

Registered manager

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Name: Melissa Morgan

Job title: Domiciliary Care Manager

Melissa attends the Shropshire network. Her service provides home care, live-in care and other care provisions to those in the Shrewsbury area.

Here she shares her experiences as a registered manager, getting support to help develop her career.

Melissa, tell us a bit about yourself...

I've been working in care all of my professional career. When I was fresh out of college, I worked alongside a district nurse. I just kept asking questions and she was brilliant, she understood that I'm very literal - whenever I read something, I try to put it into place straight away, but I also enjoy challenging that black-and-white approach. I took all the knowledge she passed on to me, and worked my way up quite quickly to become a registered manager when I was around 22.

People were unsure about me, but I put in the hard work and built on practical experience. As a result, I was invited to first become the company trainer, then a deputy manager, and then a registered manager. To be honest, that was like being thrown in the deep end. I was introduced to a branch that was running at a Requires Improvement level, and a CQC inspector arrived about three months after I started. We were given Good in all five areas though, so that says something!

It's quite a strange situation to be in, when you want to shape your own career. That's where the networks can help. You benefit from being out and about, learning from other people.



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

Well, I only learned about networking properly in the last 18 months. In some of my previous roles, we weren't encouraged to leave the office or seek out training for ourselves - it's quite a strange situation to be in, when you want to shape your own career. That's where the networks can help. You benefit from being out and about, learning from other people.

But many people find themselves hindered in that respect, as organisations aren't keen on investing in individuals that might, then, take that insight on to another job. In fact, I was always told I shouldn't speak to other managers because they were competitors - and I imagine this will resonate with a lot of people. I attend when I can. I'm determined to bring something to the table every time, I think it's as important to put something in as it is to take something out.

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

What I've learned since, is that - yes - there's an element of being sensible about these things, but it's so important to the people we support, that we really do need to work together more. At meetings, I'm happy to talk about things that might have not quite worked, because what we're actually doing is talking about lessons learned. You don't need to put all your cards on the table to still be helpful. Plus, it helps to build up that confidence in relationships, and project the reality that we're all here for the right reasons. 'I'm here to learn from you', that's how I see the meetings.

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

Yes, I can give you a good example, but it's something I've shared rather than something I've learned. People have said to me - many, many times - that they're worried about investing in training. It really is something that worries registered managers a lot. How do you encourage the team that's working for you, perhaps even pay for their qualifications, without running the risk that you're training someone else's employees? Well, I've found an answer. I've been more than happy to share it, too.

At the meeting, I explained that funding is often available for training. Like other registered managers, I wanted to support my team, and help them to get to where they need to be. I've built up connections with the colleges, and asked them how they could help.

When I explained this to the meeting, you could almost feel people's toes curling, but then we talked about it - that's the beauty of these meetings. You can raise a query or ask something that sounds off the wall, but then you're in a really safe place to knock it backwards and forwards and find out more. It's much more practical than attending a training call, because we're all talking about real-world situations. I explained, my approach to training meant I could invest time in my staff, while another organisation took on the risk of investing money. It's win-win.

I know from experience that registered managers can feel isolated. You can spend a lot of time in an office by yourself, with nobody to share ideas with. Previously, I was working alongside a director who was totally focused on the commercial side of things, and it was very hard to explain the operational perspective. The facts were important, and we needed to focus on how we were making money, but it wasn't easy to balance that against sharing thoughts about changing the way we offered care. When you've got something as fundamental as that, which you'd like to talk through, sometimes you just want to vent with someone who understands exactly what you're talking about.

And, it must be said, it's also quite nice to just get out and have a nice cup of tea and a cake with people who are in similar situations to you.

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

Be open minded. Just go, be relaxed. You're not going to be shut down by anyone, you're simply going to meet people who understand your perspective. The other thing I'd say is, don't be afraid to speak up. I've always seen it as a safe space.

Local networks for registered managers and deputy managers

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

