

Managers need supervision too

Caroline Coleman is Director of Coleman Training, a Skills for Care Endorsed learning provider. Caroline has many years of experience in delivering supervision training and support. Here, she reflects on the fact that too few managers in adult social care receive the supervision they need and what employers can do about this.



COVID-19 brought unprecedented challenges to registered managers of care services. Managers worked tirelessly to support their team, protect people from COVID-19 and manage the distress of clients and people through lockdowns and beyond.

It has been a physically and emotionally exhausting period, leading to registered managers and other staff leaving the sector. But could regular supervision have helped?

When delivering supervision training, we are frequently told that although care staff receive regular supervision, feedback indicates that some registered managers often receive none.

The issue is often, “who supervises the registered manager?”. This is easier if the registered manager works for a large organisation, with regional managers or equivalent type roles, such as nominated individuals, to support them, but for managers of smaller services, it can be a different story.

Our sector is unique; it has its own culture and quirks. Registered managers need supervision with someone who knows the sector, understands the challenges on a practical and emotional level and can offer real support and guidance when needed. Without that safe space to reflect on working practice and access vital support, burnout is the inevitable result.

Regulation 18 of The Health and Social Care Act 2008, states that all staff, including registered managers, should receive supervision to support them to carry out their role and responsibilities. If the registered manager doesn't receive effective supervision, there is a risk that the service will not meet the CQC expectations of being “Well-led”.

Supervision can take many forms

During lockdown, Coleman Training offered a registered managers' supervision service. We made ourselves available as often as was needed, with some managers

using weekly supervision to help them navigate their new working landscape. We listened carefully to what each manager wanted from their supervision.

Feeling “cared for” and “supported” was frequently mentioned, along with the words “it’s a lonely place being a registered manager”. Registered managers also told us that they wanted the opportunity to explore challenges, both from an organisational perspective and with team members, in a safe non-judgemental space, so that they could identify solutions and move forward. We often found that simply “reframing” a situation was powerful enough to remove the emotional block and allow the registered managers to move forward with a solution.

Every manager will have different needs and each service will have its own unique challenges, so, these are our seven top tips for effective supervision for managers:

- Take the registered manager away from the service for supervision, so that they are not distracted by emergency bells and staff knocking on the door.
- Have an agenda and prioritise what the registered manager needs to talk about.
- Be open and ask about the registered manager’s wellbeing and discuss ways to self-care.
- Discuss what is going well and identify achievements – no matter how small.
- Discuss what is going less well and use [GROW techniques](#) to find solutions and gain buy-in to change.
- Ask about relationships with team members – unpick difficult relationships and develop emotional intelligence.
- Be brave – sometimes people need to be asked difficult questions before they can find their answers.

Who should supervise the RM?

An experienced nominated individual is a likely candidate to provide supervision to a registered manager. However, many registered managers are also the nominated individual so this will not always be a practical solution.

If you don’t have an obvious supervisor, then peer supervision may be a solution. A reciprocal arrangement with another registered manager can work well.

There are peer support forums that can help. For example, Skills for Care’s Local networks for managers or breakfast meetings such as the one that I host. Supervision for managers is essential, so be proactive and find the supervision that works for you.

Find out more about [Effective Supervision](#) and [Local networks for care managers](#) available from Skills for Care. If you are looking for support to develop supervision skills further, our [Endorsed learning providers](#) can help.