

Social work


Children's Workforce
Development Council



Meeting the challenge of change

Handbook for the peer support pilot programme

Foreword



Social work is changing. As managers with a key role in how your organisation delivers social services for children and families, you are right at the heart of this. You will want to respond in dynamic and creative ways to the challenges of a changing world.

The recent report from the Social Work Task Force emphasised the key role employers have in providing leadership and direction for social work locally. The Children's Workforce Development Council has developed its peer support pilot programme to help you. With input from local authorities in the East of England, we have created a 12 month programme that will help you work with peers from other organisations to find new ways to tackle the current challenges of recruitment, retention and remodelling in social work and to respond to national policy developments.

We are delighted that up to 300 managers from 80 local authorities and 13 third sector organisations are taking part in this pilot programme. Over the next year, we want you to benefit from time and space to work through complex challenges with your peers, to grow your confidence and skills in managing change, and to share ideas and solutions between organisations, so that workforce reform becomes increasingly evidence-based. We have deliberately developed a programme with the flexibility to respond to the needs that are most pressing for you. We hope you will take the fullest advantage of this and look forward to sharing your learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Brumfitt". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'K' and a distinctive flourish at the end.

Keith Brumfitt
Director of strategy

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Introduction

This handbook sets out the aims and objectives of the Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC) peer support pilot programme and the approach on which it is based; outlines the task for those taking on a peer support role; and explains how participation in networking events led by your peers will support you in your own role in shaping how your organisation delivers social work for children and families.

At CWDC, our role is to make sure those working with children and young people receive the best possible training and support.

The *2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy* (HM Government, 2008) set a vision for a children's workforce that is ambitious for every child and young person; excellent in its practice; committed to partnership and integrated working; and respected and valued as professionals. The Strategy emphasises the important role of leaders and managers in taking forward workforce reform to achieve this vision. The report from the Social Work Task Force, *Building a safe, confident future* (November 2009), which has been accepted by Government, carries a strong message about the key role of employers in considering how resources can be re-allocated to make a difference on the front line and the need to build on what has already been learnt in piloting formal and informal remodelling of social work services.

At CWDC, our role is to make sure those working with children and young people receive the best possible training and support. We have developed this peer support programme for middle managers to help you and your employers respond to challenges facing the social work workforce and changes in the way social work is delivered in the context of integrated children's services. It will help organisations to:

- Make sure their approach to workforce reform within social work is evidence-based by learning from successful practice in other organisations.
- Benefit from independent challenge to their current practice.
- Pool ideas and resources to respond to national policy developments affecting social workers.

For managers in roles with a key contribution to shaping how their organisation delivers social work for children and families it will give:

- Time set aside to explore complex issues.
- Fresh perspectives on challenges.
- Support from peers in investigating and creating solutions.
- Increased confidence and skills in managing workforce change.

Those taking part in the programme are likely to be working as heads of service, area managers, assistant directors, or in equivalent roles in a local authority or third sector organisation. Although they may not have a social work background, their role will mean they have responsibility for making sure the right systems, structures and support are in place to help social workers in their organisation do the best possible job.

Participants commit to preparing for, attending and reflecting on all three networking events during the year. Peer supporters will also be asked to attend two days' training early in 2010 and will facilitate networking events, ensuring they are focused on locally-identified issues. They will be supported by CWDC's delivery and support contractor. Everyone involved will contribute to the evaluation of the pilot programme.

Employers will receive funding from CWDC to support each manager selected to participate in the programme.

Employers will receive funding from CWDC to support each manager selected to participate in the programme. We will provide additional funding to support those who train as peer supporters. CWDC funds the networking and training events.

The programme is based around a series of networking events, facilitated by peer supporters. Over 12 months from January 2010, small groups of peers will come together three times, to work through the challenges that are most relevant to them. One in five will be given training as a peer supporter and will facilitate these events. CWDC's delivery and support contractor will organise the events, develop supporting materials and help ensure activity continues between the events. They will also share learning between different parts of the country. Wherever possible, we want to link with existing regional networks for middle managers.

We have worked with local authorities in the East of England to develop and test this peer support approach¹. Their work has begun to help them find new ways to respond to national policy developments around safeguarding decision-making and to move from planning to action. The work undertaken by this group of managers has helped shape the programme we are delivering nationally.

¹As we have developed the peer support pilot programme, we have shared our thinking with the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, IDE&A and the Social Care Institute for Excellence. We want this programme to complement other support available for middle managers in children's services.

The key features of the programme are explained in this handbook.

They are:

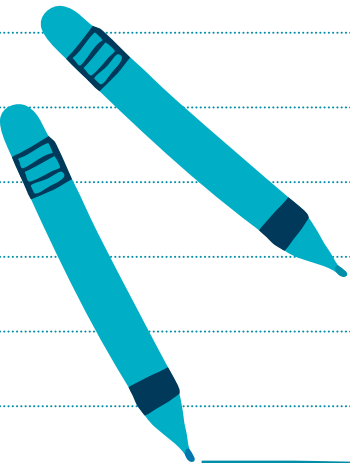
- An approach to peer support focused on managing change and transition.
- Planning and development days to enable one in five participants to act as peer supporters.
- Three network events over the course of 12 months, organised according to demand, on a regional or sub-regional basis, and facilitated by peer supporters.
- Flexibility to ensure that focus of the networking events is shaped by local priorities.
- A delivery and support contractor appointed by CWDC to manage all practical arrangements for the networking events.
- Resources for participants to stimulate discussion and develop change management skills.
- Access to online networking facilities.
- Learning shared between and across regions.
- Funding to support the cost of managers' participation.
- An independent evaluation.

Please contact us on 0113 290 4141 or email peersupport@cwdcouncil.org.uk if you have any questions.



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Our approach to peer support

CWDC's peer support programme has been specifically designed to help individuals in middle management roles respond to and lead change.

This peer support programme aims to provide managers with space, tools, resources and the support of colleagues to tackle the challenges they face.

It recognises that many of the actions signalled in recent national policy documents on the children's workforce and social work will be driven forward at local level, through Children and Young People's Plans and their underpinning workforce strategies, and that activity needs to take account of wider strategic arrangements and processes for achieving local ambitions.

Challenges around ensuring staff are well-supervised and supported, have manageable caseloads and opportunities to progress are common across organisations that employ social workers, and they are developing their own approaches to addressing them.

Many organisations are engaged in reshaping their social work teams, developing new roles to support social work or enhancing the support and development opportunities they offer social work staff. This is happening in a context of greater integration of children's services, where social workers are likely to be part of multi-disciplinary teams and where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.



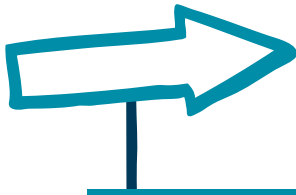
As a middle manager you have a key role in devising and implementing change in how social work with children and families is delivered in your organisation, and in supporting the workforce to meet the challenges this presents. As well as understanding and managing the changing role of social workers, your role is likely to require you to:

- Lead integrated teams and services through complexity.
- Promote a vision and drive transformational change.
- Play a corporate role.
- Manage tensions of collaboration, integration and partnership.
- Deliver high performance and high quality outcomes.

CWDC's peer support programme

This peer support programme aims to provide managers with space, tools, resources and the support of colleagues to tackle the challenges they face. It recognises that reflecting on issues and actions helps people learn and that sharing your experiences with peers can deepen your understanding of challenges and generate innovative responses to them. It will help you to apply theories that can help with leading and managing change. As a group of peers, you will have the opportunity to focus on complex issues that are part of your day-to-day reality, where solutions may be more effectively created through shared learning and experience. Participating in a peer network will give you space for individual learning and a chance to explore how you can transfer this to your own organisational networks.

A key outcome of this should be that successful practice is shared between organisations, resulting in more evidence-based approaches to workforce reform.



Managing organisational or workforce change

Transitions, particularly those that take place in organisations facing traumatic events, are difficult to manage. During transitions, previously established structures or sets of structures are changed or left behind, new forms of structure may emerge, and the relationship of structures within the whole system is altered.

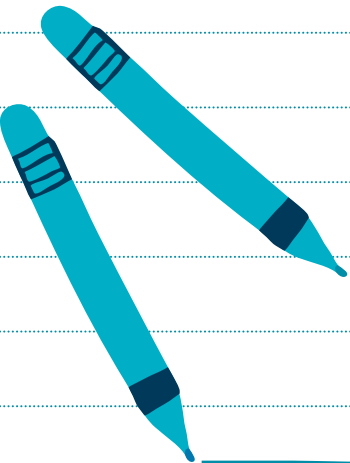
Organisational transition can be conceptualised as operating in two interlinked domains: the social and the psychological. The social system includes status, roles, relationships, authority, collaboration and competition, group norms, conformity, social conflict, and culture. The psychological domain contains motivation, learning, perception, behaviour, thoughts, feelings, needs, anxiety. Working at change requires effort in both of these domains.

Managers can enable the transition process to take place at both the psychological and social levels by:

- **Practising a collaborative management style.** A collaborative management style recognises that each manager has a role to play in systemic change and at the same time shares responsibility for the management of transition as far as possible down the line.
- **Providing a 'holding environment'.** During periods of transition, all kinds of new ideas will emerge. Some of these will be realistic and full of potential; others may be unrealistic and illusionary. At the same time insecurity and conflicts may arise because a transitional state is naturally instable. All these 'negatives' have to be managed so that they are contained within the organisation and allowed to resolve themselves without unduly damaging it. This requires 'elbow room' for people to express themselves. They need to feel they will not be rejected while these different feelings are processed.
- **Tolerating uncertainty.** During the change process uncertainty needs to be tolerated. When things are uncertain, people often want a quick solution. This may close down thinking and prevent the creation of more robust plans.

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Guidance for participants

Eligibility

As a participant in this programme, you will be a middle to senior manager whose role gives you responsibility for influencing the way your organisation delivers social work for children and families. You play a key part in making sure the right systems, structures and support are in place to help social workers in your organisation do the best possible job – and in leading workforce change. You may have specific responsibilities around performance improvement, quality assurance, workforce development or strategic planning. Within a Children's Trust you are likely to be a head of service, area manager or assistant director, or in an equivalent role. If you work for a third sector organisation, you hold a position of equivalent seniority. In your leadership role, your responsibilities may cover social workers in any of the different roles and settings they work in. The people you manage may lead discrete social work teams or integrated teams that include social workers.

Each networking event will focus on issues identified by the group and your contribution will be key to making sure, the events are useful and productive.

Expectations of participants

As a participant on this programme you commit to preparing for, attending and reflecting on three regional or sub-regional network events during the year. Because this programme is about building solutions with peers over a period of time, participants who do not attend the first networking event, which will take place before the end of March 2010, will not be able to continue on the programme. For the same reason, it is not possible for employers to substitute participants during the programme, other than in exceptional circumstances, or for you to send someone else on your behalf. If circumstances arise that make it difficult for you to participate in the programme, you should speak to CWDC or its support and delivery contractor.

Each networking event will focus on issues identified by the group and your contribution will be key to making sure, the events are useful and productive. You can ensure this by coming prepared to shape the agenda, contribute your own organisation's experiences and learning, constructively challenge peers and explore new ways of working that will help deliver change.

Between each networking event you will need to reflect on the issues and challenges raised. You may also want to explore resources that have been identified through the event. Depending upon local arrangements and capacity this may involve informal networking within the peer group. You will also be given access to online networking facilities.

At the first event, you will be given some resources around organisational learning and problems that can be encountered when attempting to make change. These are intended to stimulate discussion and ideas. If you wish to read these prior to the event they will be available online in February; we will send you details of how to access them.

If you have agreed to act as a peer supporter, you also commit to attending a two-day training and development opportunity and to helping to shape and facilitate the network events. More detail is given in the section on peer supporters in this handbook.

Neither peer supporters or participants are expected to take on any practical arrangements for the networking events, which will be set up by CWDC's delivery and support contractor. They will contact you directly with information about dates and venues. A draft agenda for the first event will be put together by those acting as peer supporters in your region.

Support for participants

To help you make time to prepare for, attend and reflect on the network events, CWDC provides funding to your employer. Additional funding is provided for managers to agree to act as peer supporters. Details of funding arrangements are given in this handbook.

Evaluation

This programme will be evaluated by an external evaluator, and by participating in the programme you agree to contribute to the evaluation. This might mean participating in networking events that are observed, responding individually to questionnaires or being interviewed about your experience. CWDC will hold a national conference at the end of the programme to share learning and good practice across the country.

At the third and final networking event participants will consider how the network might be taken forward and how the peer support approach can be used in the future. Future plans may vary according to local need and capacity.

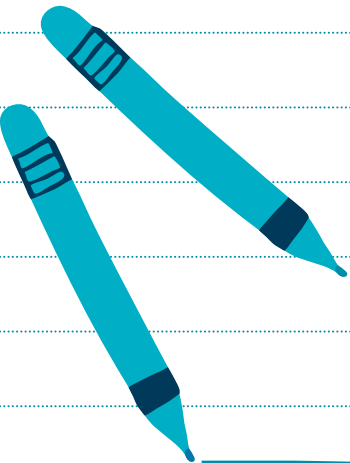
Programme timeline

Training and development for peer supporters	28-29 January 2010 11-12 February 2010 24-25 February 2010	Managers who have agreed to act as peer supporters will be contacted by CWDC's delivery and support contractor with details of the event they will attend.
First regional or sub-regional networking event	By the end of March 2010	CWDC's delivery and support contractor will contact participants with details of their event.
Informal networking	April 2010 onwards, between networking events	The nature of informal networking will depend on what is agreed by participants at the first networking event. You will have access to online networking facilities.
Second regional or sub-regional networking event	May-June 2010	CWDC's delivery and support contractor will contact participants with details of their event.
Third regional or sub-regional networking event	September-October 2010	CWDC's delivery and support contractor will contact participants with details of their event.
Evaluation activity	March 2010-February 2011	All participants will contribute to the evaluation of the programme.



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Networking events

It can be difficult for people in demanding middle to senior management roles to take time out to consider the national policy landscape, to investigate what approaches are being used by other organisations to tackle similar challenges or to get a fresh perspective on a difficult issue. Recognising this, the networking events provided through CWDC's peer support programme are designed to offer a dedicated space to find new ways, with colleagues in similar roles, to tackle issues of recruitment, retention and remodelling in social work and to respond to national policy developments.

Every participant on the programme will take part in three networking events during the year.

The events will not be 'talking shops' but, by using the skills of trained peer supporters and an approach based on managing transition, will help turn ideas into practical solutions. There will be no ready-made answers, but we believe that bringing peers together and focusing on issues that reflect participants' priorities can be a powerful catalyst for dynamic and creative responses to challenges.

Every participant on the programme will take part in three networking events during the year.

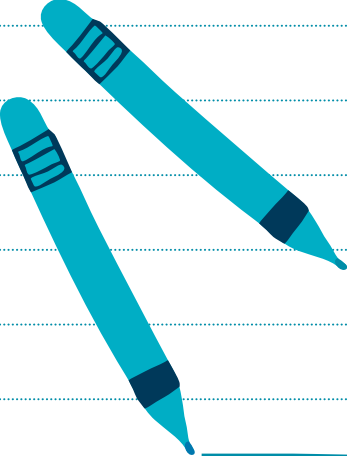
These will be organised regionally or sub-regionally, and linked with existing networks of middle managers wherever possible. Each event will have a maximum of 25 participants. Those managers who act as peer supporters will help facilitate the events; there will be up to five peer supporters for each event. The focus of the networking events will be determined by participants to ensure that it is shaped by local priorities. The first event will provide an opportunity to set the future agenda for the group.

During the networking events held in the East of England as part of helping us develop this programme, participants have used theory around defensive and supportive climates to explore ways of creating a culture where all team members value each others' contributions; they have considered the implications of Lord Laming's report on progress in safeguarding; and they have used personal construct theory and solution-focused approaches to find ways of turning intention into action.

The practical arrangements for all networking events will be taken care of by CWDC's support and delivery contractor. They will contact you with dates and venue details for your events.

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The role of the peer supporter

We believe that building a community of middle to senior managers who can support peers to find solutions to challenges and lead reform will enhance organisations' capacity to deliver change and sustain improvements in social work. So we are providing training and support for around 60 managers to act as peer supporters. If you have agreed to act as a peer supporter, you will help shape and facilitate the three networking events held in your region across the year. You will support colleagues in understanding and reflecting on the implications of implementing change in the way social work is delivered.

Early in 2010, you will take part in two days of training and development provided by CWDC through its delivery and support contractor to increase your effectiveness as a peer supporter. Your organisation will receive funding to support the cost of your attendance and the training is provided free of charge. CWDC's delivery and support contractor will contact you with details of the training and development event.

The peer supporter training will:

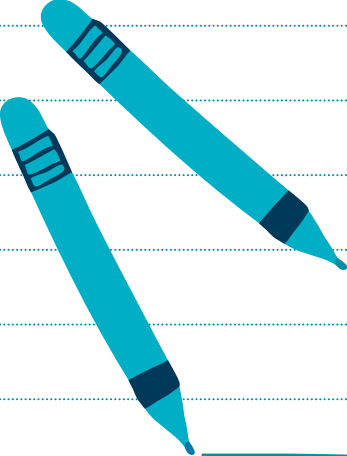
- Focus on developing an understanding of the dynamics of building the peer support relationship and of peer support styles.
- Enable you to extend your skills in listening, questioning, reflecting, and giving feedback.
- Explore the contribution peer support can make specifically to leading and managing change in social work.
- Provide resources on leading change, facilitation, peer support and mentoring.
- Set aside time to begin to plan the structure and agenda of the networking events.

Peer supporters will have a crucial role in developing the agenda for the network events, and in making sure each event is useful in sharing challenge and good practice issues that are high on the priority list of those taking part.

You will support colleagues in understanding and reflecting on the implications of implementing change in the way social work is delivered.

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Funding arrangements

This section outlines the funding arrangements and the payment schedules for the peer support pilot programme. It sets out what employers and CWDC need to do to enable payments to be released, explains how funding allocations are calculated and gives timings.

Purpose of funding	Funding allocated to employers
To support managers on this programme in committing time to preparing for, attending, including travel costs, and reflecting on three regional networking events during the year	£2,100 per manager
Additional funding to support and enable managers who will act as peer supporters to attend a two-day training and development event	£1,400 per manager

Timetable for payments

Date	Action
December 2009	CWDC's delivery and support contractor identifies participating managers and peer supporters
December 2009-January 2010	CWDC issues employers with contracts
January 2010	Employers sign and return both copies of the contract to CWDC. CWDC notifies amount to be invoiced for first payment
January-February 2010 Payment point one	Employers invoice CWDC for the amount agreed. Invoices must be received by 26 February 2010. CWDC releases funding to employers
April 2010	CWDC re-confirms participant numbers with employers following first networking event and notifies balance to be invoiced
May-July 2010 Payment point two	Employers invoice CWDC for the amount agreed. Invoices must be received by 30 July 2010. CWDC releases funding to employers

Please send both copies of your contract and your invoices, to the timetable above, to:
Peer support programme, Social Work Team, Children's Workforce Development Council
2nd Floor, City Exchange, 11 Albion Street, Leeds LS1 5ES.

Failure to meet programme requirements

To get the most from the peer support programme, we ask that participants attend all three networking events over the year. If a participant fails to attend the first networking event their employer will be unable to claim funding for the remaining two events. Only in exceptional circumstances can participants be replaced by a substitute. Funding retrieval may be implemented for any employer who does not meet all milestones set out in the contract.

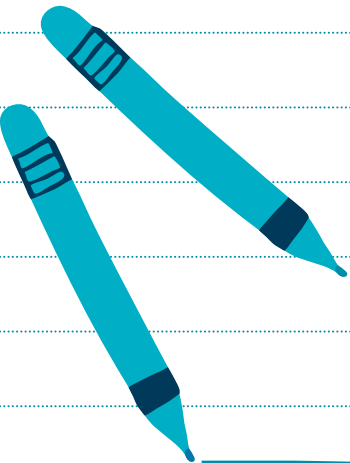


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The Children's Workforce Development Council leads change so that the thousands of people and volunteers working with children and young people across England are able to do the best job they possibly can.

We want England's children and young people's workforce to be respected by peers and valued for the positive difference it makes to children, young people and their families.

We advise and work in partnership with lots of different organisations and people who want the lives of all children and young people to be healthy, happy and fulfilling.

For more information please call **0113 244 6311**
or visit www.cwdcouncil.org.uk

Or write to CWDC, 2nd Floor, City Exchange
11 Albion Street, Leeds LS1 5ES
email info@cwdcouncil.org.uk
or fax us on 0113 390 7744

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