

Increasing network attendance and involvement at registered manager networks

We're often asked by chairs and managers at networks what they can do to encourage other managers to attend meetings. So here's a list of best practice suggestions from networks across England.

1. Set dates for the year ahead

Giving people notice is key, so try to avoid setting dates meeting by meeting. Setting dates for the year in advance gives people the most notice possible and makes it easier to promote your network (you can give someone three dates once; not one date three times).

There's an added benefit for you as well. It will give you more time to arrange guest speakers or arrange a discussion with your locality manager about agendas. Just remember, if you set dates in advance then you have to stick to them.

2. Share themes in advance

Many networks start their year by discussing, either face-to-face or virtually, what subjects they want to cover or which speakers they want to hear from over the year.

Knowing what you want to talk about as a network over the course of a year means you can promote the themes of each meeting at the same time as you share the dates for the year. You'll want some flexibility so that you can respond to things that come up locally; and for less structured time for peer support or networking.

When you're arranging guest speakers think about how you can link them to your theme. For example, getting someone from NICE and a local pharmacist at the same meeting to give different information /perspectives on medication.

3. Keep in touch regularly between meetings

Lots of networks have a WhatsApp group that managers can join; this is probably the quickest and easiest way to stay in touch between meetings. Staying in touch as a group helps the relationships and links between people to grow. It also provides a ready-made network of advice or support.

This will encourage people to attend your network – everyone likes a catch-up! It also keeps the network at the front of people's minds; so they're more likely to tell other people.

Remember that not everyone uses things like WhatsApp – so it's still important to share agendas and information via email.

4. Share news or resources between meetings

Sharing useful news or resources with the managers who attend your meeting isn't just a good way of giving people access to practical tools; it also helps people to see the network as even more useful and will encourage them to attend.

5. Share the tasks

Sharing tasks between managers who attend your network (like finding speakers, pulling together information or arranging some other element of a meeting) makes people feel more involved in the network and also takes some of the pressure off you as the chair.

Giving people a sense of responsibility to the network and to the other managers attending is a good way of increasing engagement and attendance.

6. Keep the profile of your network high

What is your network doing (or what could it do) that your local paper would be interested in? Local papers always need stories. A number of networks this year have set up their own local awards and invited local press.

Or do you have local forums where you could share news about what the network is up to.

7. Tell your local inspection team and commissioners about your network

How you reach the managers you don't know is one of the challenges facing everyone running, supporting or chairing a network.

Think about who your 'connectors' are. These are the people who know lots of other people, including the people you don't know.

They will include people like local inspectors or commissioners, who should be in touch with managers, as well as those people who 'just seem to know everyone'.

Try to identify some of these people (and get members of your network to do the same); then see what information they're happy to share for you, or if they'll invite you or Skills for Care to speak at a meeting they go to.

8. Avoid clashes

If you're going to follow our first tip and set the dates of meetings for the full year ahead, remember to check for clashes when you do this. These clashes might include sector or work specific events like local provider meetings or more general dates like half-terms at local schools.

9. Reminders

It's obvious, but sending reminders is really important. Sharing the agenda a couple of weeks in advance and a 'see you next week' email the week before a meeting can really promote attendance.
