilot was seen to offer. Where participants had been in the role for longer or had been working as a deputy for some time, they were less clear how they would benefit.

The **lowest self-assessed participant scores on entry to the programme** were business skills; knowledge of values-based recruitment; regulation processes and financial management responsibilities. Other stresses and development needs included low self-

esteem; dealing with confrontation; being unsure about their leadership role; feeling underprepared for the role and feelings of anxiety and isolation.

Participants had the **highest self-assessed scores** in understanding their responsibility to lead others in safeguarding practice; confidence in dealing with suspected or alleged abuse; compliance with health and safety policies and reflective practice.

Outcomes

In all the management skills, as measured by the self-assessment before and after surveys, there was significant (although sometimes small) progress. All the changes were statistically significant (at the $p < .05$ level).

The areas with the **greatest** average change were:

- I can confidently describe the relationship between staff structure, skills and service outcomes
- I can successfully lead and manage change in my organisation
- I understand the range of regulation processes and the information that is required for each
- I am confident I understand the CQC inspection process and that I am prepared for inspection
- I am confident in managing resources in my organisation.

The following areas saw **less movement** in scores between baseline and the end of the programme:

- I feel adequately supported in my role
- I understand the difference between being a leader and manager
- I am confident I know what to do in the case of suspected or alleged abuse
- It is my responsibility to lead others in safeguarding practice.

The main outcomes which were highlighted by participants in the focus groups and open-ended survey comments were.

Increased confidence in own abilities

This was one of the strongest themes to come out of the qualitative data. Many of the focus group participants spoke about how, prior to coming onto the pilot, they suffered from self-doubt and questioned their abilities to do the job. As a result of the programme, participants described having much greater levels of self-belief and through this increased confidence in decision making, following organisational policies and procedures, a reduction in anxiety, and trusting instincts rather than 'over thinking' issues. The principle mechanism for this change was peer interaction and support, but the Action Learning Sets and webinars were also mentioned.

Improved knowledge and skills which included:

- **Leadership (including supporting and developing a team)** - many participants were now able to clearly articulate the differences between leadership and management. Supporting and developing a team was also an area where many focus group participants highlighted progress including feeling more able to delegate; encouraging staff to reflect more; and adapting leadership styles. There was an increased understanding about, and in some cases realisation of, the benefits of supporting a team and being a leader such as respect from staff members, dispersing responsibility, and a better ability to manage time and focus on priority areas. Many

gained valuable skills in this area through the Action Learning Sets. Mentoring also helped some participants better understand how they could delegate and the benefits of this.

- **Governance and regulatory processes** – e.g. understanding the CQC process and feeling prepared for inspections.
- **Communication -** improvements in communication were very common for participants including tailoring communication styles to different colleagues; increased confidence to communicate opinions to senior colleagues; being more responsive in their communication; clearly and confidently communicating decisions
- **Professional development, supervision and performance management** - many focus group participants were extremely motivated to take responsibility for their personal development. The programme had helped participants identify the areas in which they needed to develop (as well appreciating the areas in which they were strong). It had also helped some participants to identify the need to carve out time for themselves and their own development. Participants also felt more confidence in addressing performance issues.
- **Managing self –** there was great progress in terms of awareness of methods for improving self-management and participants had put in place strategies for doing this. Improvements were reported in delegation and time management. Participants also reported that focusing on their own well-being was now legitimate and they could seek support for this.
- **Critical reflection -** while the degree of progress as measured in the Gap Analysis was small for this, the qualitative data strongly suggests that the pilot had helped participants focus more on critical reflection (both for themselves and for their staff members). The mechanisms for increased confidence in, and frequency of, critical reflection were the reflection logs (when used) and the Action Learning Sets.

Increased awareness of what the role entails

Just like the wider population of registered managers[1], the members of this pilot were unprepared for the level of responsibility and competencies necessary for the role. Focus group members highlighted how the programme had helped with this. Talking to their peers and mentors (where they had one) had increased their understanding of the scope of the role.

Outcomes are interconnected and co-dependent

Discussions with participants in the focus groups and analysis of the open-ended survey comments, exposed the degree to which outcomes for participants are interconnected and co-dependent.

Increased awareness of support available (including from Skills for Care)

The pilot had increased participants' knowledge of the support that was available including

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[1] The Survey of Registered Managers found that *"the breadth, depth and diversity of responsibility attached to the registered manager role is not something that all new managers are aware of before they start."*

ongoing peer support; registered manager networks and publications and resources.

While many believed Skills for Care had a good reputation, they were less clear, at the outset, on the range of support that was available to them through the organisation. Several focus group members believed that they now had a much better understanding of what Skills for Care did and could offer.

Satisfaction with their job role

Before their time on the programme, satisfaction levels were already high (with 87.8% agreeing they would recommend being a registered manager as a career and 93% agreeing it was a rewarding career). This had not changed by the end of the programme. It is possible that participants were reluctant to admit to feeling unsatisfied about the role despite admitting to it being stressful and pressured.

It is conceivable that some registered managers can maintain two theoretically opposing feelings about the role contemporaneously – both finding it rewarding, and at the same time difficult, stressful and isolating.

Likelihood of remaining in post and in the Adult Social Care sector

We were only able to examine the extent to which the programme had affected participants' *intentions at the current time.* The quantitative data showed that at the beginning of the programme participants were likely to state that they wanted to stay within their profession and would not leave it even if they could. This had not changed at the end of the programme.

While this is positive, it might not be reflective of the wider population of registered managers. Pilot participants may feel more positive towards remaining in their role and the sector than other new managers (having self-selected to enter a development programme).

The qualitative evidence however provided evidence that the programme reduces the likelihood of leaving the sector or the role. Where participants were experiencing high levels of stress, self-doubt or multiple experiences of employment in organisations offering poor levels of support and care, the programme (or the assurance that support was imminent), seemed to provide them with the strength to continue.

Making changes to policy, practice and culture

There were plentiful examples where participants had returned to their workplaces and enacted change. Some of these changes included:

- Introducing Action Learning insightful questioning to team meetings
- A change to staffing structure and hierarchy whereby more junior staff were given greater responsibility
- Introducing the colour personality exercise within their own teams to help with communication
- Changes to supervision to make the process more in-depth
- Cascading the training on well-being to staff

Those working in larger organisations with layers of upper management, or conversely those in smaller organisations where they had little support from the owner found making changes more difficult.

Ongoing needs

A number of ongoing needs were identified by participants:

- Dealing with inspections (CQC, the KLOEs and regulations)
- Compliance with legislation
- How to prioritise their own personal development
- Business skills, including
  - Managing budgets
  - Business planning (and understanding business plans written by others)
  - Managing contracts, commissioning and procurement.

Developing better business skills (e.g. understanding financial processes and decisions) was a common theme, with participants highlighting how they still lacked experience in this area and acknowledging that it is a skill which they increasingly required to evidence.

Process and Implementation findings

Participants had a good understanding of the pilot and generally reported high levels of satisfaction with the support received from their managers. However, there is evidence that some struggled to meet its demands. This was reflected in mixed attendance/engagement during the programme.

The evaluation considered the **effectiveness of the different elements of the programme.** Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of different elements of the programme in the final survey. The mean scores for the ALSs and the face to face meetings were the highest. In focus groups, a common response was that it was 'the whole package', and that all elements had been vital to their progress.

Peer support from others on the programme

One of the biggest benefits for participants was the peer support. This helped them feel less isolated; feel part of a wider sector; have their concerns and abilities validated; feel supported through CQC inspections; access example tools and templates; improve their resilience and motivation for the job role; improve their skills and competencies through learning from others in the group; and understand what was required of them in their role.

In addition to the face to face meetings, peer support was also accessed through WhatsApp groups (although engagement in these was sporadic), the Action Learning Sets, and discussions during and after the webinars.

Action Learning Sets

The impact of Action Learning Sets (ALSs) on those individuals who participated in them was examined through the self-completion of a before and after survey. There was a significant increase in all the ALS associated competencies with the greatest progress made in relation to the following items:

- I am confident about how to use insightful questioning as a tool in supervision
- I am confident in my use of reflective practice

Using insightful questioning was the skill which on average, respondents to the survey felt least confident in at the beginning of the programme but had made the most progress in by the end of the programme.

The main benefits reported included:

- That they provided participants with the permission to implement changes within their workplaces

- An increased understanding that it was not necessary to have to have all the answers to every workforce issue
- Being able to see problems from multiple perspectives.
- Being able to bring a problem to a supportive group that were neutral and non-judgemental.
- Learning how to use insightful and probing questioning to help other staff members reflect on issues and find their own solutions.

The sessions were described as 'therapeutic' and 'supportive' and provided another opportunity for peer support and reflection.

Mentoring

Mentoring took place in the South West area. The frequency and format of the mentoring sessions varied. Most participants had had a positive and rewarding experience with their mentor. Mentors were described as 'hands on', 'forthcoming', 'generous with their time' and 'impartial'.

The benefits which participants mentioned included:

- Learning and improving skills, e.g. delegation.
- Having an extra person to support you, who wants you to succeed and who has 'got your back'.
- Access to a different organisation's policies and procedures.
- Signposting and access to expertise, e.g. training, recruitment and apprenticeships.
- An impartial ear to talk through issues, and act as a 'sounding board'.

However, participants' experiences were not universally positive. In one case the relationship failed to get off the ground, with the mentor failing to engage.

Lessons were learned about what needs to be in place for the mentoring experience to be successful:

- That mentee and mentors are well matched in terms of personality
- That they are geographically close to facilitate face to face meetings
- That mentors have the time to be able to provide the support that may be required.
- The skills of the mentor (good listening skills, impartial, honest and non-judgemental).

While implementing the model was relatively straightforward, our experience suggests that replicating the approach at scale would be resource intensive.

Webinars

Seven webinars were offered over the course of the programme, with the final two being bespoke and the content tailored to the needs of the groups.

The 'Resilience' webinar was ranked the most effective and 'making connections' the least. Participants valued topics that were new to them, or when they were dealing with issues related to that topic at the time.

Participants generally liked the content of the webinars and found the slides useful reference tools. However attendance (particularly in the later webinars) was low. There were some technical issues in some instances and participation was sometimes hampered by the format and possibly a lack of experience in attending webinars. The benefits of the webinars reported included

- cementing existing knowledge and reassured participants that they were 'doing the right thing' or 'on the right track'.
- providing another opportunity for some space away from the day to day running of their organisation.

<u>Other elements of the programme</u>

- o **The reflection logs** were rarely used, and where they were this tended to have been at the beginning of the pilot and then not again. Reasons for not using them included finding the time, and the use of them not being promoted or mandated during the pilot. Participants fed back that they may have benefitted from using them more and they had in some cases acted as a reminder of the importance of reflection.
- o **Personal Development Plan and Gap Analysis** – these were useful during the first session but use of these beyond that was minimal. One focus group participant had used their PDP as part of their own supervision, and some focus group participants acknowledged that it would be useful to review the document as time went on to appreciate the progress they had made.
- o **Registered Manager Networks** - where participants had attended, they had found the experience positive, with useful information provided and excellent speakers. Network meetings were also useful for understanding trends in the sector. The intimacy and security of the pilot groups however was felt to offer more in the way peer support.
- o **Membership of Skills for Care** - participants valued the resources which had been made available to them through membership.

<u>Support from Skills for Care and pilot administration</u>

The focus group and survey data indicate strong satisfaction with Skills for Care's support, communication and administration.

There was praise for the staff involved in delivery and management of the programme. They were described as helpful, accommodating, knowledgeable, supportive and experienced. Participants appreciated in particular the accessibility and responsiveness of staff; and the consistency of support.

<u>The pilot format</u>

Participants generally liked the format and length of the pilot. The regular face to face meetings provided enough opportunities for peer networking. Without a control group of a pilot with a different format we cannot determine accurately whether the programme would have been as effective if it had been shorter or had contained fewer, or different, elements.

Participants were very clear that a programme lasting less than a year would have reduced its efficacy. The reasons given were:

- A shorter programme would probably mean less time between meetings, therefore reducing the amount of time to gather experiences, reflect on learnings to feed back to the group.
- A new and inexperienced registered manager has learning needs which cannot be covered in less than a year
- A shorter programme would mean either reducing the number of elements or reducing the length of time between them.

- A year long programme meant that participants did not feel they were overcommitting and yet there was enough activity to feel they were actively benefitting from the activities.

Additionality and sustainability

The pilot accelerated the speed at which participants progressed in skills and confidence. A common response from participants was that they may have eventually reached the same level, but that the pilot had 'propelled them forward quicker'. Focus group participants reflected how the pilot had eased the transition into the role and had helped them settle into it more easily.

It is possible that participants who would have benefited most from the programme were those who engaged the least with it. Conversely, those participants who would have made good progress in the role anyway (albeit more slowly) were the ones who had embraced it. This raises the question of how, in general, those in most need of support through a programme such as this can be encouraged to engage with it.

Aspects of the pilot are sustainable or have been sustained

- Networking mechanisms - participants planned to continue to offer peer support to each other beyond the end of the programme.
- Outcomes - there are positive indications that these will endure with a high percentage (94.1%; n = 32/34) of those responding to the end of programme survey agreeing, or strongly agreeing that they had had enough opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills gained through the programme.
- Lessons about the needs of new registered managers - the pilot has added to the bank of knowledge about what new registered managers need. This intelligence has helped to shape a number of our new resources aimed at supporting and developing registered managers.

There has been a considerable focus recently in relation to planning and developing support for registered managers recognising the need for continuing professional development of registered managers and the pivotal role they play in the quality of care provided in the sector[2]. Elements of the pilot will be considered for scaling up such as the webinars and Action Learning Sets. This year (19/20) has seen several initiatives introduced focusing on supporting registered managers such as enhanced funding available specifically for developing managers through the 19-20 Workforce Development Fund.

Conclusions

The evaluation demonstrates that an intervention and support for registered managers at this point in their career is valuable, appreciated and necessary. The key outcomes for those on the programme are an increase in self-belief; increased understanding of the role; increased confidence in and frequency of critical reflection; and increased well-being.

The key mechanisms for change were

- Peer-to-peer engagement
- Problem solving

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[2] . Evidence shows that the presence of an effective, well supported manager has the biggest influence on the overall quality of care provided and the positive outcome of Care Quality Commission ratings. In addition as many as 10,000 registered managers due to retire in the next 15 years.

Final evaluation of the Supported Year for Registered Managers Pilot 2019

- Reflection
- Access to information.

Action learning proved a particularly effective mechanism for change. Participants appreciated the combination of support and felt that the length and format of the pilot met their needs.

There is evidence that the pilot added value by accelerating the process of learning for this group of new registered managers, easing the process of transition into the role and improving their wellbeing. For a few participants, the programme played at least a part in their remaining in the sector or within the role of registered manager.

Skills for Care

West Gate

6 Grace Street

Leeds

LS1 2RP

Telephone: 0113 245 1716

Email: info@skillsforcare.org.uk

Web: www.skillsforcare.org.uk