

**Recipient of the  
Workforce Development  
Innovation Fund 2016/17**



## **Suffolk Brokerage**

# **Wellbeing project for social care managers**

For managers working in social care, finding a healthy work/life balance can often feel like an impossible task. But when managers neglect to take care of their own wellbeing, it impacts the whole organisation, often creating a stressful and high-pressurised culture. In addition, organisations that fail to promote wellbeing often face difficulties in retention.

In this project, The Suffolk Brokerage wanted to develop a programme to help social care managers develop strategies to promote their own wellbeing and equip them with the knowledge to help the wider workforce achieve a good work/life balance.

### **Introduction**

Established in 2006, The Suffolk Brokerage is a non-profit making organisation, dedicated to raising care standards in Suffolk. The organisation provides impartial advice, guidance and information to support the county's health and social care sector.

With a small dedicated team, The Suffolk Brokerage works closely with the sector, to support and develop managers and staff, helping them provide high-quality care.

Through its work with managers and social care staff, The Suffolk Brokerage has learnt that both managers and staff are feeling increasingly stressed within the workplace. Managers often feel isolated and over-burdened, with a poor work/life balance. Meanwhile, care staff report feeling unsupported with a work/life balance that is unsustainable.

These issues have a direct effect on the wellbeing of both managers and staff and also the consistency of care services within Suffolk.

### **What we wanted to achieve**

The Suffolk Brokerage wanted to develop a sustainable programme to help adult social care managers and aspiring managers understand wellbeing and resilience in the workplace.

By supporting them to develop new skills and techniques, managers would be better equipped to manage their own wellbeing and that of their staff. This in turn would lead to higher levels of staff satisfaction, a better work/life balance for everyone and a stronger workforce to support those receiving care.

The Suffolk Brokerage also wanted to create a programme where the managers would be confident in taking the learning forward, passing on the knowledge and benefits to other managers in the future.

### **What we did**

To increase the understanding of wellbeing and its relationship within the organisational culture, The Suffolk Brokerage developed a six-month programme, consisting of workshops, action

learning sets, one-to-one coaching sessions, and the sharing of good practice between managers.

The programme was promoted to all care providers in Suffolk and 30 providers expressed an interest in taking part. As only 10 places were available, these were offered on a first come, first served basis, resulting in a good mix of small and large organisations, with different types of care provision.

The monthly sessions were designed to help managers understand the factors that cause staff to leave the sector, while providing the skills for them to make positive changes within their own work settings.

During the six sessions, the managers explored a range of topics including stress and resilience, teambuilding, and overcoming difficulties. In addition, there were three one-to-one coaching sessions with a Coaching professional, for each manager, allowing them to contemplate their own resilience and wellbeing while learning the skills needed to coach other managers.

The participants also constructed a staff survey to measure wellbeing and learnt how to analyse the results. As part of the project, the survey was rolled out in all of the participants' workplaces and the results were analysed.

Experts involved in the project included a psychologist with extensive experience within the social care sector and a coaching professional.

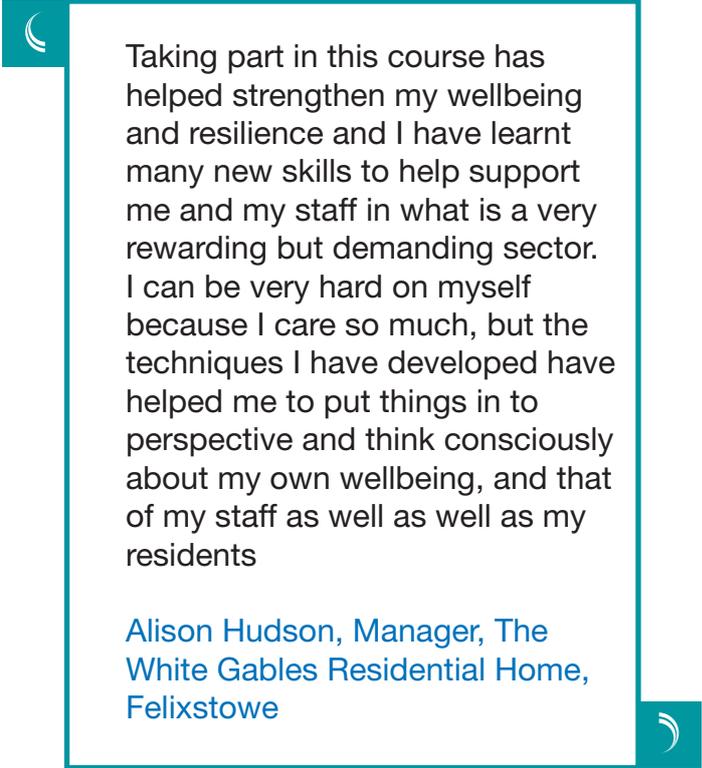
## What we achieved

The project fulfilled its aims and all sessions were delivered and evaluated as planned. The managers all reported learning new strategies at each session while resources developed included the staff survey to assess ongoing wellbeing.

All the managers said they will continue to use the survey as a way of measuring staff satisfaction within the workplace and ultimately improve staff retention.

The managers have gained new coaching skills to provide supervisions in a more individual way. They are also able to cascade this new way of working to other senior staff such as team leaders and others conducting supervisions.

The project participants reported increased resilience and less stress as a result of attending the programme. They now have more trust in their teams, less pressure on themselves, a better work/life balance and the confidence to delegate where appropriate, providing learning opportunities for staff to grow and develop.



Taking part in this course has helped strengthen my wellbeing and resilience and I have learnt many new skills to help support me and my staff in what is a very rewarding but demanding sector. I can be very hard on myself because I care so much, but the techniques I have developed have helped me to put things in to perspective and think consciously about my own wellbeing, and that of my staff as well as well as my residents

Alison Hudson, Manager, The White Gables Residential Home, Felixstowe

## What we learnt

For The Suffolk Brokerage, this project has confirmed the importance of programmes of this kind. It has given managers the skills and knowledge to make significant changes within their own settings, directly improving their own wellbeing, as well as that of their staff. In terms of retention, the programme has led to changes in culture and greater job satisfaction, resulting in a less transient workforce.

While interest in the project was strong, with 30 organisations applying for just 10 places, the final number of participants fell throughout the project from 10 to five. To overcome this in the future, the team recommends over-subscribing the course, as some participants are always

likely to drop out due to other commitments. However, it would be important to ensure the course could still be delivered to the same quality if a larger number remained.

To avoid a high drop-out rate in the future, The Suffolk Brokerage would also look at offering two 'taster' sessions to assess commitment from the participants.

The Suffolk Brokerage plans to build on this project to provide a sustainable programme to offer to other managers across larger parts of the sector.

## For more information please visit:

[www.suffolkbrokerage.co.uk](http://www.suffolkbrokerage.co.uk)

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## Skills for Care recommends

Skills for Care produces a wide range of products and services related to the wellbeing of your staff.

### Resilience

Building the resilience of your staff will help them cope better under pressure and protect them from mental and physical ill health.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/resilience](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/resilience)

### People performance management toolkit

This toolkit can help you manage the performance of people in your team.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ppmt](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ppmt)

### Managing people

We have a variety of resources to help registered managers get the best out of their staff.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/managementtools](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/managementtools)

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