

Case Study – A Management & Leadership Development Programme for Outlook Care, 2014

Background & Objectives

Outlook Care, based in Billericay, Essex, is a not-for-profit organisation, registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) that delivers person-centred support and care to people with learning disabilities, mental health needs or to older people. It has been in existence since 1990.

DWHRC, in conjunction with Amanda Cowan Consulting (ACC), were commissioned by Outlook Care in early 2014 to design and run a management and leadership development programme (M&LDP) for a cohort of middle-managers. This cohort included a number of Service Managers, i.e. managers having responsibility for the establishments that deliver the care services mentioned above to service-users, together with managers of other support-services and functions.

Outlook Care operates in an environment which is both highly regulated and increasingly competitive. Consequently, it needs high-quality managers who are able to deliver results in such an environment, in accordance with the organisation's objectives, values and key behaviours. It was identified that a key element of this role, and therefore of this programme, was the people-management facet. The programme was therefore designed to address this key domain.

It was hoped that the programme would facilitate both the acquisition of appropriate knowledge and skills by the participants, together with the solving of real, work-based issues.

The overall objectives of the Programme were:

- To raise the confidence and competence of this management and leadership cohort, especially in relation to some key people-management themes.
- To enhance the performance of the individuals and teams that this cohort manage.
- To thereby contribute to raising the standards of care provided by Outlook Care.

Approach & Programme Structure

From the outset, it was decided that a key element of the design of the programme should facilitate the "transfer of learning" to the real world, i.e. it should not be a purely classroom-based programme. The final design of the programme therefore featured a number of different elements:

1. A multi-directional feedback process at the start of programme to help each participant identify and prioritise their management and leadership development needs.
2. A variety of self-assessment questionnaires, e.g. on leadership and communication style preferences and the dark-side of personality.
3. Four taught classroom sessions on:
 - a. Developing positive management and leadership skills.
 - b. Managing, monitoring and reviewing performance.

- c. The manager's role as coach.
- d. Managing change.
4. Participation in an Action Learning Set, to address work-related or organisational development issues.
5. Participation in a series of three telephone-based coaching sessions with a programme facilitator, carried out at different stages of the programme, i.e. one towards the start of the programme, one in the middle and one towards the end, primarily intended to address personal development issues.
6. "Kick-off" and "follow-up" sessions, designed as "book-ends" to properly initiate and conclude the Programme.

The kick-off session took place in February, which included a scene-setting session by Penny Taylor, Outlook Care's CEO, with the four classroom sessions taking place from March until June. The follow-up event took place in October, with the supporting Action Learning Sets and telephone-based coaching sessions happening at appropriate points along the way.

Outcomes

Before the follow-up session took place in October, the three main stakeholder groups, namely the programme participants, their line-managers and the programme sponsors (Outlook Care's CEO and HR Director), were briefed to assimilate relevant information around the impact of the programme, to share at the follow-up session. The major focus of this was around things that had been learned, happened or changed, as a result of the Programme. Examples from the programme participants included:

- Delegating more effectively to the people they manage, this often having a beneficial effect on the motivation and performance of those being delegated to.
- Dealing with instances of poor performance and unacceptable behaviour more quickly and more effectively.
- Improved effectiveness and team-working of the front-line teams providing the care to service-users.
- An increase in their confidence generally, but also specifically in carrying out management and leadership activities, this often being noticed by their line-manager and others.
- Helping each other resolve management issues, such as more effective ways of recruiting new staff.
- Using their enhanced self-awareness, especially of any "dark-side" tendencies, to improve relationships with others, e.g. their manager, the people they themselves manage, key people in other parts of the organisation with whom they need a good working relationship and suppliers to the organisation.

Generally speaking, the Programme was deemed to have been very successful by all the stakeholders. Indeed, the follow-up event, held at Outlook Care's flagship establishment, Foxburrow Grange in Colchester, had a very celebratory feel to it. Most of the participants' line-managers were

present and gave examples of the positive impact of the programme. A number of these examples related to discernible increases in participants' levels of confidence.

Outlook Care's CEO, Penny Taylor, and HR Director, Robert Smith, were also in attendance, encouraging the programme participants to continue with their developmental journeys and the good progress which had already been made. The photograph below is of the programme participants, together with Penny Taylor, Amanda Cowan and David Woollard, taken by Janice Fenner, HR and L&D Support Officer. Janice played a key role in the success of the programme, via all the largely unnoticed planning and organising she carried out behind the scenes.



From L to R: Amanda Cowan, Martin Hill, Sam Davis, Sara Costa, Brenda Nash, Steve Truman, Pav Kalsi, Dave Mottley, Natasha Nowell, David Woollard and Penny Taylor.

Feedback from Programme Stakeholders

At the conclusion of the process, Robert Smith, Director of HR said:

We wanted a programme that would ensure a cohort of our managers had the knowledge, skills and confidence to develop themselves and perform effectively as manager-leaders of Outlook Care. We had identified a cross-section of managers undertaking different roles as the target group for this programme. A priority was to ensure the programme's learning was translated into the managers' performance - this is why we required that the programme included coaching sessions and action learning sets for all those involved. This enabled the knowledge, skills and techniques learned to be applied to real organisational issues, to good effect. All the managers appreciated and enjoyed this developmental opportunity and were positive about the quality of the support and guidance provided by David and Amanda. Ultimately, it was a successful programme.

Feedback from some of the participants included:

This course has helped me to reflect, build on my support network and most of all, develop my teams to help me manage the workload better. My services have moved in the right direction and the staff/teams are receiving more compliments now. The standards of the services have increased and generally, the morale of all the teams is really positive.

I am now dealing effectively with some difficult people-management issues and it is resulting in positive outcomes... this course came at a perfect time for me and I have Outlook Care to thank for putting me on it...it has helped me to achieve not only my professional goals, but also a personal goal. This course does not only develop you as a professional manager/leader, but also as a person. A really big thank-you for putting this valuable course together and investing your time and knowledge in me. It has made a positive difference and I have very much enjoyed it...a programme I will easily recommend to anyone to complete.

Pav Kalsi

I feel I have really grown in confidence throughout the past few months. The course came at a good time in my career and having been in this particular post since July 2013, I now feel I own it rather than perhaps playing at it. I feel I need to repeat that actually - I have definitely grown in confidence and am much more self-assured.

The course has given me skills to be able to look at the bigger picture and I am enjoying the benefits of this, in that I am involved in a lot of what is going on at Central Services and feel that I can contribute in a meaningful way. I appreciate the way the course has made me self-reflect. This is uncomfortable at times, but it enables you to have a good understanding of what works for you and for others.

Sara Costa