

Local registered manager networks: top tips

“We know that registered managers are critical to the quality of services delivered in care and support settings. Care Quality Commission (CQC) tells us that there is a link between the absence or high turnover of registered managers and poorly rated services. But we also know that it is a tough job and that many registered managers feel isolated and lack peer support in the role. That’s why I am committed to developing strong networks across the country” – Sharon Allen, CEO, Skills for Care

Thank you for expressing an interest in establishing a network for registered managers in your area. These top tips are here to help you think about what needs to be done to get the network up and running.

Laying the foundations

The network Chair

The Chair will have support from a Skill’s for Care locality manager, who will be invited to attend each meeting and offer guidance and support. It may be useful to keep in mind that:

- the chair of the network needs to be a registered manager
- we suggest having one person designated as the chair; however
- you can take an approach where chairing the meeting revolves between a number of registered managers; if you’re doing this, make sure that Skills for Care have a single point of contact for whoever is administering the network
- the chair’s role is to ensure that the network runs smoothly, and that any discussions are focused and supportive, based on the aims of the network.

Establishing early interest

- You will already know managers and colleagues who are likely to be interested in joining the network.
- If you’re part of a large employer organisation, get in touch with your HR department and ask them for help.
- To consider contacting your local Care Provider Association or Forum.
- Your network will also be promoted on the Skills for Care website.

Have an initial discussion

Once you've got a small group of registered managers who want to participate (it doesn't need to be more than five or six people), you can decide on outcomes and a structure for the network.

Have a planning meeting – outside work if you need to, and use this time to discuss things like:

- your experiences of other networks
- your ideas for the network
- what you'd like to get out of the network
- the kinds of things you'd like to know more about in relation to your role – e.g. the inspection process, adult safeguarding, etc.

If you want to access information (or find a speaker) on a particular subject, your locality manager can help you do this.

Decide your aims, objectives and ground rules

The terms of reference (which are the same for all networks) can help with this and you can of course add to them. You should also think about some group rules which answer questions like – how will:

- your network maintain confidentiality?
- the network work inclusively to ensure all feel comfortable to contribute and conversation isn't dominated?
- (if you decide to broaden attendance to some non-registered managers) you ensure the network remains a 'safe space' for registered managers?

Getting up and running

Network contact details

The chair (or, if this is someone else, the person with responsibility for administration of the network) will be expected to collect and hold details of registered managers linked or connected to the network; this will include contact details. It is a good idea in advance to:

- have a single place or template to collect this information
- decide when you are going to ask for details and keep this up-dated.

You should ask managers if they are happy for you to share these details with Skills for Care or give your locality manager opportunities to collect managers contact details separately at network meetings.

N.B if you want to share these details with any other party you must obtain the written consent of the registered managers who attend the network.

Deciding a network programme for meetings

Before the first network meeting we suggest having a basic plan for how the network will operate – this might be things like:

- would you like an external speaker at every other meeting?
- what topics would you want to cover at the meetings?
- how long will meetings last?

Finding venues

When considering venues, keep in mind:

- where is an easy location for people to meet?
- can one of the members of the network offer a venue?
- can your local council offer support with finding community venues?
- what facilities do you need?

Finding speakers

There are lots of ways to reach experts who could come to speak at a network meeting. Think about whether: contacts you or managers at your network already have; associations or agencies locally who might have contacts; how your locality manager can help you. We also publish a list of some suggested speakers on the Skills for Care website.

Publicising the network

Local papers, alongside social media and sector organisations, can all help here.

- Could you put a press release or note in your local paper; especially if one of your network members has a “good news” story to share?
- How could you use Facebook or Twitter?

Your Skills for Care locality manager will be on hand to help spread the word; they can include network details in newsletters, on the Skills for Care website and can talk about the network when they are meeting other registered managers.

Holding meetings

The first meeting

Before anything else, decide on the frequency of your meetings and consider how these fit with school or other holidays, which may make it difficult for others to attend. It may also be worth considering if local managers would find it useful to know the meeting dates for a full 12 month period? Once you've decided where and when your first meeting will take place, send out:

- date, venue and times
- your aims and purpose for the meeting
- the terms of reference
- the frequency of meetings.

Meetings

Try to reach a balance at meetings between formal and informal discussions, encouraging input from all. Start each meeting with introductions and asking for any other business (AOB). What happens next will depend on the format of the meeting.

You might want to:

- break the meeting up into an initial discussion of key local issues
- hear from an invited guest speaker
- form a number of small groups focusing on different subjects for the meeting (feeding back to everyone at the end).

Alternatively, you could give the meeting over to a specific issue that someone chooses to bring to the network. Remember, a good network Chair observes, listens, reflects back to the network.

On-going activity

If you run a network, you will:

- actively work to recruit and grow the membership of the network
- chair or identify a chair from within the network's membership
- look to appoint a deputy chair
- schedule a minimum of three network meetings per annum
- prepare and circulate a draft agenda ahead of each meeting; ensure that networks run smoothly and that discussions are focused and supportive
- arrange venues and subsistence for network meetings
- run a registered managers' network in accordance with the terms of reference
- collect and hold details of registered managers linked/connected to the network.

To support you, your locality manager will:

- offer and providing on-going support to the network lead
- attend network meetings
- contribute to the formation of network meeting agendas and present on specific items at network meetings (as appropriate) to
- facilitate links between wider local and national stakeholders and the registered managers network
- report network activity back to the Skills for Care contracts team on your behalf, so that you concentrate on running the network
- run an annual or bi-annual chair's support day.

Next steps

Thank you once more for your interest in establishing a local network for registered managers. Each network is an important part of the activity being taken to make sure that registered managers have the support and information they need, in their vital role within the sector.

If you've got any questions please speak to your Skills for Care locality manager link; they're here to help.

If you have not done it yet, then once you're ready, send your completed expression of interest template to your locality manager link. If you've already submitted this they will be in touch with you shortly.