

Evaluation of the Registered Managers' Networks 2015-2016

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Evaluation of the Registered Managers' Funded Networks 2015-2016

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Summary

The registered managers' networks aim to support registered managers to improve the quality of their services through improved leadership practice.

The main activities of networks are informal and formal peer support, delivery of training and inviting guest speakers to talk about particular topics. Popular themes for networks to cover are improving knowledge, learning and development, workforce development, improving direct work with service users, as well as improving connections and working relationships with other organisations.

An evaluation of the networks was carried out between February and June 2016. An online survey was sent to the participants of 48 networks that had been running for about 12 months or longer to determine the extent to which participation had resulted in positive outcomes (feeling more valued and supported, better equipped to support staff and respond to significant changes, and more likely to remain in their position). The survey received 143 responses.

The greatest benefit survey respondents reported from participation in the networks was access to up to date information. This had helped them to improve their knowledge of legislation, good practice, regulations and standards, which in turn had led to increases in confidence in particular topics and application of this knowledge to their practice. Registered managers also cascaded knowledge to their staff within their own organisations and felt more motivated to pursue opportunities for self-directed learning.

Qualitative comments suggest that networking opportunities helped participants improve their links with, and knowledge of, other organisations, share information and knowledge, and share and solve problems. Feedback from respondents also indicates that meeting with peers helped participants feel less isolated in their role.

The aspects of network participation, which members were less likely to believe to be extremely or very helpful, were 'feeling more supported in their role' (60%) or 'feeling more confident in their role' (57%). Half of survey respondents felt that the networks had been extremely or very useful in helping them to better support staff, which suggests more could be done to achieve these network objectives.

Over half of respondents (52%) indicated that their experience had made them more likely to continue as a registered manager, 40% believed that it had made no difference

and 8% were unsure. No respondents believed that the experience had made them less likely to continue in their role.

Suggestions for improvements to the networks were:

- more specialist sessions
- more guest speakers
- an increased and more varied membership
- changes to the location, format and frequency of meetings
- additional meetings for those in similar roles.

A more detailed evaluation of the 2016/17 programme will be carried out looking at additional indicators and examining a greater number of networks.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Registered Managers' Networks programme

The registered managers' networks are part of a suite of programmes which aim to improve the quality of their services through improved leadership practice. Longer term it is hoped that this will lead to an increase in the quality of leadership across the sector.

Research suggests that registered managers are crucial to good quality care. Work done in 2015 by Skills for Care for the Care Quality Commission (CQC), found that adult social care providers felt that registered managers were key to setting the tone in their organisation. They can provide leadership, which is about creating the culture for the organisation, making decisions, giving direction and enabling people to work to the best of their abilities¹. There is evidence that where registered managers are in place in residential care homes, people receive much better care².

Research has also found that registered managers face particular challenges and frustrations in their role. A survey carried out by the National Skills Academy for Social Care in 2012 found that registered managers feel like they lack support³. Less than half stated that they felt supported and a quarter expressed feelings of isolation. The survey also explored the potential benefits of increased peer contact for registered managers. The main benefits cited were:

- the opportunity to learn from the experience of others
- a source of advice and support
- time saving through sharing systems and solutions and accessing advice and support at convenient times.

The networks were set up in 2013/2014 to offer some of these benefits and to try and address some of the issues faced by registered managers.

Network activities and themes

Network chairs were asked to report back in their monitoring reports on the types of activities and themes covered in network meetings.

The main **activities** of networks reported were:

¹ Skills for Care "Safety in Adult Social Care" (2015) (pg. 48).

² CQC "The State of Health Care and Adult Social Care 2013/14" (pg. 20). Inspection data showed that people received much better care in residential care homes where there was a registered manager in place, compared with those homes that had not had a manager in place for a long period of time (six months or more).

³ The National Skills Academy "Everyday Excellence" (2012).

- informal and formal peer support through sharing experiences, ideas, resources, good practices and problem solving - networks commonly allowed some less structured time during meetings for informal networking, problem solving and good practice sharing among members
- delivering training
- inviting guest speakers who were experts in a particular topic to speak or deliver training.

The **themes** and topics covered seem to have been shaped by network members themselves. Analysis of the open ended comments therefore reveals what is important to registered managers in their role. A wide range of themes were covered at meetings.

- Increasing **knowledge of legislation, regulations and standards** was an important focus for all networks. This included a focus on:
 - the Care Act
 - the Mental Capacity Act (and in particular Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards)
 - NICE guidelines 2015 (older people independence and wellbeing)
 - the National Living Wage
 - CQC regulatory and inspection regime, which was a particularly popular topic, and networks looked at case studies of CQC outstanding services, how to achieve an outstanding rating and maintain it, understanding CQC expectations, how to present evidence of good practice and recognising how CQC benchmarks can provide levers for service improvement
 - Care Certificate implementation.

- **Workforce issues** were also popular topics for networks to cover such as:
 - coping with the demands of the registered manager role such as isolation and time pressures
 - recruitment and retention issues
 - training and development of staff
 - performance management of staff.

- Some networks reported themes which were focused more specifically on **direct work with service users**. Some examples of this include:
 - promoting the health and wellbeing of service users
 - delivering more person-centred care
 - improving communication with service users
 - Individual Service Funds (for example a new approach to person-centred planning)
 - safeguarding.

- Another focus for networks was on **improving connections and relationships with other organisations**. This happened through:

- network members sharing amongst themselves knowledge of other relevant organisations
- having specific items on agendas which focused on partnership working and how to improve it - discussions about how to pursue better integration between health and social care were common and there was a recognition of the need for greater involvement of different stakeholders to improve outcomes for clients.

2. Overview of evaluation methods

2.1 Aim and objectives of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide some initial indications of the impact of registered managers' networks. In particular the evaluation considered the extent to which, as a result of the programme, registered managers:

- feel more valued and supported
- feel better equipped to support staff and respond and adapt effectively to significant changes
- are more likely to remain in their position as a registered manager.

2.2 Evaluation methods

The methodology was developed to take into account a short evaluation timeframe (February 2016 – June 2016). New networks approved in 2015/16 were only being set up from December 2015, and many did not begin operating until February 2016, so it was felt to be inappropriate to include these in the evaluation due to the short time they had been meeting. Restructuring of the network model (in the first two quarters of the year) meant that evaluation activities had to be delayed. The evaluation method was, by necessity therefore, brief and simple, so as to gather data from as many network participants as possible.

The results presented here are a starting point for the examination of the impact of the registered managers' networks and provide an early insight into outcomes. A more detailed evaluation framework will be developed for the 2016/17 programme. A larger number of networks will be included in the evaluation and additional indicators will be examined.

Online survey

An online survey was administered to network members to explore their views of the networks; the benefits and suggestions for improvements. The survey was developed and sent by the Evidence and Impact team to chairs of the Registered Managers' Networks on the 22 February 2016, who were then asked to pass the survey link onto the other members of their network. The survey closed on the 21 March 2016 and received 143 responses.

A decision was made to send the survey only to those networks approved in 2015 (n=48). This was because most of the remaining networks did not begin operating until February 2016; too early for any impacts to be identified.

We are unable to determine whether the responses presented here are representative of the network members as a whole because we cannot be sure how many members the survey was passed on to, and we do not have accurate membership numbers for each network that took part in the survey.

The table below shows the percentage of respondents by geographical area, compared to the percentage of networks (that were included in the evaluation) found in those areas. The majority of respondents to the survey were from networks in London and the South East (42.1%). 21.4% of respondents were from networks in Yorkshire and the Humber and from networks in the Midlands. Fewer respondents were from networks in the Eastern region (9.3%) or the North West (3.6%). Responses from those networks in the Eastern region and the South West under represent the percentage of networks that existed in those areas at the time of the survey. Responses from London, SE, NE and Yorkshire and Humber are over-represented based on the percentage of networks found in those areas.

Area	Percentage of respondents	Percentage of networks found in this area
London and SE	42.1% (n=59)	22.9% (n=11)
NE, Yorkshire and Humber	21.4% (n=30)	10.4% (n=5)
Midlands	19.3% (n=27)	14.6% (n=7)
Eastern	9.3% (n=13)	29.2% (n=14)
North West	3.6% (n=5)	4.2% (n=2)
South West	1.4% (n=2)	18.8% (n=9)
Total	100% (n=136)	100% (n=48)

The results of the on-line survey were analysed using Excel. Frequencies of responses were analysed and these are presented in the following section. Open ended comments were analysed using a qualitative analysis software tool called NViVO. This allowed us to look at the key themes emerging in these responses.

Analysis of monitoring forms

Network chairs were asked to complete monitoring forms and report on activities and learning and development outcomes for the period June 2015 to March 2016. These monitoring forms contain useful data for the evaluation and responses to the following questions were qualitatively analysed:

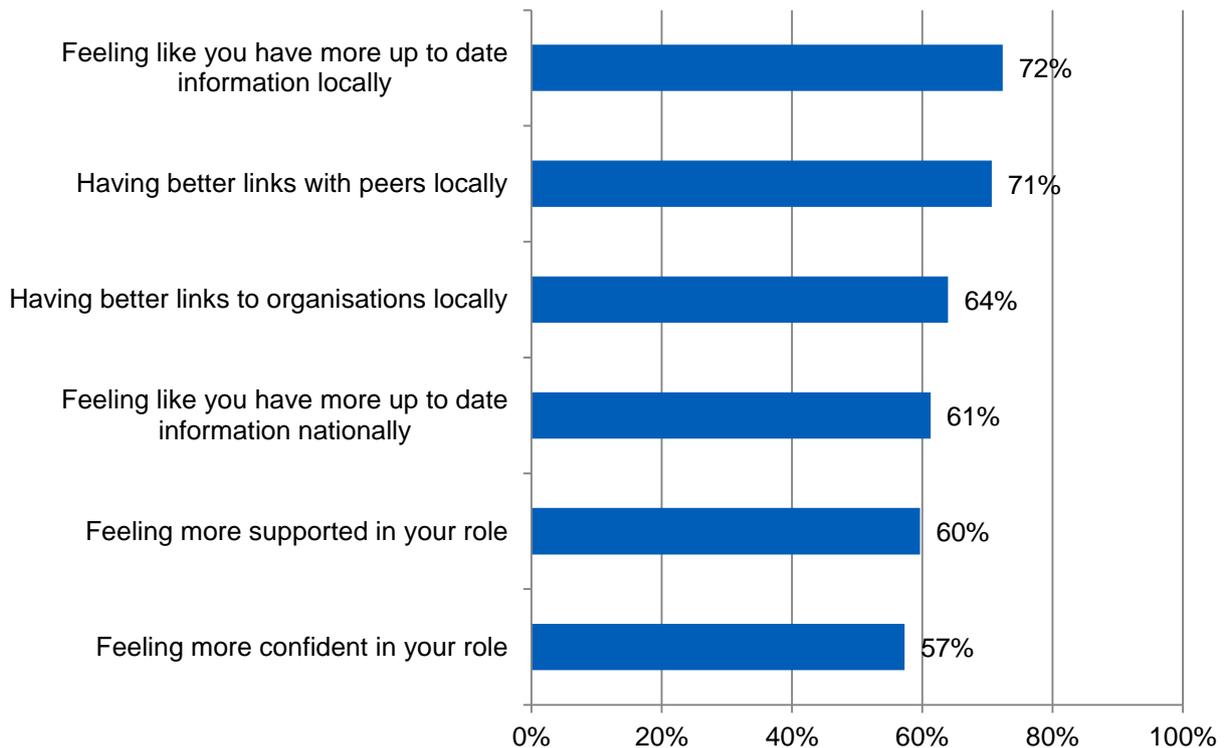
- please tell us the themes that have come out of the networks this period

- explain how the network has helped the learning and development of members and how they have assimilated this into their practice
- what do you think has been the impact on the experience of people using care and support services provided by network members?

3. Key findings from the research

3.1 Benefits of network participation

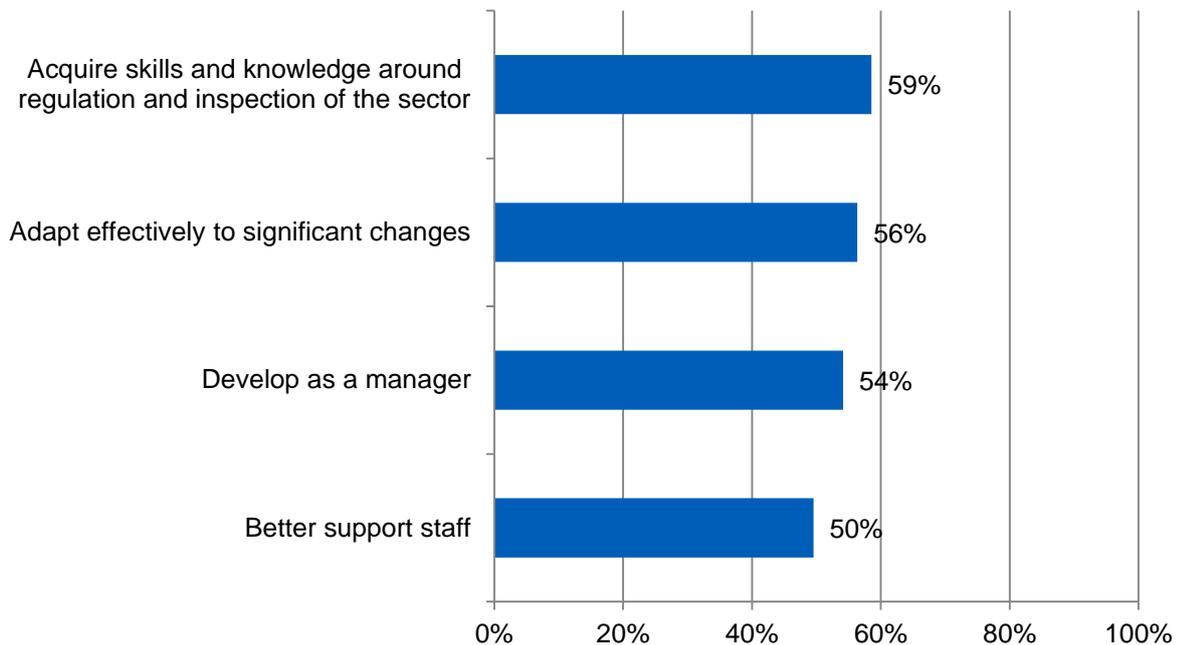
Figure 1. How helpful has being part of a network been to you?
(Percentage of respondents indicating extremely or very helpful)



Respondents indicated that feeling like they had more up to date information locally was the most helpful aspect of network participation (72% believing this to be extremely or very helpful). This was closely followed by believing that network participation had helped them have better links with peers locally (71% believing this to be extremely or very helpful).

The aspects of network participation that members were less likely to believe to be extremely or very helpful were feeling more supported in their role (60%) and feeling more confident in their role (57%).

Figure 2. How useful has the network been in helping you to...
(percentage of respondents indicating extremely or very useful)



Network members were also asked how useful the network had been to them in terms of their own skills and development. Around half of all respondents (50-59%) found the network extremely or very useful in helping them achieve all of the suggested outcomes.

3.2 Positive outcomes from participation

Data gathered from monitoring forms and from open-ended comments on the online survey confirmed these benefits. The following section presents findings from these data sources relating to the main outcomes of participation.

Improvements in knowledge, learning and development

Network chairs reported how participation in networks had led to improvements in learning and knowledge of the attendees and more broadly.

In particular, registered managers were able to plug gaps in their knowledge related to legislation, regulation and standards. One network chair commented that many registered managers, without the networks, would struggle to have the time to acquire this knowledge, or even know how to. Workforce development issues were a common theme covered in meetings and resources and initiatives to help improve knowledge and practice in this area were often shared and discussed. This included Skills for Care

initiatives such as Finders Keepers and Skills for Care workforce resources. Networks were also used to share experiences of how to use workforce resources and tools in the workplace.

Some registered managers stated that the networks had increased their motivation for self-development and self-directed learning and they had pursued opportunities for this following discussions at network meetings.

Network members were asked to provide open-ended comments indicating the most positive outcome of being part of the network. One of the most common themes was “gaining information and knowledge with peers at the meetings” (35 mentions). One respondent, for example, said the most positive outcome had been...

“To have information regarding legislation. To be able to hear and see other managers and their views. It made me feel I was not alone”.

This increase in knowledge and increased motivation for learning and development was not limited to the network attendees. Registered managers frequently reported that the learning and knowledge they had gained had been cascaded to staff within their own organisations. They also reported that network attendance had led them to increasingly prioritise staff development.

Registered managers reported that this increase in knowledge and focus on learning and development had had a number of flow on benefits, and had led to:

- increased confidence in different topics
- application of understanding and knowledge to practice
- improvements in quality (for example feedback from one network member that learnings from the network had contributed to an outstanding CQC rating).

Positive outcomes resulting from networking

One of the main benefits registered managers reported in both the on-line survey and the monitoring forms was opportunities for networking (mentioned 46 times in the online survey).

One of the consequences of this networking and information sharing was improved links with other organisations (both those internal to the networks and external to them). Network chairs reported in the monitoring forms that network attendance had brought about increased links with services and organisations within the local community. In an example of this, a nurse practitioner was identified to provide support in local care homes. This was believed to have improved the provision of care and reduced unnecessary hospital admissions. One network chair reported that the networks had led to a greater willingness to involve outside agencies for support, for example Multi

Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) procedures. Another reported improved working relationships with other organisations:

"the network is starting to have some real impact in terms of influencing relational change and as a result achieving quality improvements for our clients. The network has helped to break down some of the boundaries between 'them' and 'us' and has facilitated more honest and open discussions, with the result that there has been a move away from a 'contract compliance' approach toward a more supportive and joined up quality improvement approach."

Registered managers commonly reported in the online survey how the networks had allowed them to share good practice and knowledge (31 mentions) and problem-solve (12 mentions), e.g:

"Networking with other managers as I am a new manager and sharing experiences to see the common issues and how people solve things differently."

This was also a common theme in monitoring forms, with one network chair reporting that it had given those attending the ability to look at issues differently and to seek new solutions.

There have also been some unexpected outcomes from networking. One respondent to the online survey made an interesting comment about collective impact:

"Also we have engaged with key stakeholders on a formal basis so the group has given us a collective voice which has had more impact...[and] which is more influential which cannot be underestimated."

Improved outcomes for service users

Networks commonly included agenda items which were about direct work with service users, and data from the monitoring forms suggests that network meetings helped focus network members on the needs of service users. As one network chair put it:

"these meetings have also been used to draw the focus back to improving outcomes of the service user which it is easy for a registered manager to become distracted from with the level of pressure this role carries."

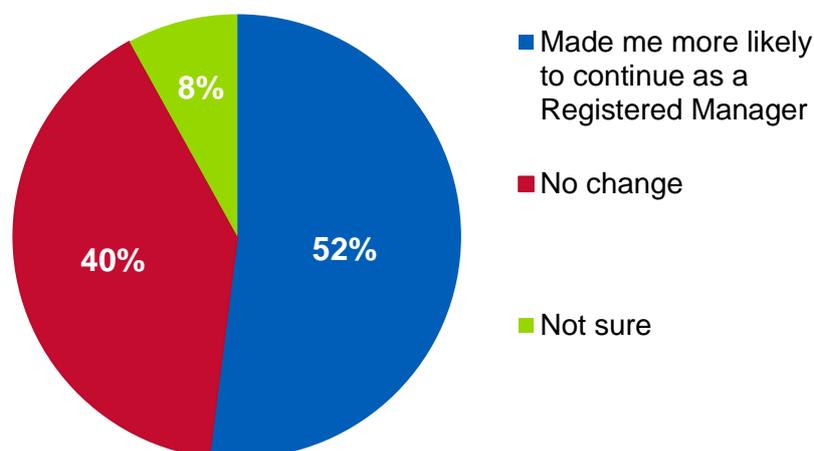
Although many network chairs found it difficult to articulate any direct or immediate benefits to service users as a result of registered managers' participation in networks, many were clear that there would be flow on benefits to service users. All of the outcomes for registered managers and their organisations would have positive impacts on service users, for example increased multi-agency collaboration, increased knowledge of good practice in relation to person-centred care and increased knowledge about effective recruitment and retention. One network chair wrote:

"a key desire of service users is to have consistency of care provider, so effective recruitment, training and retention are vital."

Registered managers feel more able to remain in their role

One of the objectives of the networks is to tackle the poor retention rates of registered managers. It is hoped that by reducing levels of isolation, managers will be less likely to leave the role. Network members were also asked the extent to which their experience of being part of a registered managers' network had supported them to continue in their role.

Figure 3. To what extent has your experience of being part of a registered managers' network supported you in continuing as a registered manager?



Over half of respondents (52%) indicated that their experience had made them more likely to continue as a registered manager, 40% believed that it had made no difference and 8% were unsure. No respondents believed that the experience had made them less likely to continue in their role.

3.3 Suggestions for improvement

Network members were asked provide open-ended comments indicating what element of the network could be improved in order to achieve a greater impact. The emergent themes and numbers of times mentioned were:

- the need for **more specialist sessions** in particular learning disabilities (21 mentions)

- *“It was quite generic, there was a lot of emphasis in the room on nursing and elderly homes, this was based on the numbers. I think a learning disabilities registered managers’ network would be very useful”*
 - *“Perhaps some sessions being within one service area i.e. LD or OP or Domiciliary care verses Residential care”*
 - *“Because the group covers a diverse range of services the topics covered although interesting are not always relevant to me”*
- **a desire for more guest speakers** (11 mentions)
 - *“More outside relevant speakers”*
 - *“More guest speakers - sharing experience and knowledge”.*
 - *“More information around MCA, Social Care Act, safeguarding issues. Invite speakers around these issues”*
 - *“To also to build on having more access to national speakers related to the national agenda and developments”*
 - *“Input from CQC and training specialists”*
- **increased engagement** (10 mentions). Several respondents highlighted that they thought the networks would benefit from an increased and more varied membership and that more could be done to increase the awareness of the networks, for example:
 - *“Wider membership including representation of regulatory bodies.”*
 - *“To continue to build the network membership and involve more RM's from a range of organisations to be able to share more, act as a support network for the local Registered Network Manager and provide support to new RM's and new members of the group.”*
 - *“More registered managers engaging.”*
 - *“The network could be more widely advertised as the numbers attending do not reflect the number of registered managers in the area.”*
 - *“It tends to be the same faces.”*
 - *“Encouragement to all mangers of care homes and Nursing home to attend. To strengthen network.”*
- **changes to the location and frequency of meetings** (9 mentions). The location and frequency of meetings was felt to be important to some participants, suggesting that events were held closer to where respondents were based.
 - *“More frequently bi monthly.”*
 - *“The meetings are all quite a long way from our area.”*
 - *“Meetings when they are in the area /county I am in. I find travelling to meetings outside my county a waste of valuable time.”*

- **changes to the format of meetings** (20 mentions). Changes to the way in which meetings were run were also suggested, for example, time built in for informal socialising, or longer meetings. One respondent would have liked the opportunity for network members to be more active participants at the events.
 - *“The Network should allow broader exchange of ideas, including ideas from even invited participants. Participants should not merely be listeners who ask questions at the end of presentations from invited speakers. But where a participant has proven valuable knowledge and experience on any subject matter, it helps the whole group if such a participant is given some time to either make an ad hoc presentation or at least given a few minutes to convey to colleagues what s/he has learnt and / or experienced.”*

- Another suggested that the opportunity to have **additional meetings** with those in very similar roles could help to facilitate application of knowledge in the workplace and provide a safer environment for voicing issues.
 - *“More bite size workshops maybe with relevant peers - at the moment we are a variety of managers ranging from domiciliary care to residential managers and it would be nice to have 2 or 3 buddies that are in a similar role as me with whom I can meet up monthly to discuss how we make what was discussed at the quarterly meetings a reality in our day to day roles. To have a platform where I can voice my uncertainties without made to feel that ‘you are the manager you should know this,’ because reality is how I interpret the law and how someone else does can be so different and it is good to debate in a safe environment without being judged.”*

- Many respondents had **no suggestions for improvements** (13 instances of this). Where respondents were asked to make any final comments, on the whole all were positive with many highlighting the importance of the networks and requesting that they continue. Several respondents also highlighted that they would recommend joining the networks to other registered managers.
 - *“We all hope it will continue because it is really important to keep up to date with all the current changes in social care.”*
 - *“Our network is vibrant, focused and really useful.”*
 - *“I hope it continues as it’s a useful network.”*
 - *“I think it is an extremely good and useful group, one which gives huge support and the right kind of support to managers who are often isolated. I would like to thank the facilitators and really hope the meetings carry on.”*
 - *“I would recommend joining a network to any registered manager.”*
 - *“The registered managers’ network is a fantastic resource and I would encourage every manager to join their local networks.”*

4. Conclusions and recommendations

This section of the report brings together the evidence from the survey data to answer the evaluation questions. The evidence gathered does provide an indication that the programme leads to positive outcomes for participants. Because the evaluation is at an early stage however, this will be confirmed during the next phase of activity.

4.1 To what extent do registered managers feel more valued and supported as a result of the programme?

The survey results suggest that the networks are effective in helping registered managers feel more supported. 60% of respondents to the survey indicated that network participation had been extremely or very helpful in feeling more supported in their role. Over half (57%) indicated that network participation had been extremely or very helpful in feeling more confident in their role.

From the evidence gained from the online survey, it seems that reducing isolation is one of the key ways in which networks help registered managers feel more supported. 71% of respondents believed that the networks had been extremely or very helpful in having better links with peers locally. ‘Networking’ was also the most common positive outcome network members cited in the open-ended comments section of the survey. Knowing everyone faces the same challenges and issues has been reassuring and has helped those working in the private sector who might face greater levels of isolation.

“Prevents the feeling of isolation”

“It is great to know that I am not alone in it, that I am not the only one struggling to make sense and keep up with all the changes all the time and the demands and to find out about support groups and shared training ideas and software that can be used that can save on the demand on my time to focus on what is important and that is to keep clients and staff safe in a stimulated environment”.

“Any networks of similar professions is a good thing to be part of especially for managers who work in the private sector and often feel isolated.”

Exploring other ways in which networks might help registered managers feel more supported and more confident in their role might further increase their usefulness in this regard.

4.2 To what extent do registered managers feel better equipped to support staff and respond and adapt effectively to significant changes?

The data received from the online survey suggests that the networks were effective in helping registered managers adapt effectively to significant changes with over half (56%) of respondents indicating that the networks had been extremely or very useful to them in this regard. Half of those surveyed (50%) believed the networks had been extremely or very useful in helping them support staff.

Some of the ways in which participation was able to do this was that it allowed registered managers to:

- keep on top of relevant legislation and good practice
- improve their theoretical knowledge and practical skills – *“It helps me develop and sharpen my theoretical knowledge and practical skills relevant to my job as a care manager and helps me learn from the narrated experiences (good or bad) of colleagues.”*
- use other’s knowledge and advice to solve problems
- use other’s knowledge and advice to save time and resources
- work collaboratively.

It would be valuable to better understand the help that registered managers might need to allow them to better support their staff. Similarly, it would also be valuable to explore what else the networks could do to support participants’ development as managers (only 54% felt the networks had been extremely or very useful in this regard).

4.3 To what extent are registered managers more likely to remain in their position as a result of the programme?

Part of the logic underpinning the programme is that if registered managers feel more supported and less isolated they will be more likely to remain in that role, and therefore retention rates will improve. With over half (52%) of survey respondents indicating that the experience had made them more likely to continue in their role, this looks positive. However, for those individuals it would be useful to understand what elements of the experience had made them feel this way. For the 40% who indicated no change, what could the networks offer which might make them more likely to remain within their role?

4.4 Recommendations

The current work programme sets out Skills for Care's intention to develop and strengthen national coverage of the networks to support registered managers to continuously improve the quality of their services.

In light of the initial findings presented here it is recommended that networks:

- have an increased focus on building the confidence of registered managers, to develop as a manager, and to help them to better support their staff
- are encouraged where possible to run more specialist sessions for example focusing on learning disabilities
- are encouraged to have more guest speakers
- consider different meeting formats which encourage more peer to peer interaction and support (for example time for socialising, informal presentations from participants with particular expertise)
- consider facilitating smaller meetings between those in very similar roles with a view to establishing how to operationalise learning from the larger meetings.

4.5 Evaluation of the 2016/17 programme

In order to find out more about the effectiveness of the registered managers' networks, a more detailed evaluation will be necessary. The evidence and impact team at Skills for Care will work with the programme manager to identify specific areas of interest and how impact might be measured. It is suggested that the future evaluation should consider collecting some process data to examine in more detail how networks are administered and the activities which take place. This would contextualise outcomes and provide an indication of whether some administrative models and activities are more effective than others in achieving the desired outcomes. It is also suggested that the future evaluation considers the extent to which participation in registered managers' networks enables recognition of their leadership role.

It would also be interesting to look if possible at knowledge transfer, i.e. the extent to which network participants have applied any of the new skills and knowledge gained and how they did this, and what impact this has had on their team.

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