

Registered manager networks - Benefits of attending



Name: Anna Fleming



Job title: Domiciliary Care Manager

Anna attends the Mid Kent network, and has been a registered manager since 2020. Her service specialises in providing bespoke case management services to people who have sustained catastrophic injuries resulting in complex needs.

Here she shares her views on the connections she's made through networking.

Anna, tell us a bit about yourself...

I qualified as a social worker when I was in my 20s. I worked for social services for a while, and then, well, life changes and I got into case management about 15 years ago. It was about three years ago I set up independently. I have a number of support workers that I manage and supervise on a regular basis. Primarily, we're looking after adults and children with brain injuries.

Where did you hear about the registered manager networks?

I needed to talk to somebody about an administration query - it was baffling - so I found an email address, followed it up, and found myself working with a local registered managers' forum. Everything grew from there, really. I started going to the registered managers' meetings not long afterwards.

When I'm with other registered managers, I can hear their fears too. It's reassuring. Networking is really useful in making me feel less alone in a very isolated job.



So what was your perception of networking, before your current role?

I think by nature of being in a self-employed role, you know the value of networking. I used to go to conferences and network in that way. I was always one for putting my hand up to get involved with working parties, because that seems the best way to go about things - getting your voice heard. I've also helped set up an association of social workers, locally to me.

Can you give us an example of something you've learned through the networks?

You know, the confidential aspect of the network meetings is brilliant. At the beginning of the meeting, the host asks you to just give your first name. Just mention if you're in home care or residential care, or wherever it is you're specialising. Everything we say is confidential. That makes it feel really safe.

I had an issue I wanted to bring up, and without using any identifying details, I could just talk about a sensitive scenario quite freely. Really useful to hear from different voices, and still feel comfortable about it - it's hard putting things out there that are a bit scary. And when you think about CQC registration for example, I think many case management companies feel as though they've been chucked in the deep end.

As a lone practitioner, taking on the registered manager status, I've got heaps of my working week committed to administration now - I can't do as much client-focused work. It's mind blowing, so when I'm with other registered managers, I can hear their fears too. It's reassuring. We're always saying, "what if we don't get it right?" But that's the really positive side of this - learning what's available outside our little world.

I actually get a lot of confidence from the networking. We share ideas and I always come back with something new.



What part of attending the registered manager networks do you enjoy most?

I actually get a lot of confidence from the networking. We share ideas and I always come back with something new. When I want to action that, I write a star in my notebook - when I come back from the registered managers' forum, I've always got a load of stars and things I want to action. We have staff meetings every month, so I'll feed that information into the meeting - I'll put an item on the agenda for it.

One of the areas I've been working on with my team is improvements to infection prevention and control. We're working in people's homes, and it's really hard to say to them, "you should do this, you should do that". But at the network meetings, I got to pose that question to the meeting straight out - "how do you guys manage it"

Some of the home care providers came back with great ideas. In fact, one of them mentioned there was an infection prevention and control forum. I hadn't heard of it, so I took that information back to my team and now have one of my managers attending those meetings.

What's the top tip you'd give someone who isn't sure about attending the registered manager networks?

Dedicate the time in your diary. Don't take phone calls, don't be popping in and out, don't check emails - just immerse yourself in the event.

Would you encourage other people to join a registered manager network?

Yes, definitely. I make sure I keep in touch with other companies, so I can check what I'm doing against what they're doing. But more than that, it's incredibly helpful to have someone on hand - you can just reach out and say, "I've had a really rubbish day." Being honest about it, you're in a really odd position in this job. You have to supervise your staff and keep that professional boundary, but sometimes you want someone who'll listen to you when things haven't gone well... or there's someone you've been working with who's making your job harder, even though they don't realise it. They're the sort of things that you can't share with your staff. Networks are important. Networks are really useful in making me feel less alone in a very isolated job.

Local networks for registered managers and deputy managers

Our networks are a place for managers to come together with other managers in their local area.

Find out more at www.skillsforcare.org.uk/networks

