How to support and motivate teams

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WORKING LIVES CAREER AND LIFESTYLE ADVICE QUALITY IN PRACTICE... the latest guidance on AWAYDAYS

Margaret Egrot believes an "away day" can build team morale and give a clear focus for team and individual work.

Managers should: 1 Plan the programme
Decide what you want to focus on and what is achievable in a day. Wide ranging discussions about everything that is wrong in social care will get you nowhere. Concentrate on a few key initiatives and decisions needed for the coming year, and structure the programme around these. An external facilitator is not usually necessary, but if you decide to use one make sure they know, and provide, exactly what you ask for.

2 Prepare in advance
Choose and book the venue and arrange the refreshments. Check if the venue will provide flipcharts etc or will you need to provide your own? What about photocopying? Ensure you have budgeted for everything and are not left with unexpected extra charges on the day. Have you organised cover for duties and emergencies back at the office?

3 PowerPoint
Don't overdo this. You want people to contribute, not just sit back. You need to build in plenty of discussion or activity time. Allow time for social interaction too — many good ideas can come up over lunch or during a coffee break.

4 Personnel
Who is coming? Administrative staff play an important part in many social work teams and have a lot to contribute so the programme needs to be relevant to all the participants. Are there personality clashes within the team? Plan the seating and activities with these in mind. Establish ground-rules at the outset about allowing others to speak and respecting differences.

5 Pulling it all together
Don't over-run and miss out on formally summing up what has been achieved. Evaluate the day and write down actions to be carried out (and by whom) when you get back to the office. And for the rest of the year — don't allow yourself or team members to lose the momentum for improving practice that a well planned day will have built up.

6 PR — avoid calling it an away day
Call it a "study day" or "planning day". Away day might give the impression that the team is off on a jolly. Yes, you do want people to enjoy the event as well as work hard, but be mindful of how public money is seen to be spent. Quality in Practice brings you the latest guidance on social work practice from UK trainers and consultants. If you would like to contribute or suggest a topic to be covered, e-mail daniel.lombard@rbi.co.uk

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Margaret Egrot (pictured) is a freelance consultant and trainer. She has more than 20 years' experience in management in the public and voluntary sector.