

The co-ordinator

As busy public sector organisations the Care Inspectorate and the SSSC have continued to develop and change since they were created. For some time our organisations had considered how best to support the development of staff on an ongoing basis and in particular through periods of change and restructure. Coaching and mentoring have long been recognised in the business world as successful interventions that support people with their own development. Research also suggests there is particular relevance in supporting staff during restructuring. In recognition of the level of change both organisations have undergone and the impact this can have on staff and organisational functions, an ambitious internal coaching and mentoring scheme was set up. The scheme is ambitious in both its size and aims.

Fifty-eight people across our organisations were trained to provide coaching and mentoring for any staff member who could benefit.

The scheme is designed to provide space and time in our busy working environments to reflect on the important task of our own development and to enhance our abilities and performance. We believe that by looking after ourselves we will be better able to look after the interests of the people that we serve. We also anticipate that the benefits won't only be internal, as our developed organisations will have an even better impact on the outcomes for people who use services and their carers.

Running in parallel to meeting individuals' needs, the scheme plays an important role in the organisational development of both the Care Inspectorate and the SSSC. One aim is for the scheme to contribute to a coaching culture. For us this means working practices which nurture behaviours that promote our values, challenges those that don't and works toward developing resilience. This will be done through both our organisational approaches and in us as members of the Care Inspectorate or SSSC team. The kind of behaviours played out in a coaching relationship are what we wish to see demonstrated on a wider scale - in manager/reportee relationships, between team members and between different departments and functions at every level.

The scheme is also tasked with identifying organisational themes that could benefit from a closer look. In ways, which don't compromise confidentiality, such themes are fed back to both organisations. In doing this the scheme provides a crucial link between the workforce experience and the strategic approach.

Our coaching and mentoring scheme is one strand of our overall development strategy and provides a welcome complement of space in our often hectic environments, whilst seeking to meet individual development needs and looking after the success of the organisations.

Early evaluation of the scheme points to developments in a number of areas with the greatest impact being on:

- gaining greater confidence and commitment to the organisation
- increased ability to reflect and analyse complex situations
- becoming more resilient
- improved peer relations
- more effective management of workload
- more effective partnership working.

The co-ordinator

Here is what some of our coaches and those who have been coached have to say about their experiences.

"I really appreciate the coaching sessions that I have. By working through the goals that were set at the start, my confidence has increased allowing me, not only to deal with the current demands of work, but to face challenges head on with a new perspective. I really believe that these sessions are one of the best things that I have ever done during my career."

"Coaching highlighted to me that you don't need to have a problem to go for coaching. You might simply have an issue or idea that you want to work through and sort out how you might take it forward. Coaching can give you the time to think and reflect in a safe environment."

"What surprised me most about coaching was the value of having some time away from a busy work schedule to unravel my story and have someone listen to me. Unravelling my story helped me to think more clearly, sort out where I felt stuck and prioritise what I needed to do."

"It's hard for me to put into words what coaching has done. It has just helped so much! Having the time to reflect, hash things out, role play, try different scenarios, think critically about a situation and learn what is important to tackle and what needs to be let go. To leave with the tools to do that on my own, internalise the questions my coach would ask and think things through is good."

"I am now making the most of the moment I'm in. Coaching delivers real focus and helps manage uncertainty and change; I like certainty and to know black from white. The time out allowed me to use that time specifically to get out the issues that were weighing me down. Without this opportunity these issues would usually have had an impact on my performance - productivity wise and quality wise. Coaching allowed me to feel freed up and to work in the moment when out with coaching."

We've learned a lot during the two years since the scheme's inception and we want to build on the successes and develop the things that could improve:

- We plan to continue providing external professional supervision and Continuous Professional Development for our coaches as a quality assurance measure and we will continue to provide ongoing support internally for our coaches and mentors.
- The take up rate for coaching has averaged around four new referrals per month. We would like more people to benefit from the scheme and plan to reinvigorate our marketing strategies to achieve this. Anecdotally there are suggestions that there is a ripple effect from the number of people who have been coached and been trained to coach. So whilst there is a set number that have officially received coaching, others have benefitted from the approach on a wider basis.
- We are establishing links with the Scottish Public Sector Coaching Collaborative to widen the matching opportunities for our staff and others in the public sector and to be able to contribute to the shared responsibility that we all have as public servants.
- We are focussing on developing the mentoring aspect of the scheme as more referrals are made for this.

The co-ordinator

As co-ordinator of our scheme I would like to thank everyone who has given generously of their time and energy to participate in coaching and mentoring. I have witnessed some transformational results and people demonstrating real courage and commitment. The knock on effect of this alone has felt significant and our next steps will serve to increase the incredible impact that coaching can have on a system; be it that of an individual or an organisation. The early evaluation suggests very positive outcomes for individuals. Further evaluation will demonstrate how well this has been translated into organisational development and into better outcomes for people who use services. Ultimately this is what steers our work and is the outcome by which we can truly measure our effectiveness.

The coachee - my journey through coaching

I always knew that I lacked confidence in speaking up or speaking out when I was in large group sessions with my peers, managers or other colleagues out with my own team. I never believed that I was good enough to be in my job and that it was just through luck that I was able to secure my permanent post. I didn't have any formal qualifications; I learnt what I did on the job. I was comfortable speaking to colleagues and managers within my team and informally putting ideas and suggestions forward, but when it came to bigger projects or speaking out in group settings, I would stay relatively quiet and, unless asked directly, would hardly speak out. The thought of having to stand up in front of colleagues to do a presentation on my own would petrify me and I would shy away from anything that would involve that.

I always started big projects and group work with a sense of trepidation and an initial fear of my own failure. This added stress to the whole thing.

At first I wasn't sure if the coaching sessions that were on offer in our organisation would help me but like any kind of training I was willing to give it a go. During my first coaching session, we explored the various methods that could be used and what I would be comfortable with. We discussed our contract, what we both expected of each other. Trust and confidentiality was a big thing for me.

We decided on role play situations, where my coach would role play a situation; for example, one-to-one manager sessions about a project, presenting a report to a senior member of staff. We would discuss, what I was thinking, how I was feeling, my body language, what I was visualising in my mind's eye at the time. The first few times was a bit weird, but strangely I felt a sense of relief afterwards as if talking through helped me to figure out what I was afraid of so it didn't seem so frightening. It was emotional, tiring and scary as I was facing scenarios that before I would always run from having to deal with.

The coaching sessions helped me to identify why I had confidence issues and where these came from. They helped me figure out what I was afraid of, why I reacted the way I did and what triggers these thoughts and feelings. I was then able to change my thinking and come up with tools and tricks to help me work through these when I was faced with similar situations again.

The coachee - my journey through coaching

Throughout my sessions, and beyond, my confidence to speak out has grown and although there are times when I still question myself, I don't allow the fear of what might happen to stop me from moving forward. I no longer think that I'm unworthy of this job, surely seven years counts for something. I am now in the middle of completing a diploma too, which I would never have thought possible. The fear of failing would have stopped me from starting it.

To this day I still have my post-it-notes as a reminder to not let negative thoughts get in the way and to always push myself forward and take risks. One of my major achievements that I wouldn't have been able to do without coaching was to give a presentation to a group of colleagues, on my own. Presentations still scare me but I'm not running scared anymore.

Coaching is one of the best things I have done, not just for my career but for myself.

February 2015