

Registered Managers in Adult Social Care

Their support and development
requirements

November 2022

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Executive summary

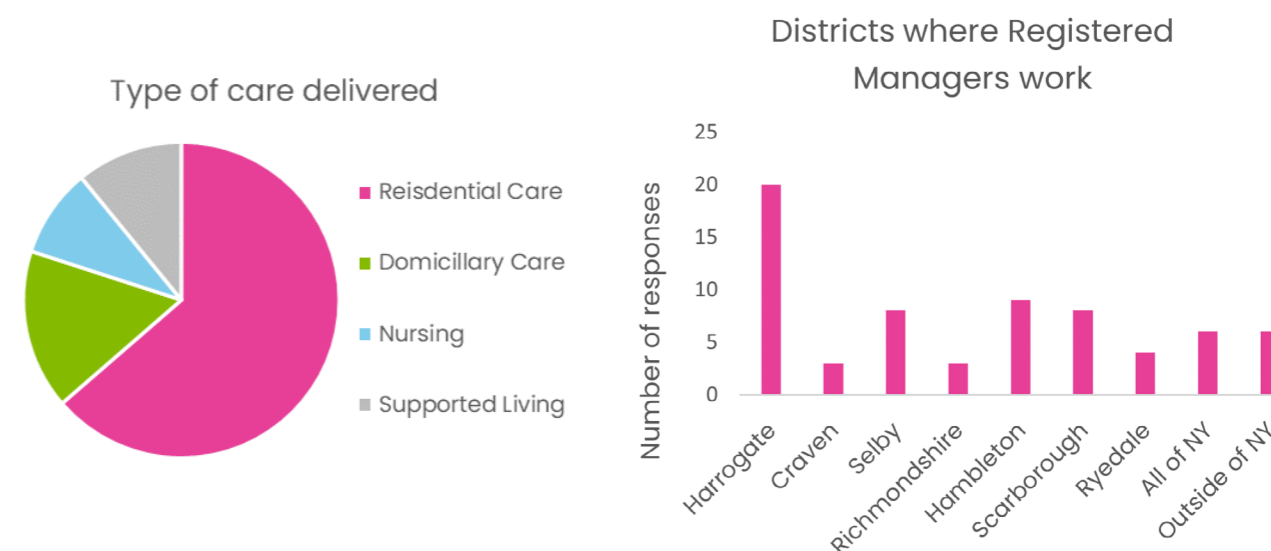
This research and report was commissioned by North Yorkshire County Council and was undertaken between January – June 2022.

Adult social care sectors are experiencing ongoing service pressures, in part due to the pandemic. The current recruitment crisis makes it increasingly difficult for Registered Managers to manage their service and look after their mental health and well-being. Registered Managers are currently under immense pressure, with a recent study finding that 50% felt overwhelmed and overworked, and 18% felt burned out. Other research, conducted by Skills for Care, found almost 80% of respondents felt their role as a Registered Manager had changed over time, becoming more varied (71%) but also more pressured (83%).

A Registered Manager is not only responsible for the people in their care, but also has a leadership role for their team of staff. They also have a support role for relatives and are responsible for following necessary regulations and policies. As the role has become increasingly complex and demanding it is essential that Registered Managers are effectively supported to ensure they can deliver a high-quality service, whilst looking after their mental health and well-being.

Through a survey and focus groups, Healthwatch North Yorkshire has explored what challenges Registered Managers are facing, what is working well in their jobs, as well as where further training and support is needed. The findings and recommendations set out in this report are aimed at helping North Yorkshire County Council develop an action plan of support for Registered Managers.

We received 61 responses to our survey and ran two focus groups. To contextualise the sample, 87% were female and 13% male and all were white British. The majority of this sample work within residential care, with the highest number of respondents working within the district of Harrogate, as shown below.



This report pulls together the feedback we received via our survey and focus groups as well as additional literature on this topic and what other councils and NHS Trusts currently have in place to support Registered Managers in their local area.

Key findings:

Within our sample, 61% of Registered Managers said they are feeling fatigued. Some of the main challenges they are currently facing include: additional pressures due to COVID, issues with recruitment and retention of staff, lack of time with an increasing workload and being part of an undervalued and underfunded sector.

Despite the challenges, many Registered Managers said they enjoy their job and working within this sector due to the ability to make a difference to people's lives, the interaction with and positive feedback from service users and supportive staff teams.

While being a Registered Manager can be incredibly rewarding, the challenges raised in this report highlight the urgent need for further training and support to be provided to ensure Registered Managers can effectively manage their service and stay mentally well. The recommendations below suggest how these challenges could be addressed by North Yorkshire County Council.

Recommendations:

Training

North Yorkshire County Council develops further training around:

- The new CQC requirements.
- Leadership and management, such as transformational leadership training (especially for new Registered Managers).
- Well-being training focused on resilience.
- Further digital training.
- Improved inductions for new care staff to take some pressure off Registered Managers.

In terms of how Registered Managers would like the training to be delivered a mix of both online and face to face training would be beneficial; the topic should determine the most appropriate method.

Training sessions should also focus on how Registered Managers can practically apply the lessons learnt during the session, perhaps through facilitated action planning.

Support

Develop a dedicated, real time support team that Registered Managers can go to for advice and support. This team could consist of ex-Registered Managers, following the model of the Care Quality Team at Leeds City Council. Also, link in with existing support services such as the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care System (ICS) Staff Resilience Hub to ensure Registered Managers can easily access this type of service¹.

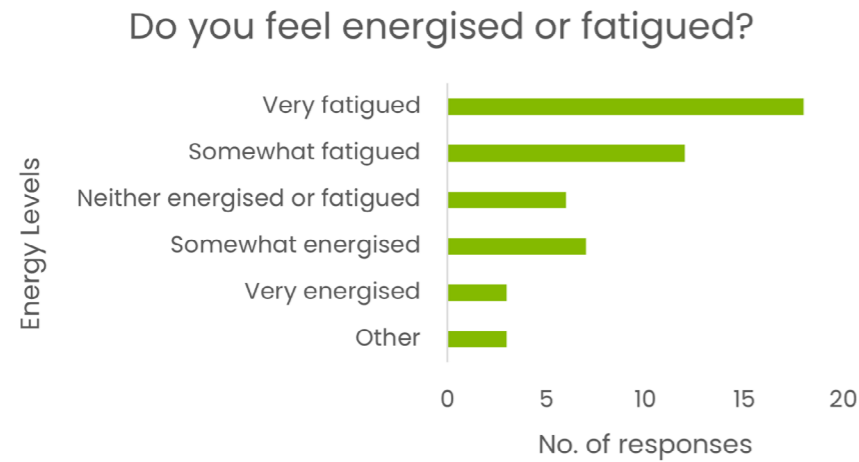
- Facilitate connection between Registered Managers via support networks and through peer supervision or buddying. These should be streamlined by locality and by the different types of care Registered Managers deliver.
- Develop online forums where Registered Managers can share problems and solutions as well as a safe online space for Registered Managers to simply offload and share all of their stresses and worries.
- Where needed, help to facilitate connection between Registered Managers and their provider or owner.

Development

- In collaboration with care providers, continue to help raise the profile of the sector. More positive PR and communications would help provide a counter narrative to the, often negative, portrayal of this sector within the media.
- With partners in the health sector, explore joint opportunities to promote the sectors for recruitment, including working with local schools, colleges and education providers as well as exploring retraining opportunities for people in other professions.
- With other local authorities and care providers, explore how to develop opportunities for more clearly defined career progression within the care sector.
- Work in collaboration with care providers to review the job descriptions and pay of Registered Managers to ensure their workloads are realistic and manageable and their pay reflects the responsibility of the job. Also, work with the CQC to reduce the scope of Registered Managers who are increasingly overstretched and to reflect that in the regulations.

Challenges that Registered Managers are facing

Within our sample, 61% of Registered Managers said they were feeling very or somewhat fatigued with their job. The four main challenges respondents said they are facing that are resulting in these feelings of fatigue are explored below.



2. Additional pressures due to COVID

The COVID pandemic has had and is continuing to have a pervasive impact on the social care sector, with numerous additional pressures being placed on Registered Managers. Respondents expressed the difficulties they have faced due to staff isolating and the challenge of keeping up with the ever-changing guidance. Outbreaks in the home and keeping residents safe as rules were relaxed in the community were also raised as key concerns. These additional pressures have meant it has been increasingly difficult for Registered Managers to keep up morale amongst their staff and stay mentally well themselves.

Further research supports these findings, with one study conducted by the University of Highlands and Islands and Northumbria University highlighting how Registered Managers have endured the pressure of supporting their teams during the crisis, while often not revealing their own struggles. The unreasonable and unrealistic demands placed on staff by care inspectors during the pandemic was also raised in this study. In one example, a member of staff said the inspector picked up on the fact the home had version two of a poster instead of version three².

“The constant demand of the extra workload with staff isolating due to COVID. Regulatory bodies expect the same level of compliance in the current climate”

“As the community opens up and COVID guidelines change, keeping clients safe still [is a challenge]”.

“Recruiting sufficient staff and trying to maintain moral amongst a very tired and overworked workforce”.

2. Issues with recruitment and retention of staff

Recruitment and retention issues within the sector are well documented, with the CQC’s recent State of Care report warning of a “tsunami of unmet needs” if the crisis isn’t resolved. The National Care Forum reported that a third of care homes lack staff and more than a quarter have closed their doors to new residents. This sustained pressure is clearly affecting Registered Managers as feedback we received indicated they feel overworked, overstretched, and burned out.

Many described how they are on call at all times, even at the weekend and during annual leave. They also described how they have no time to switch off or recharge due to a lack of staff. The problem of recruiting high-quality staff was also raised. Despite recruiting and retention issues, high expectations are still placed on Registered Managers. One respondent questioned how they are expected to deliver gold standards when they often have bronze resources.

“Even when I’m at home my phone could go constantly. You can have a weekend off but if anything happens you get a phone call So you’re always connected and that’s expected of you. I like my job but it totally takes over life”.

“Short staffed, leading to extra hours to cover services - unable to switch off when not at work”.

“I think there is a little bit of naivety from external authorities, including CQC, as to what a manager and a team can get done on the timescales they expect. We are in the biggest recruitment crisis I have known in 20 years of managing and we are still expected to deliver a gold standard service with bronze resources”.

3. Lack of time and increasing workload

Many respondents expressed the increasing workload demands they are facing, such as large quantities of paperwork (e.g. audits and policies), which leaves less time for them to be with the people they care for. One respondent stated that there are simply not enough hours in the day to do everything that is necessary. Other research supports this, with a survey conducted by Skills for Care revealing 87% of Registered Managers were responsible for an unreasonably long list of tasks, including the management of day-to-day operations, involving families and residents, building and maintaining external relationships, leadership and culture, and business strategy and management³. These increasing demands are resulting in Registered Managers having a poor work-life balance which in turn is having a negative effect on their mental health and well-being.

² [Care home staff say psychological distress from Covid pandemic was like facing ‘war’](#)

³ [Supporting registered managers - Care Management Matters](#)

“Keeping up to date with guidance, testing, surveys, capacity trackers, infection prevention and control (IPC) etc. on top of increasing demands for more and more paperwork (audits, policies etc.). How are we supposed to actually spend any time with the people we care for when we have so much to do and be responsible for”.

“We have too much demanded from us right from the moment we sign our contract of employment. We get given set hours but a little line states that it is expected that we will work over these paid hours if the home needs it, and it often does. We don’t get paid for being on call but would lose our jobs if we didn’t respond to the phone. We’re expected to supervise individuals in a huge staff team but there is little support for us. Care homes have become more like clinical settings but without the training and support for the team. We have carers taking blood pressure, setting up pace maker trackers etc.”.

4. Undervalued and underfunded

Feedback highlighted how adult social care staff, including Registered Managers, are often undervalued and not treated with the respect they deserve. Respondents expressed their frustrations with the acute lack of appreciation and recognition for care staff and the pressures they are under within society. This may be in part due to the negative representation of the care sector within the media and suggests more needs to be done to help raise the profile of the sector.

Respondents also raised the concern that the pay for Registered Managers has never reflected the responsibility and workload of the job. Recent research supports this, with one study suggesting other workers with similar skillsets to care workers receive an average of £7,000 more per year⁴.

“I think that care work is not a recognised profession - no one outside care work realises the responsibility of the job. Pay has never reflected this”.

“Our care staff do a wonderful job, work extremely hard and are an under recognised profession, often being in the lowest paid jobs but carrying a huge amount of responsibility. They undertake a huge amount of training each year but are undervalued outside the sector”.

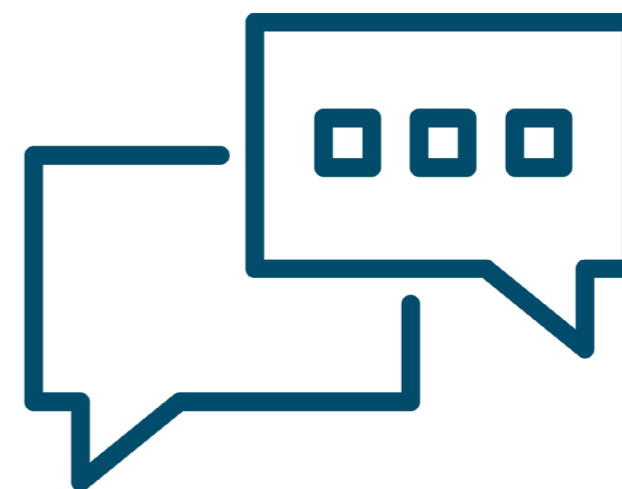
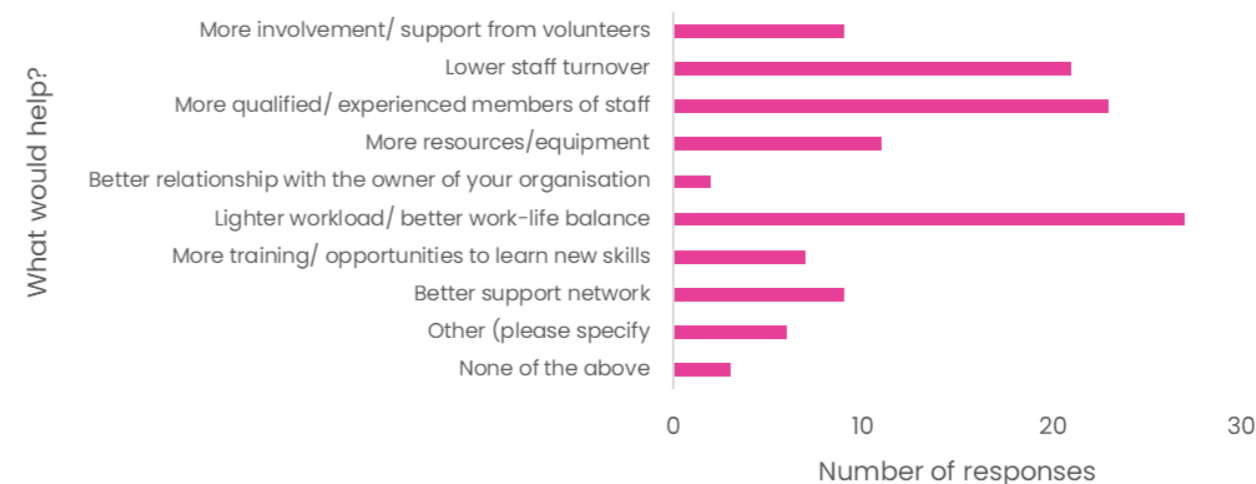
“[There needs to be] improved profile [and] status of social care and its value to people and society”.

When respondents were asked what could support them to perform their role more effectively the top three options chosen were:

1. Lighter workload and better work-life balance.
2. More qualified and experienced members of staff.
3. Lower staff turnover.

These areas where further support is needed reflect the challenges raised above.

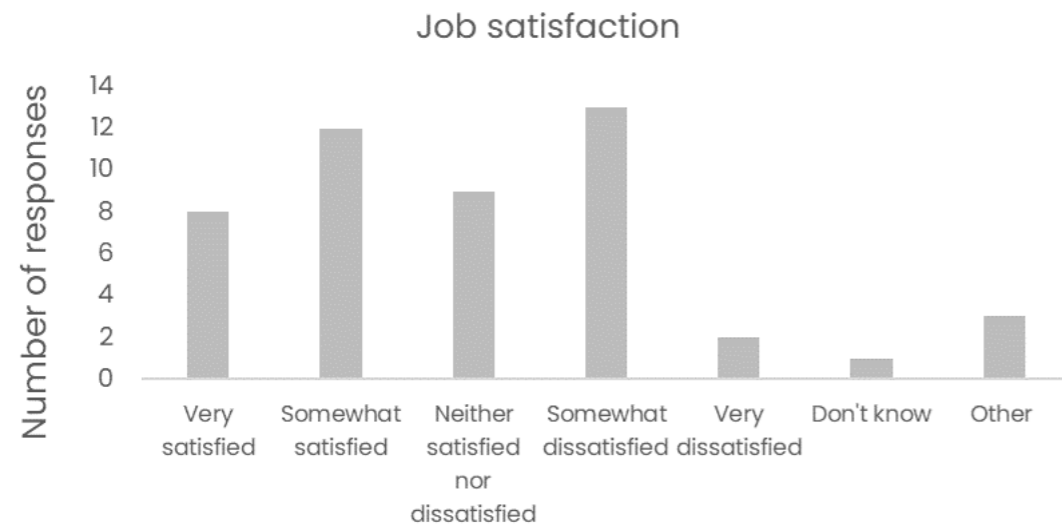
What could support Registered Managers to perform their role more effectively?



4 [Social care workers undervalued by £7,000 annually during pandemic \(consultancy.uk\)](https://www.consultancy.uk/research/social-care-workers-undervalued-by-7000-annually-during-pandemic)

The positives of being a Registered Manager

Despite all of these challenges and feelings of fatigue, more than two fifths of our sample (42%) said they were either somewhat or very satisfied with their job, with less than a third (31%) saying they were dissatisfied. Responses to this question once again reflect the pervasive impact the pandemic has had, with some respondents saying they enjoyed their job a lot more before COVID, and feel more frustrated (rather than dissatisfied) due to the high workload and current staffing pressures.

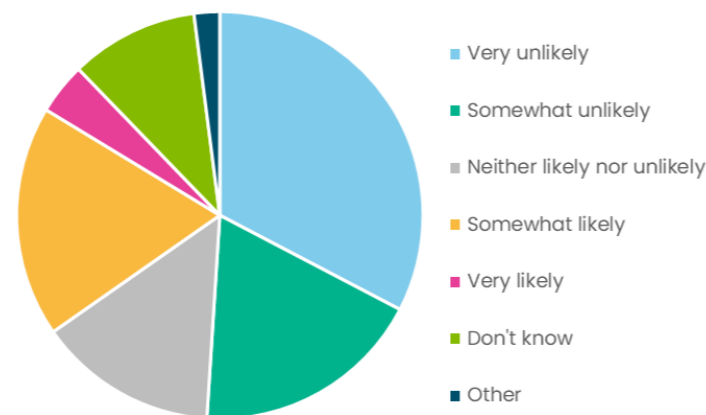


“I thoroughly enjoyed my job before COVID. Since the pandemic the pressure has increased tremendously”.

“I’m more frustrated than dissatisfied due to work load and shortage of good staff”.

Similarly, a large proportion of respondents said they are very or somewhat unlikely to look for a new job within the next six months. Other research reflects this, with a survey from the National Skills Academy for Social Care finding two thirds of their respondents thought they would still be working in social care after five years⁵.

It must be noted that this research was carried out in 2012, however the findings still coincide with our sample, even with the additional pressures the pandemic has created.



How likely are you to look for a new job?

“All of these challenges, yet we keep coming back and we keep doing it because the sector is amazing and there is something special that is here”.

This suggests despite the many challenges Registered Managers face, the job can be incredibly rewarding too. Some of the main reasons why Registered Managers enjoy their job are outlined below.

1. The ability to make a difference to people’s lives

Respondents said they enjoy their job as it means they have the ability to make a difference to people’s lives which is hugely rewarding. Even though it can be difficult, respondents said they like overcoming the challenges faced in their job and seeing the positive outcomes as a result of their work.

“I enjoy every part of my job, knowing you are providing a safe living environment for those who are unable to look after their own daily needs is very rewarding, making a difference to someone’s life”.

“[I enjoy] the challenges but also making sure that all our residents feel at home and getting positive feedback from them and the family. I enjoy team building and seeing results and a happy team. I enjoy one to one work with staff”.

2. The interaction with and positive feedback from service users

The interaction Registered Managers have with the people they care for was raised as a perk of the job. The positive feedback received from service users’ families was also mentioned as a great reward of the job.

“Residents are great and have been so patient during the pandemic”.

“Despite everything we receive positive feedback from service users. We are slowly progressing with positive organisational changes and projects”.

3. Having a supportive staff team

Many praised the supportive staff team they are part of and highlighted the importance of effective teamwork and communication in order for high standards of care to be delivered. Others mentioned how the pandemic has bonded their staff team together even more as they have overcome challenges together.

“I have built up a really strong, competent, amazing team and we have very high standards of care and support. I like to see a happy and productive team work hard together for positive outcomes for the people we support”.

“Seeing staff working so well together especially through difficult times and the positivity and fab teamwork we have in the home”.

Taken together, this feedback highlights how many Registered Managers enjoy their job and working within this sector, however there are many challenges and pressures they are currently facing which impact on the quality of care they can deliver and their own mental health and well-being. This highlights the urgent need for further training and support to be given to Registered Managers in order to address these challenges.



What further skills and development training is needed?

Before exploring where there may be gaps in the current provision of training for Registered Managers, it is important to note that in this sample, over half of respondents (61%) said they have undertaken some form of training in the last 18 months. This mostly consisted of training around four areas:

1. Leadership and management.
2. Understanding and improving well-being and mental health.
3. COVID related, including infection control.
4. Digital technology and computer skills.

Of those who said they have not completed any training within the last 18 months, 68% said a lack of time and 16% said a lack of funding were the main reasons for this. Therefore, there seems to be a wide range of training on offer, but many Registered Managers simply do not have the time or funds to participate.

“The difficulty is finding time alongside the increasing workload to carry out skills or development training”.

“Because it has been so, so demanding for so long you have to evaluate the level of priority from any training session you go on because in isolation if there is quality and governance training [on offer] you think ‘oh brilliant I’d absolutely love to impose that’ but regrettably there is some slipping of the standards because you can’t prioritise all of those things”.

Whilst there is already a lot of skills and development training on offer to Registered Managers, some gaps in existing provision were still raised with 16% of the sample saying the reason they have not recently undertaken any training is because the right type of skills training is not available or there is not sufficient skills training available. Five main areas emerged where it was suggested further training would be helpful.

1. New CQC requirements

It was suggested that since the CQC is changing how it completes its monitoring and inspection process, any training regarding this would be helpful⁶. More development training that focuses on making improvements following a CQC inspection or a safeguarding concern was also mentioned.

“More training on CQC requirements for self and team – however usually costly per session – which becomes unachievable”.

“[Any training around] the new CQC inspection process and ...”

⁶ [Statement from our Chief Inspectors on developing our monitoring approach | CQC Public Website](#)

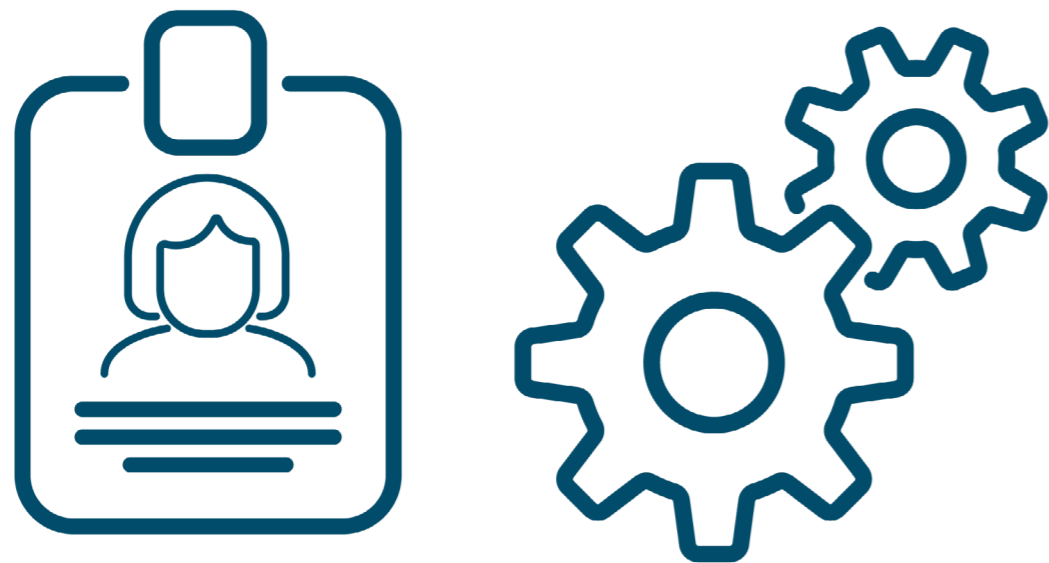
...how this will be incorporated in the role so I can support my teams to provide the best person centred approach".



2. Leadership and management, especially for new Registered Managers

It was acknowledged that there is lots of leadership and management training already available for Registered Managers. However, the difficulties new managers in particular can face when taking on the responsibility of the role was raised as a concern and as an area where further training would be useful. Research conducted by Skills for Care revealed 70% of Registered Managers within their sample were offered their first Registered Manager post by an existing employer; the majority had not planned to become a manager (instead taking an opportunity when it arrived)⁷. This means some Registered Managers can come into the role without much experience in leadership.

The importance of effective leadership when managing a service cannot be overlooked. One research review of 18 studies found good leadership styles in healthcare settings to be strongly correlated with quality care. It was considered a core element for a well-coordinated and integrated provision of care, both from the patients and healthcare professionals⁸. There are many different types of leadership styles that exist but the literature suggests training specifically around the development of transformational leadership would be beneficial for Registered Managers.



⁷ [New research reveals more about registered managers in adult social care - Fountain and Loving Care Homes \(fountainlovingcare.co.uk\)](https://www.fountainlovingcare.co.uk/news/new-research-reveals-more-about-registered-managers-in-adult-social-care)

⁸ [Importance of Leadership Style towards Quality of Care Measures in Healthcare Settings: A Systematic Review - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31111111/)

Transformational leadership is an approach in which a leader inspires and motivates team members to create positive changes within an organisation. One study found there were positive effects on the whole staff team when Registered Managers took part in the My Home Life 12-month transformational leadership support programme⁹. This training had a positive effect not only for the Registered Managers themselves but also for their relationships with staff, residents and relatives¹⁰. Another study found transformational leadership was positively associated with job satisfaction and well-being in staff caring for older people¹¹. This research suggests Registered Managers, and in particular new Registered Managers, would benefit from training that supports the development of this leadership style.

Leeds City Council echoes the importance of leadership and management training for Registered Managers, which is why they have developed their Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy supports and develops leaders and managers across adult social care, improving their confidence and capability to ensure the teams they lead are better able to provide high quality care. This is an accredited centre of excellence providing a range of training and development opportunities for aspiring, new and existing leaders and managers across the adult social care sector. Leeds City Council consult with managers and use the feedback they receive from managers to design the annual programme of training¹².

The issue of not knowing which training to undertake when starting in the role was also raised. One respondent, who had recently moved from working in the NHS, said there is a lot to learn when you join and it can be difficult to know where to start with training. Therefore, more focus and structure on what you need to learn when starting in the role would help Registered Managers prioritise training and ensure time is used effectively.

Online/ classroom based management course for new managers

"I'm a relatively new manager (I came from the NHS) so for me finding out what training I need to do is a bit of a minefield, there's so much to learn and there's so much people expect you to know. It's obviously very different from working in the NHS because you've always got somebody you can go to talk to in the NHS. Some sort of focus on what you actually need to learn initially [as a new Registered Manager] would be helpful".

⁹ [My Home Life England](https://www.myhomelife.org.uk/)

¹⁰ [The effect of a leadership support programme on care home managers - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31111111/)

¹¹ [The importance of transformational leadership style for the well-being of employees working with older people - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31111111/)

¹² [The Leadership Academy- Leeds City Council.pdf](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/leeds-city-council/leeds-city-council-leadership-academy)

3. Well-being, focussed on resilience

In terms of well-being and mental health, it was suggested that training should have a specific focus on resilience. Registered Managers expressed the difficulty of trying to keep their staff team motivated while they themselves are feeling overworked and burnt out. Therefore, more training that provides practical ways to develop resilience would be useful. Training that can help Registered Managers cope better and plan more effectively considering the uncertain climate we are currently in was also suggested.

Research conducted with Registered Nurses highlights how resilience training can be beneficial. One study integrated a Stress Management and Resiliency Training (SMART) program into the usual orientation program for new Registered Nurses. At the end of this study, it was found that the SMART program was effective in improving the mindfulness and resilience of the participants¹³. Although this study was conducted with Registered Nurses rather than managers, it provides a good example of how effective training can increase resilience.

As well as further training around resilience and well-being, the literature suggests dedicated well-being pages (available on an intranet network) might also be beneficial, so Registered Managers know where to go for support if they need it. This is something that was developed by NHS Lanarkshire and has been highly praised by care staff¹⁴.

“Resilience is an area where there is something worth investing some energy and training in. It is about finding that resolve to keep going with the fatigue those around you experience. How do you keep picking everybody up in the team and holding that responsibility when you are feeling that [burnout] yourself? You wonder how long you can keep doing that for”.

“Strategic planning, goal setting in context of uncertain climate and weakened resources”.

4. Additional digital support training

As more systems and processes are moving to digital there needs to be training in place so Registered Managers are able to use the systems efficiently and effectively.

“Better IT skills for senior team. As more and more of our work is completed online, no thought has been given around training to do this. Hard in small companies where we don’t have the facilities of larger organisations”.

¹³ [Enhancing Resilience Among New Nurses: Feasibility and Efficacy of a Pilot Intervention\(ochsnerjournal.org\)](https://www.ochsnerjournal.org/)
¹⁴ [Dedicated webpage offers wellbeing support for care home staff | NHS Lanarkshire \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/)

5. Better induction for new staff, to take pressure off Registered Managers

Induction training for new staff members was also raised by respondents as an area where further training would be useful. Although this training would not be for Registered Managers themselves it would help relieve pressure off Registered Managers as many said they often do not have the time to properly induct new staff due to other responsibilities and demands. This leads to new staff struggling or wanting to leave the role, resulting in more stress and pressure for the Registered Manager. Some sort of structured welcome training when people first arrive into the sector that might help people feel part of the wider sector was suggested. Streamlining and reviewing the current induction protocols and training was also suggested.

In addition to training, buddying new staff members with more experienced staff members and then changing who they buddy with each week so the new staff member is properly integrated into the team was also suggested. Research supports this type of scheme; one organisation which took part in a care home buddy programme saw the positive impact of the scheme through a rise in the retention of new staff¹⁵. This type of programme can help build the confidence of new staff members and help them feel part of the team which in turn can take some pressure off the Registered Manager.

“I think there should be some more support, coaching, development training when people first come into the sector as you [as a Registered Manager] can’t look after new staff the way you want to [due to time constraints]. You’ve got to win people over early on and they’ve got to have good experiences. But sometimes you are so desperately short of staff somebody arrives [new] and you have all the best intent for them to be shadowing and inducted but by day three they are on the shop floor delivering services because that’s where the real need is. If there was a set welcome into the sector that might help people feel part of the bigger picture [that would be good]”.

“We could streamline and review the structures of induction we already have in place to make it more effective to relieve some of the pressures on us to deliver and free up some time”.

¹⁵ [Care home buddy programme sees rise in ‘retention’ of new care workers](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/)

How training should be delivered

1. Online or face to face?

In terms of how training should be delivered it was suggested there should be a mix of face to face and online training offered as it was recognised that there are benefits and drawbacks to both methods. One of the main benefits that was mentioned in terms of face to face training is that there is the dedicated time and space to focus on the training with no other distractions. It also gives the opportunity for more open discussion and connections to be developed between Registered Managers. However, online training is more easily accessible (in terms of traveling time etc.) so many said it has its place too, it just depends on what the training is about. For example, one respondent raised the point that some training, such as moving and handling training, should be prioritised for being face to face.

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust run monthly webinars (this year topics have covered emotional resilience, coaching and mentoring). In order to form the year's programme of events they send out a survey to Registered Managers asking what topics people want to be covered¹⁶. The staff members who facilitate these webinars said the face to face sessions (that took place before COVID) had better attendance as they found it allowed for networking and more open, personal conversations to take place, meaning learning and good practice could be shared. The lack of outside distractions during face to face training was also a positive.

“Having a day out [to do training], once a month even, would be good. We have to be mindful as we are responsible for our own management of time but it is also important to be compassionate leaders to ourselves so therefore giving yourself that permission to attend a course. It is important to allow that dedicated time to do that”.

“[When doing training/courses online] people don't acknowledge that it is too easy for someone [in the team] to come and get you and say they need you now. Whereas if you were actually there in person, they wouldn't be able to do that. However, online has its place and I do enjoy it as well so I'm quite open to either [face to face and online training]”.

“Some training has to be face to face, such as moving and handling. We are getting more and more training that is online but you can't always learn that way”.

¹⁶ Training and Support for RMs in HCV.pdf

2. Further support needed to practically apply training

It was mentioned that going to training can sometimes be a 'tick box' activity and it was suggested that more needs to be put in place to ensure the knowledge learnt during training is practically applied. One respondent said there should always be time at the end of training to reflect on what has been learnt and time to create an action plan of how the training can be carried forward. Research suggests action plans can help bridge the gap between learning and putting that learning into practice. Action planning consists of four key principles: reflection, actions, accountability, and follow-up¹⁷.

“The main challenge is the time capacity to access training but also the pause in the chaos of the everyday to stop and think and implement some of the learning into practice. I've always thought training which comes with a bit of preparation, so preparing [beforehand] what you want to get out of the training and stating that in advance [is useful].

It's about holding yourself to account perhaps through putting something in writing saying 'this is what I hope to get from the training' then you are more inclined to take those actions forward... A task at the end where you look at what you're going to take forward and set clear actions from it [would be useful]. I think that space and reflection time after [training] is important. If you have an hour long session it would be good if 40 minutes was content and 20 minutes was discussion and reflection to help with taking the training forward”.



¹⁷ [Action Planning Helps Link Training to Doing \(icmicom\)](#)

What further support is needed?

When asked what further support, other than training sessions, would be helpful, five main themes emerged.

1. Dedicated, real-time support team

Respondents said it would be useful to have a dedicated, real-time support team that they could contact if they have any questions, queries or concerns. One respondent said it has often been difficult during the pandemic to make decisions about how to interpret certain guidance. They had one instance where two people lived in a shared house and, while one was highly vulnerable to COVID, the other wanted to be independent when the community began to open up. It would have been helpful to have been able to speak to someone about this when making the decision about what to do (rather than having to wait for a timetabled webinar). Registered Managers also mentioned how lonely and isolating it can be, so having a dedicated phone line for chatting or sharing concerns would be helpful.

“Thinking back over the last couple of years I think if there had been a place to go to if you were just a bit stuck with something [that would be helpful]. For example, when trying to make sense of new guidance and make considered decisions about how to interpret that effectively. When there wasn’t a clear answer to your questions in the guidance you had to make those decisions either alone or with a colleague, so if there was a space where you could talk it through [with someone] and it was easy to access [that would be helpful].”

“The pressures we’ve had for the past two years are not going anywhere. It has been one of the most isolating experiences I’ve ever had with some of the worst traumas and dramas we’ve had”.

A dedicated support team is something Leeds City Council offers to all care homes across the city through its Care Quality Team¹⁸. By providing support to care home managers, this small team aims to improve the quality of care in Leeds. The team is made up of ex-Registered Managers, so they have a wealth of knowledge and experience that helps them form relationships. It provides a range of support for managers, including coffee mornings, a telephone line for managers to contact with questions or just to chat, auditing and governance work, webinars, and mentoring.

Furthermore, if a care home is inspected by the CQC and rated as needing improvement, it is recommended the care home works with the team to improve (the team only works by invitation). Registered Managers in our sample said a support team of this type would be highly beneficial for North Yorkshire.

¹⁸ [Care Quality Team \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/care-quality-team)

The importance of this kind of support has been echoed by other organisations such as Barchester Healthcare (this is an independent care provider that runs care homes and registered hospitals across the UK). In response to the pandemic, Barchester Healthcare has introduced a number of initiatives to promote and support staff well-being including a support line which gives staff the opportunity to unload or share any worries that they may be having with people who have experience of working in a care home environment¹⁹.

Another organisation that offers a range of support is the Independent Care Group (ICG), a membership organisation for care providers in York and North Yorkshire²⁰. They offer opportunities for care staff to network and attend meetings within their locality. They also have a senior officer on hand to talk through issues and provide individual support as well as providing a legal helpline service, regular e-mail updates and a yearly conference.

The difficulty of accessing existing support teams when needed was also raised as a concern. Some respondents said they often can only access support services, such as the learning disability services, when they are at crisis point. If these services could be accessed more freely, before it reaches crisis point, this would help improve the quality of care of residents and reduce the stress placed on Registered Managers.

“Access to services tends to be at crisis point. If you want deprivation of liberty guidance or to access the learning disability services team, you are only going to get those if things have gone really wrong or someone is an extreme case. A more proactive offer would prevent those things from getting to that stage and you’d be operating in a more comfortable and confident setting. I know it is such a big county with such a lot of need so I don’t know how realistic that is. As those services withdraw and have less and less to offer, more and more sits within your own remit”.

2. Connection with other Registered Managers (via networks and peer supervision/buddying)

In our sample, 53% of respondents said they connect with other Registered Managers and of those who currently do not connect with others, 53% said they would like to if possible. Many highlighted the importance of connection as it allows the sharing of good practice and ideas and allows issues to be seen from a different perspective.

“Sharing stresses and knowledge, seeing things from different perspective, support network”.

“Networking and sharing of ideas when meeting others would provide me with a fresh approach which I can share with my teams”.

“Share the pain. Share the positives. Collective voice”.

¹⁹ [Barchester Healthcare - employee wellbeing in care homes | Local Government Association](#)
²⁰ [Home - Independent Care Group](#)

Registered Manager networks can provide a safe space for people to share their concerns and to receive peer support and understanding. Respondents who have attended these type of networks in the past said it has helped them realise that all Registered Managers are in the same boat, facing similar issues and challenges.

“Attending CCG forum meetings and the care connected NYCC meetings has been a great support. Getting information directly and networking with other care home managers has been invaluable throughout the last two years, I hope that these networks/ forums continue”.

“Great at helping to understand that I am not alone in how I am feeling. Someone to talk to who understands exactly what each other is going through”.

“I used to Chair the Skills for Care Registered Managers Network Group in another area. It served as a bit of a therapy session, it was a safe space, confidential and managers could share how they are really feeling and get practical advice and support from others. It’s also really useful for keeping up to date with ever changing guidance and space to discuss it, get other people’s perspective on it”.

As these networks can provide valuable support for Registered Managers they must be available across all areas of North Yorkshire. A few respondents said a network for Scarborough and one for the Hambleton and Richmondshire area would be useful.

“I attended one Registered Managers network via Skills for Care, but the nearest one was Hull. And then I believe the person left, and I haven’t heard anything again about this. One is needed in Scarborough”.

Others said the networks need to be more than just online webinars as these types of webinars often do not offer enough support, there needs to be something more regular and interactive that takes place that is worth Registered Managers taking the time out to attend. The need for network sessions to be structured and focussed was also mentioned. It was suggested a poll could be sent round before the network meeting to ask people what they would like the session to focus on. Having networks that also include other stakeholders from the sector was another suggestion.

“For me, it’s more perhaps the creation of a better support network. We meet on webinars for a brief period and then go back to the isolation of our own care services with little in between”.

“I think if Registered Managers are coming together it... ..needs to be really well structured, purposeful and with clear intent because everyone has so many issues going on really it is just whoever speaks loudest dominates the content and then the time is gone”.

“I think a group not just for Registered Managers but also bringing in some other stakeholders such as county partners, someone from the ICG (Independent Care Group), links that we use as Registered Managers so you can understand their ways of working and obstacles”.

As well as Registered Manager networks, respondents also said peer supervision or buddying with other Registered Managers within their locality would be beneficial. Registered Managers are expected to supervise their staff, but there is not always someone available to supervise the Registered Manager. While this type of supervision may be more readily on offer for larger organisations, for smaller services, it can be much more difficult. It would therefore be beneficial if a peer supervision or a buddying system could be put in place that is streamlined for specific need (e.g. a Registered Manager of a residential nursing home to be paired up with another Registered Manager who delivers the same type of care) and matches new Registered Managers with more experienced managers. Respondents also said they would prefer to buddy with someone outside of their organisation who could bring in a different, objective perspective.

Research supports peer supervision and buddying up within statutory and clinical services, but this is not common among adult social care services. A recent study evaluated the effectiveness of peer-group clinical supervision for nurses (a form of clinical supervision whereby two or more practitioners engage in a supervision or consultation process to improve their professional practice). They found the supervision led to a reduction in stress and helped with problem-solving, managing change and prioritisation. Considering the positive effects of this type of support within clinical settings, it may be useful to adopt this approach with Registered Managers who work in adult social care settings.

“As a new manager working in the community it would be so useful to get some support from people who have been doing it a lot longer than me. There is so much you are just expected to know. Being a Registered Manager of a home you have your owner who is putting pressure on you for one thing or another and your staff so you are in the middle so sometimes you can feel very isolated”.

“Somebody external that could be more objective [would be good]”.

“Registered Managers in a certain area getting together and having a chat or one to one [would be helpful]”.

3. Online forums to share issues and ideas

Some respondents said a central, online forum or group chat where Registered Managers can share ideas, problems and solutions would be useful. The literature supports this type of support, with one positive example being Balhousie Care Group in North East Scotland (which runs 26 care homes). They set up private chat groups for staff and private Facebook pages for relatives. This has been praised by many of the care homes they run and has aided communication among staff and relatives and provides a place to share problems and open up²¹. Respondents in our sample suggested there could be separate online forums for different types of care, such as one for Registered Managers of residential care and a different one for Registered Managers of supported living facilities.

“Feeling connected to other people in similar roles, all with the same obstacles and challenges. Our WhatsApp group is really supportive we can ask each other anything, there is always someone to help. Sharing stories, tips and helping each other especially with difficult parts of the job”.

Whilst online forums for Registered Managers across North Yorkshire would be welcomed by some respondents, there were also concerns from other respondents around the extra time pressures and responsibility being part of a group like this would bring. Others instead suggested it would be more beneficial if there was some sort of forum where Registered Managers could simply offload all of their stresses and worries. This forum would not be a place to resolve other people’s problems but simply a safe space where Registered Managers could express the issues they are facing so they could see they are not alone in their struggles. Some respondents said they do not want to bring their staff team down with their worries or concerns so an online forum could offer a quick and simple platform to do this.

“I can see the logic of why WhatsApp groups could work but I’d be scared to join a group like that because of the time demands and the thought of having another forum you’re trying to respond to or be supportive in.

It would be great if there was a forum where you could have a brain dump of all the stuff that has been really hard, just having a place to say that. I think with the nature of the job you would just end up trying to problem solve, so if it was a forum that was more about an offload than a resolution [that would be helpful]. Comradery in the pain of it all!”.

²¹ [Care home staff say psychological distress from Covid pandemic was like facing ‘war’](#)

4. More recognition, more clearly defined career pathways and better pay

One of the main challenges highlighted by respondents was that the sector is undervalued, underfunded and is currently experiencing a recruitment crisis. More support for Registered Managers and for social care staff more broadly is needed in the form of better recognition and appreciation for the work they do and better pay. This in turn will help with recruiting and retaining new staff, improve the quality of care of residents and the well-being of Registered Managers.

The CQC has echoed this need, stating that if extra funding for social care is to have any impact, there must be a sharp focus on developing a clearly defined career pathway for social care staff. This must be linked to training and supported by consistent investment, higher overall levels of pay to increase the competitiveness of the market. There must also be good terms and conditions to ensure employers can attract and retain the right people²².

“If you want the quality of delivery and to meet the expectations and standards it’s not just about being above the minimum wage it’s about it being a vocation of choice that’s valued by society”.

“It is time health and social care are treated as true equals, training opportunities for all with better funding available to support professional development”.

Succession planning and delegation of tasks can relieve some of the pressure on Registered Managers. One Registered Manager said they have various ‘champions’ within their team, such as a dignity champion, a falls champion, and a nutritional champion. It empowers staff and frees up some time for the Registered Manager.

Despite succession planning and delegation being good in theory, some respondents said the fundamental issues of recruitment and retention need to be addressed first. Several Registered Managers said they would like other staff members to take on more responsibility. Unfortunately, due to current pressures and demands, many people are not willing to take on more responsibility. One Registered Manager said they are continually having to agree to staff requests for a reduction in hours just so they retain enough staff to function.

“A lot of the people I would rely on [to potentially take on more responsibility] are people who have been around a long time and are committed to the sector but are closer to retirement age than taking on more responsibility. But the next wave of people [who could take on more responsibility] are a tier or two behind that [in terms of experience]”.

²² [CQC joins call for care staff pay boost to prevent ‘tsunami of unmet need’ - Community Care](#)

“Succession planning is a great management theory model but in my last job the two who were coming up [to take on more responsibility] were off sick and left because they couldn’t cope with the pressures and expectation of the role so they went and did something else where they could be at home on weekends. It’s great in theory but how do you do that?”.

5. More support from providers and owners

In our sample, 75% of respondents said their relationship with the owner of their organisation was good or very good. Those who do not connect regularly with their provider or owner said it would be helpful if they were more present and provided a more personal approach. They also said providers or owners could be more understanding of the pressures they are under and of the day to day running of the home.

Previous research has found that Registered Managers who have support, trust and backing from their provider or owner are more confident, resilient and better able to support a positive culture of practice and the benefits cascade to their staff who also feel more confident²³. This suggests more should be done to help facilitate this connection between Registered Managers and their provider or owner.

“He [the owner] could be more visible. As the company expands he is getting further away from his regular visits”.

“There has been no introduction for me with the owner of the organisation despite being described as a ‘family owned’ establishment”.

“Them [the owners] being more involved and taking an interest in the running of the care home. Having 1:1s to discuss how things are and taking an interest in our residents”.

“I think they [the owners] should reach out to me and say hello, ask me how I’m settling into the home. They have difficulties with retention of staff in these really key roles and I think it could create a sense of belonging”.

Conclusion

The feedback we have received highlights that many Registered Managers enjoy their job and enjoy working within this sector. However, there are many challenges and pressures they are currently facing which is impacting not only on the quality of care they can deliver but is also having a negative effect on their own mental health and well-being. This highlights the vital need for further training and support to be given to Registered Managers to help tackle these challenges.

Thank you to everyone who worked with us on this project, responded to our survey or attended one of our focus groups and contributed feedback. Your voices help inform and shape social care services in North Yorkshire. The more feedback we receive the greater chance we have in influencing change – so thank you for sharing your experiences with us.

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