How To Develop The People Management Skills Of Line Managers

Evidence from an evaluation of online learning interventions

Developing Line Manager Capability and Better
Organisational Practice In Managing:

- Agile and Secure Work / Values Based Recruitment
- Conflict / Creativity
- Getting the Best Out of Your Team

Professor Julia Rouse, Professor Carol Atkinson, Professor Ben Lupton, Dr Katie Willocks,
Sarah Acton, Dr Liz Rivers, Jennie Shorley, Dr Helen Woolnough

Manchester
Metropolitan
University

Executive Summary

We all know that the people management skills of line managers matter. How well you are line managed affects how much you enjoy your job and how well you do your job. Yet line managers are often neglected. They are under intense pressure to develop high performing teams and to support staff wellbeing yet they tend to receive little practical training in people management and are often isolated from their peers. This leads to a lack of confidence and strain. Managers also have ideas about how to manage people better but are constrained from influencing the organisations they manage within. Their role in developing productive teams and engaged, healthy workforces is too often neglected by their employers and wider society. So, there is a burgeoning need to understand how to develop the people management skills of line managers and how to create management contexts where line management can flourish.

The Good Employment Learning Lab (GELL) is led by researchers and HR professionals in the Centre for Decent Work and Productivity at Manchester Metropolitan University. We trialled short online interventions that aimed to develop the people management skills of line managers.

We have two Learning Labs:

• The Greater Manchester Good Employment Learning Lab is working with the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and local authorities to make sense of the challenge of raising people management skills in a particular place.

• The Adult Social Care Good Employment Learning Lab is working with Skills for Care, the NHS and local authorities to make sense of the challenge of raising people management skills in a particular sector.

Both Learning Labs are also supported by the CIPD, ACAS, the Federation of Small Businesses and the TUC. We are funded by the Economic and Social Research Council [grant ES/T014857/1].

See our short video and outputs and events here: www.mmu.ac.uk/research/research-centres/dwp/projects/good-employment-learning-lab

What We Did In The Learning Lab

In total we ran 34 masterclasses (involving 386 participants), 17 flash peer learning sets (involving 69 participants) and 78 skills coaching relationships (involving 81 participants). We delivered 506 learning interventions. These sought to raise line manager capability to address five management challenges identified as timely or important by our practice partners.

Developing People Management Skills In:	
Greater Manchester Lab	**Adult Social Care Lab**
Agile Working and Secure Work	Values Based Recruitment
Conflict Management	
Creativity	
Getting the Best Out of Your Team	

Evidence-based management: We built on evidence-based ways of thinking about and tackling these challenges, drawing on both research and better-practice resources.

Learning pillars: Our masterclasses, flash peer learning and skills coaching models drew on evidence-based management learning pillars so that managers select relevant knowledge to experiment with and, so, change management and organisational practices. We started with 5 learning pillars: gain knowledge, reflect, make sense, experiment and learn together. Our evaluation prompted us to add: access, psychological safety and accountability. GELL learning interventions were built on a Theory of Change which is a programme logic that considers how the context of learners will relate to the learning mechanisms in the programme to generate outcomes.

The GELL Framework for Developing the People Skills of Line Managers is a revised version of our programme theory that integrates our evaluation findings.

Our interventions were carefully designed to build on best research and practice evidence and to generate knowledge, cause reflection, enable managers to make sense of their management options and to experiment with new practices. They aimed to provoke development in management practice and spill over effects in teams and organisations to create good and productive work. We recruited managers from a range of backgrounds and in Greater Manchester and in the Adult Social Care sector organisations and with varying management experience. More women than men volunteered. Our realist evaluation sought to develop knowledge about 'what works, for whom and why' and so we explored how Context + Mechanism = Outcome. Our research includes 248 learning journeys

What's next for the Good Employment Learning Lab?
Our next steps are to:

• Develop a toolkit that will guide programme commissioners and delivery teams to use the GELL Framework to Develop the People Management Skills of Line Managers to review existing provision and design new programmes.

• Engage with our project partners and a wider range of stakeholders to discuss the implications of our research for the tricky problem of how to develop line management practice for better work and productivity. We will host events and meetings and are keen to talk to you so please get in touch!

• Stimulate debate with policy makers about how to embed and fund training for line managers and how this will promote good work and productivity.

• We will work across sectors and also conduct some focused engagement with the Adult Social Care sector.

• Publish research papers on our Learning Lab method and our evaluation findings.

Keep in touch with latest developments and get involved by:

Signing up to the GELL Network to hear all our news: www.mmu.ac.uk/research/research-centres/dwp/projects/good-employment-learning-lab/good-employment-learning-lab-network-sign

Getting in touch: goodemploymentlab@mmu.ac.uk

Learning more about the Good Employment Lab, watch our video and access our project outputs on our website: www.mmu.ac.uk/research/research-centres/dwp/projects/good-employment-learning-lab

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Context

The Person: The Particular Line Manager

Neglected – Likely to have little access to training or peer support, isolated, under-confident.

Facing significant & changing people management challenges.

Struggling to process and manage conflict, affecting ability to tackle several management challenges.

Busy and easily distracted from developing people management skills – needs flexible and timely learning events and communities of practice.

Hungry to learn & be validated (within our programme – majority women; this may be different for other compulsory or 'hard to reach' programmes).

Often willing to experiment or even take on a change project (in our cohort; this may vary).

The Line Manager Role

Neglected – People management is under-valued and development is under-resourced and under-incentivised.

Tenuous power to enact practice & organisational change.

The Organisation/Sector

Neglects the importance of line management and of people management skills as a productive resource.

Needs to give line managers power & resources to enact practice and organisational change via projects.

Psychologically safe, learning and experimenting organisations/sectors are more likely to absorb learning & innovation.

Values message are often out of synch with resources/strategy.

Society

Neglects the importance of the people skills of line managers as a resource & promotes operational busyness as a sign of productivity.

Mechanisms

8 Learning Pillars:

1. **Access**
2. **Psychological safety**
3. **Gain knowledge**
4. **Reflect**
5. **Make sense**
6. **Commit to experiment/experiment**
7. **Accountability**
8. **Learn together**

Short online & evidence-based learning interventions led by HR professionals:
- Masterclass
- Flash Peer Learning
- Skills Coaching.

Programme Design Principles:
- Learning events to garner manager attention & reduce isolation
- Masterclass as a foundation & gateway to coaching and peer learning
- Pacing to enable experimentation between learning events
- Promote experimentation as personal and organisational projects
- Target learning in contexts that enable manager development
- Extend programme design to shape context, reducing barriers to practice and organisational development and to enable innovation.

Outcomes

- **Experiment**
- **Improve manager practice**
- **Improve organisational practice**
- **Positive impact on staff**
- **Improvement to good and productive work**

Realist Design, Delivery and Evaluation

Design – Think about how Context+Mechanism=Outcome at programme design, using the GELL Framework and by developing (and stress testing) a Theory of Change.

Delivery – Remain sensitive to context and how Context+Mechanism=Outcomes during programme delivery, continually improving programmes by being aware of what enables or constrains experimentation and practice/organisational development. Observe how the programme can capitalise on contextual enablements and overcome contextual constraints.

Evaluation – Observe how learning works and what experimentation and practice/organisational development is occurring and record what causes this so you become aware of how Context+Mechanism=Outcomes in your programme setting. Revise your Theory of Change in light of your evaluation findings to inform future delivery and wider reflection on 'what works' to develop the people skills of line managers.

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1. Introduction to the Good Employment Learning Lab

1.1 What Is The Good Employment Learning Lab?

The Good Employment Learning Lab is led by a research and management learning team from the Decent Work and Productivity Research Centre at Manchester Metropolitan University. We are trialling short interventions that develop the people management skills of line managers to find out 'what works, for whom, and why?'. We want to know how line management development can create efficient teams and good work for staff and managers.

We are Engaged Scholars who follow Van de Ven's (2007) call for researchers to identify research problems and develop research and impact with stakeholders. That is why we are working in partnership with organisations that know about real life management challenges and who commission line management training. We have two Learning Labs:

• The Greater Manchester Good Employment Learning Lab is working with the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and local authorities to make sense of the challenge of raising people management skills in a particular place.

• The Adult Social Care Good Employment Learning Lab is working with Skills for Care, the NHS and local authorities to make sense of the challenge of raising people management skills in a particular sector.

Both Learning Labs are also supported by the CIPD, ACAS, the Federation of Small Businesses and the TUC. Our team includes Human Resource Management (HRM) professionals who are experienced in supporting busy line managers. Of paramount importance to us are the experiences of the hundreds of line managers who have taken part in our management training and evaluation. We have also spoken to some of their staff to find out how line manager training shapes work and working lives.

Our approach to designing and testing the effectiveness of line management training is innovative. We're drawing on partner knowledge about common management problems, evidence-based management and realist evaluation to design interventions based on a theory of change and to

identify 'what works, for whom and why' to develop line managers.

1.2 Why Was The Good Employment Learning Lab Formed? What Will It Achieve?

The spark for the Good Employment Learning Lab was a conversation:

Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter representative: "An organisation's people management policies are only as good as the line managers who use them. If we could develop line managers' people management skills, they would be more confident and effective in using policies and tackling all their everyday people management tasks."

Researcher: "Yes. But we don't know what would work. There is too little evidence about what training is realistic and effective for busy line managers."

We all know that the quality of people's working lives is highly dependent on how well they are supervised or managed. And the efficiency and quality of work produced by teams also depends on good line management. Some line managers love managing people and have lots of skills and experience. But many line managers are accidental people managers and find people management challenging. They would like more support to manage people effectively. We ask how to offer support that is realistic, accessible, practical and effective for particular line managers.

The Good Employment Learning Lab brings together a range of stakeholders to build evidence about how to develop line manager's people management skills via online short interventions. Our joint aim is to influence the type and scale of support available to line managers so that staff and managers can have good work and teams can operate creatively and efficiently. These aims ultimately address big societal challenges around the quality of people's working lives, skills shortages, service provision, innovation and productivity.

GELL is linked to a family of research projects all interested in these questions in the Propel Hub.

We hope to influence the type and scale of support offered to line managers in organisations, sectors, city regions and local authorities (including in small business leadership programmes), by professional and sector bodies, Good Employment Charters and by management educators in universities and beyond. We seek to put people management training for line managers 'on the map' of central, devolved and local policy making by showing how investment in short interventions that are well designed and targeted can support wider challenges such as productivity, innovation, entrepreneurship, levelling up and good work.

1.3 Why A Learning Lab?

As Engaged Scholars, we believe in devising and conducting research projects with stakeholders. Our Learning Lab method started with the spirit of Engaged Scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007) when we identified a shared problem around how to develop the people management skills of line managers. We then built an innovative method for designing and testing short interventions in line management training:

Evidence-based management: Our training tackles management challenges that our partners tell us are common for line managers at the moment. We build on evidence-based ways of thinking about and tackling these challenges, drawing on both research and reliable better-practice resources.

The management challenges our learning interventions have tackled: agile working and secure work; values-based recruitment; developing a creative team; managing conflict; getting the best out of your team.

Learning pillars – Our training was originally based on evidence-based management learning practices, pictured below.

Short interventions designed on a Theory of Change: We designed a masterclass, flash peer learning (three sessions) and coaching (three sessions) for each management challenge. These are founded on a Theory of Change. In other words, we started with a theory of how the design of these sessions would empower line managers to learn about, experiment with and consolidate better people management practices. We also designed in prompts for this to influence organisational practice, employee experience of work and good and productive work.

Realist evaluation – So that we could understand how learning varies according to the type of line manager and their context, we evaluated 'what works for whom and why?'.

1.4 Find Out What We've Learnt And Join The Conversation

We are sharing our learning through:

• Conversations with anyone who commissions or delivers people management skills development for line managers: please get in touch to join our network or to start a conversation goodemploymentlab@mmu.ac.uk

• A programme of events and a series of reports, summaries and other media (e.g. a toolkit) that will be posted on our website. Sign up to our GELL Network to keep receiving updates www.mmu.ac.uk/research/research-centres/dwp/projects/good-employment-learning-lab

• Our Resource Bank.

You can also hear us talk about our project in our video. Follow us:

The Good Employment Learning Lab

@EmploymentLab

Gain knowledge   Reflect   Experiment   Learning together   Make sense

This Report.

In this report, we outline our project and then present learning from online training to develop line manager practice in handling three sets of management challenges, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation of People Management Training Interventions In Three Management Challenges

Management Challenge	Developing People Management Skills In:		Learning Delivery Dates
	Greater Manchester Good Employment Learning Lab	Adult Social Care Good Employment Learning Lab	
1	Agile Working and Secure Work	Values Based Recruitment	March-August 2021
2	Conflict Management and Creativity		July-October 2021
3	Getting the Most Out of Your Team		Oct 2021-Feb 2022

Quickly finding your way around this report.

The most rapid way to learn from this report is to read our Executive Summary and our Conclusion and Summary chapter. These both outline the GELL Framework for the Development of the People Management Skills of Line Managers which builds on our original programme design and integrates our evaluation findings to offer our core recommendations for designing programmes. To hear more about how we designed and evaluated our training, see the early chapters. And to read in-depth about what we found out about 'what works, for whom and why', read the chapters on management challenges 1, 2 and 3 and our overall programmes outcome chapter.

We call this report a rapid evaluation because we are sharing findings from an initial analysis of our data so that we can make sense of the implications of our findings with partners. We will deepen our understanding of 'what works' by talking to stakeholders about our findings and seeing what helps them design and commission better line management development. We will write about some of this learning in research papers. **You can keep hearing about our progress over the coming months and years by signing up to the GELL Network**.

2.

The GELL Approach to Developing the People Management Skills of Line Managers

The GELL Approach to Developing the People Management Skills of Line Managers

We worked with partners in the Greater Manchester and Adult Social Care Good Employment Learning Labs to identify common people management challenges faced by line managers that would form the focus of short learning interventions (online masterclasses, peer learning and coaching). We designed, delivered and evaluated these in three waves (Table 1) using the principles of realist evaluation.

2.1 Designing Learning Interventions Using Realist Evaluation Principles

The Good Employment Learning Lab seeks to work with partners to design and test learning interventions to find out 'what works, for whom, and why' to develop the people management skills of line managers. We seek to use learning from our experiments to advise people who deliver or commission line management training about how to design and test people management training that is evidence-based and likely to work in context. And, to make some claims about 'what is likely to work' to develop better people management skills among particular line managers in other programmes. Crucially, we also consider how improving people management skills can shape good work for staff and team/organisational effectiveness or productivity and, indeed, how contexts may need to be developed so that line management practice can 'take' and have innovative effects.

Our core approach to this work is Realist Evaluation. Realist evaluation was advanced by Pawson and Tilley (1997) and Pawson (2013) to move beyond asking 'what works' in social programmes to grapple with the context-sensitive question 'what works, when, where, for whom and why'. There is a longstanding critique that management development initiatives are rarely designed to relate to context. Yet, learners and their contexts vary and these differences affect programme outcomes. The problematic assumption that there is a one size fits all approach may be why there is relatively poor evidence that management learning is effective. Clearly, learning interventions require tailoring to context (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Gurjian et al., 2014). But... how does a busy commissioner or facilitator of people management training design programmes that are likely to work in the contexts they are serving?

Realist evaluation helps us to think in practical ways about how the mechanisms of an intervention inter-relate to the context(s) of the participants and their environments to create outcome(s). In short, it challenges us to think about how:

> **Context (C) + Mechanism (M) = Outcome (O)**
>
> and identify
>
> **C+M=O** configurations (i.e. programmes tailored to context so they can work)

Of course, it is also helpful to identify the CMO configurations that do not work! In other words, to figure out:

(i) what aspects of context block mechanisms from working: these observations can help to expand on programme designs to actively amend contexts (e.g. by creating incentives or culture change to create readiness for learning or practice change, providing pre-learning necessary to scaffold programme knowledge or to prioritise time for learning and practice experimentation).

(ii) what mechanisms don't work in particular contexts: these observations help to target mechanisms effectively (e.g. by observing that a learning programme is effective for new line managers but is a waste of time for more experienced managers or it works for line managers in large organisations with organisational policies but requires adaption for the more informal and flat hierarchical structures of a small firm).

2.1.1 Using A Theory Of Change To Design (And Test) Programmes

Realist Evaluation encourages us to think *at the intervention design* about what Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes are likely to occur in programmes. And, how they can be managed and combined to create positive outcomes. A relatively simple and useful way of doing this is by developing a *Theory of Change*.

Figure 1 outlines the core Theory of Change we used originally the Good Employment Learning Lab.

Figure 1. The Original GELL Theory of Change: How We Proposed That Learning Interventions Will Improve Line Manager Practice

Evidence about management development
Using/testing management development theory by deploying 5 pillars of learning: gain new knowledge, reflect, make sense', experiment and learn together.

Evidence about better management practice
Using/testing theory about ways of managing around particular challenges that create good and productive work.

KNOWLEDGE

Context
Variation in managers, their teams, organisations, sectors and wider environments

Learning intervention
Online Masterclass, peer learning, coaching

Learning Pillars
Gain knowledge, reflect, make sense, experiment, learn together

Improved management practice

Improvements in Good or Productive Work
Considering the subjective experience of the manager or workers, working conditions and work efficiency

Sector or place-based community learning

Iterative feedback loop for learning journeys that involve multiple interventions or independent learning

Improved organisational practice

Positive impact on staff

Better practice in the place/sector

Key

Context
Knowledge
Inputs/outputs
Intervention outcomes
Higher level outcomes

In the sections on our three management challenges (sections 6-8), the specific Theory of Change used for each set of learning interventions is outlined. In this section, we introduce the Theory of Change we are deploying at the more general level in GELL. This is the starting point for all our learning interventions.

Evidence Based Management. Our Theory of Change builds on the principle of Evidence-Based Management (as discussed in Denyer et al., 2008). Our programme design draws on pre-existing evidence (from research or practice) to make initial propositions about how our learning interventions (masterclasses, peer learning and coaching) are likely to create favourable outcomes in particular contexts. Testing these propositions, and observing what else is happening to create positive or negative outcomes, forms the backbone of a realist design and evaluation approach.

> At the top of our Theory of Change (Figure 1) are two boxes (in orange) that show how knowledge is used to design the programme intervention:

• **Research and practice evidence about management development.** We used management development theory to identify 5 **Management Learning Pillars** on which our learning interventions are built (these are explained in detail later in this section).

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• **Evidence about better management practice.** We drew on research and practice evidence about better practice approaches to the particular management challenge being addressed in a specific intervention. To replicate 'real life' circumstances in which management learning is designed, we worked within a limited timeframe to gather rigorous concepts, tips and materials that could help managers to think about a particular management challenge and to experiment with developing their practice.

'Knowledge' in our Theory of Change (Figure 1) is multi-directional. This indicates how we have used research and practice evidence to design our learning interventions but also how experience of running the programme and emerging evaluation results have led to iterative re-design of both the Theory of Change and the programme design.

Context. Look now at the second horizontal line of boxes in our Theory of Change (Figure 1). The 'Context' box acknowledges that participants entered our learning intervention with variation in their prior manager knowledge, skill and experience and in their external contexts.

Contexts are multi-faceted and complex systems and it's not possible to include all aspects when considering 'what can work, for whom' to develop people managers at the programme design stage or to evaluate 'what works in what context'. In the Good Employment Learning Lab, we are interested in how our learning interventions relate to three levels of context:

(i) The participants including their knowledge, experience, motivation and confidence.

(ii) The role, organisation and sector in which participants work, including the people management challenges they face in their organisation and sector, how organisational policies and practices shape norms in people management approaches and the kind of support available to develop people management skills.

(iii) The broader socio-cultural and environmental context including broad socio-economic trends such as the Covid19 pandemic, the economic climate, broader norms about work and people management at play in society and employment law.

Learning Across Organisational Size and Form.
Perhaps unusually, we brought line managers together from across a range of sizes of organisation (participants were from micro, small , medium and large organisations) and forms of organisation (public, private and third sector). In later phases of our evaluation, we will reflect on what we have learnt about this approach.

> The next box (in yellow) in our Theory of Change is 'Learning Interventions: Online Masterclasses, Peer Learning and Coaching'.

As Engaged Scholars, we sought to design and test line manager development interventions that could realistically be commissioned. We knew that a crucial question for partners is 'what is an affordable and realistic way of scaling better people management skills among line managers?'. Affordability relates to the time involved in participation by line managers as well as the direct costs of delivering the interventions. Given that line managers are short of time, we designed interventions with limited time demands.

For each management challenge we offered line managers

• A Single Masterclass (2 hours)
• 3 x Flash Peer Learning Sessions (3 x 90 minutes each)*
• 3 x Coaching Sessions (3 x 1 hour each).

*In our pilot delivery, peer learning sessions were three hours long but we adapted the model to a condensed flash peer learning approach to secure better engagement.

Line managers could sign up for masterclasses, peer learning or coaching or combine any of these elements to create their own learning journey. They could also opt to engage in one or more of our three phases of the GELL programme and so may have learnt about one, two or three of our management challenges.

Online. Our learning interventions were delivered and accessed online. This significantly reduced the direct costs of hiring venues and paying for facilitator transport and travel time. Our online model was driven by Covid lockdown restrictions. We believe that it proved to be a benefit because we were able to explore how to make online

learning effective and attractive to line managers. We soon found that line managers took to online learning and found it convenient.

A drawback of online provision was higher rates of no-shows at training, compared to our previous experience of running similar programmes in the community. Training providers (e.g. CIPD) also reported high rates of no-shows to online provision during the Covid19 pandemic. At times, it seemed that online training was convenient but also disposable. Equally, no-shows resulted from the overwhelming and unpredictable demands faced by line managers at work and at home during the pandemic that caused additional reasons not to attend. Our training was free and many of our managers reported that they may not have paid for provision; this was often due to the bureaucracy involved in getting budget approval and payment organised more than the cost itself. However, it may be that free provision also made sessions seem more optional and disposable, especially when urgent matters distracted attention. There are no easy answers to the question of whether free programmes or small fees are more likely to garner management attention and ensure accessibility.

A high rate of no-shows creates additional work to over-recruit to programmes so that sessions are full. No-shows can threaten the integrity of peer learning sets. And, it creates re-scheduling work for programme administrators and coaches. We took steps to mitigate the problem of 'no-shows' (e.g. holding onboarding meetings and sending reminders) and future evaluations could actively test these and other mitigating approaches, as they relate to different contexts. Learning about how to improve attendance at online learning is clearly vital to the question of how to commission cost effective line manager training.

> The next box (in yellow) in our Theory of Change is : 'Learning Pillars: Gain knowledge, Reflect, Make sense, Experiment, Learning Together'.

Our online masterclasses, peer learning sets and coaching sessions drew on the five learning pillars we took from management learning theory to prompt line managers to gain knowledge, reflect on their people management practice, make sense of context and management options and commit to experiment with new practices and learn together. Peer learning and coaching also created the expectation that managers would actively experiment and accountability for this by asking managers to report back on progress in the second and third sessions. Manager learning and experimentation was not confined to the intervention period and our evaluation sought to track managers for two or more months after the learning interventions (we also followed up a small number of cases several months later). Our five management learning pillars are broadly based around Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle which has four stages: 'concrete experience', 'reflective observation', 'abstract conceptualisation' and 'active experimentation'. Our corresponding terms are 'gain knowledge', 'reflect', 'make sense' and 'experiment'. We also include 'learning together' as a management learning pillar, encompassing

the social learning inherent in a programme where groups of participants learn together.

Acknowledging the limitations of Kolb's learning cycle, such as it leading to single rather than double loop learning (McGill and Brockbank, 2004), our facilitators actively encouraged double loop learning through a questioning of participants' underlying assumptions in their practice.

• Single loop learning (instrumental learning) leads to small, incremental changes in their practice: "Am I doing things right?".

• Double loop learning (transformational learning), is where learners question assumptions underpinning their practice: "Am I doing the right things?".

Double loop learning has a potential impact on organisational learning as individuals, depending on their context, may need to challenge policies, practices and goals which are outside of their control to embed learning (McGill and Brockbank, 2004).

> The next boxes (in blue) of our Theory of Change (Figure 1) are the immediate outcomes that our learning interventions seek: Improved Manager Practice, Improved Organisational Practice and Positive Impact on Staff.

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Improved manager practice. This is where a manager has experimented with a new practise or started a new practise (without experimenting as such) and spoken about intending to continue to do this or as if this a normal part of practice or a new routine now. A practice here can be an improvement in the manager's internal life (how they think about something or handle stress and so cope better with being a manager) or a behaviour that means they are managing better.

Improved organisational practice. This can be either a local change to team management and work practices or spill over to wider organisational practices and policy.

Positive impact on staff. This is an improvement to the working life of one or more staff members. It may be in terms of their subjective experience of work and/or objective work conditions (e.g. pay or flexible working hours). It may be reported by the manager (e.g. claiming to have improved staff wellbeing) or the employee.

The boxes (in pink) on the far right hand side of our Theory of Change are broader programme outcomes. At the top is 'Improvements in Good and/or Productive Work'.

An improvement to good or productive work is an improvement to the working life of one or more staff members or an improvement to the organisation of work so that it is organised more efficiently or achieves an outcome that will have an indirect effect on efficiency (e.g. staff retention or care quality).

The second box (in pink) on the far right hand side of the Theory of Change is 'Better practice in the place/sector'.

We originally set out to create 'Sector- and Place-based Learning' (a box at the bottom left of our Theory of Change) and to produce the outcome of 'Better Practice in the Place/Sector'. Our switch to online learning due to the Covid19 pandemic negated our original intention to bring learners together in-person and to promote the development of informal, face-to-face learning relationships that might have endured after learning interventions. As our stakeholder partners were still interested in developing place-based learning, we made an initial attempt to form place-based online groups. These became somewhat diluted when filling sessions and over-recruiting, due to high levels of 'no-shows', depended on offering line managers the range of dates set up for different localities. Our overall conclusion here is that prioritising the development of very specific place-based learning communities creates significant rigidities to recruiting to online learning programmes. Of course, this may not be problematic if working with partners or groups who are place-based (e.g. local Chambers of Commerce or groups of staff within an organisation). Our aim to develop place-based learning has endured but become secondary, in the context of our online learning offer. However, we will still report on the difference that our learning has made to improving people management skills in Greater Manchester in later reflections on our project. And, we still have a strong focus on developing sector-based learning via online learning and we will report on the development of skills in a sector in the Adult Social Care Learning Lab as our project progresses.

At the centre of our Theory of Change (Figure 1) in a yellow box is 'Iterative feedback loop for learning journeys that involve multiple interventions or independent learning'.

This reflects the non-linear and iterative nature of learning cycles including connections between our learning interventions, where the effects of one intervention create a new context into which the next learning intervention is then related.

3.

The Design of Our Learning Interventions

3. The Design of Our Learning Interventions

In this section we outline the design of our three online learning interventions: masterclasses, flash peer learning and skills coaching. First, we explain how we accommodate a diverse participant base. Second, we set out the pre- and post-learning tools. Finally, we detail the design of the three learning interventions and illustrate how our management learning pillars were applied to each.

3.1 Targeting Our Participants

The GELL programme is designed to develop line managers in a place (Greater Manchester) and a sector (Adult Social Care).

Though we particularly encouraged applications from line managers "from an ethnic minority background, with a disability, who have less formal education, who are new to managing people or who work in a small business" the programme was open to anyone who "supervises the work of someone else". Our design, therefore, is relevant to experienced and inexperienced line managers, the small business owner and the line manager in large organisations, and those with differing experiences of education and training. To address such diverse needs, our interventions included opportunities for sharing experiences, learning about other participants' (innovative) practices and their organisational contexts, time to reflect on current practice and new knowledge gained. The following sections on each intervention set out examples of this in practice.

3.2 Pre- And Post-Intervention Learning

We implemented several opportunities to supplement participant learning at their own pace:

- **An online Resource Bank,** which is a curated collection of articles, news stories, videos and other media about the management challenges we addressed in learning interventions. We included content which appeals to a diverse range of managers.

- **Pre-meetings** for coaching and peer learning participants, which clarified the process, confirmed participants' suitability, and provided an opportunity for questions.

- **Portfolios** for coaching and peer learning participants, to provide prompts and structure to reflections before and after each session, a mechanism to track goals and progress between sessions, and provide research data.

- **Surveys** for masterclass participants, designed to aid participant reflection, articulate commitment to experiment, and provide research data.

3.3 Masterclasses

Our masterclasses are two hour, online, facilitator-led interactive sessions aimed at approximately 15 participants, with opportunities to share experiences with others.

The facilitators are experienced, qualified HR practitioners with management education experience. Masterclasses are primarily intended to provide participants with new knowledge, and to enable synthesis of new learning with existing knowledge. Our masterclass topics were as follows:

- **Management Challenge 1:**
  Managing agile and secure work*
  Managing Values Based Recruitment (VBR)*

- **Management Challenge 2:**
  Managing conflict
  Managing creativity

- **Management challenge 3:**
  Getting the best out of your team

*Agile and secure work was the management challenge in the Greater Manchester Lab and VBR was the management challenge in the Adult Social Care Lab.

The research team provided research-based principles on each topic, which guided the broad structure, content design and key takeaway messages. The session outcomes are consistent across topics, and incorporate the management learning pillars:

- Gain knowledge and skills on the management challenge/topic.

- Share thoughts, ideas, and practices on the management challenge/topic and, so, reflect, start to make sense and

- Reflect on their own practice, think differently, and challenge their own assumptions on the management challenge/topic.

- Experiment with different ways for working and identify at least one thing to try post-session on the management challenge/topic.

- Gain knowledge to influence how people are managed in their team, organisation, sector, and places.

Our design acknowledges that one-off masterclasses are less likely to elicit double loop learning because of the limited opportunity for reflection and deeper learning. However, the masterclasses were aligned to our management learning pillars. To illustrate how this worked in practice, we have included an outline of the Managing VBR masterclass (Table 2) and, below this, a vignette of group discussion in the Managing Agile and Secure Working masterclass.

Table 2. Composition of the Managing VBR Masterclass

Section – Values-based recruitment	Activity	Management learning pillar
"How familiar are you with values-based recruitment?"	Poll – self-assessed scale 1-5	Reflect
Definitions	Sharing definitions of recruitment	Gain knowledge
What are the challenges in recruitment?	Group discussion reflecting on context at a local (team), organisational and national level	Reflect Learning with others
What are values, and why use them in recruitment?	Sharing example values and how they can be useful in recruitment, encouraging participant reflection on their organisational context	Reflect Gain knowledge
Pros and cons of VBR	Padlet activity	Reflect Gain knowledge Learning with others
Diversity and inclusion considerations	Instructor-led slides and reflection opportunity	Reflect Gain knowledge
Skills for Care's 5-stage model	Instructor-led slides and reflection opportunity, including invitation to self-assess organisation's current performance	Reflect Gain knowledge
An example VBR question	Instructor-led slides and reflection opportunity	Reflect Make sense
Case study	Case study in breakout rooms	Reflect Make sense Learning with others
How could VBR work (better) for you?	Facilitated reflection opportunity	Reflect Make sense
Recap and consolidation of today's content. Invitation to reflect and share goals publicly	Postcard activity	Reflect Make sense Learning with others Intend to experiment

• Managing a secure and agile team masterclass vignette

After introducing definitions of agile work and agile principles and practices to **gain knowledge**, participants went into online breakout rooms to discuss three questions:

- What are the challenges you are facing/have faced in managing remote teams?

- What do you wish you'd known this time last year? [at the start of the pandemic]

- What is constraining and enabling you right now?

This prompted **reflection** on experience and learning on how they had managed their teams. The constraining and enabling factors encouraged participants to **learn from others** about what contextual factors or practices helped or hindered. When feeding back, the facilitator highlighted themes that related to or contradicted the agile work research and/or any new learning points.

This was followed by a 'stop and **reflect**' activity where participants turned their cameras off for five minutes to do the following visioning activity that drew them into starting to **make sense** of their context and their management options:

- What does 'agile' look like right now in your organisation? How might it look in the future – post Covid?

- Imagine a point in the future where your vision for agile working was successfully in place.

The facilitator asked participants to share reflections with other participants, so they could **learn from others**. This deliberate moment of reflection allowed participants to absorb content covered so far, and benefit from uninterrupted reflection time. The facilitator then asked participants what was stopping them from putting their vision into practice, encouraging them to consider their organisational context, who they needed to influence, and the need to challenge existing organisation policies and practices – encouraging **double loop learning. Making sense** in this way prompted participants to consider their **commitment to experiment** with at least one new practice.

3.4 Flash Peer Learning

Our peer learning design is based on action learning, a well-established process of learning and reflection, that helps people 'get things done' by tackling real life challenges with the support of peers (McGill and Brockbank, 2004).

Participants discuss their challenges with a small group of line managers from different organisations supported by a facilitator. **Unlike in traditional action learning, our design requires the facilitator to take an active role in the group as an HR expert who, in addition to facilitating the sessions, offers knowledge or even advice on participants' challenges, as required.** Participants ask curious questions about each other's challenges, offering critique and insights in a supportive yet challenging environment (Daloz, 1986). The aim is to reflect on their challenges from different perspectives, draw on the experience of others, and identify actions with which to experiment. Each participant is the expert in terms of their work context, situation, feelings, and knowledge but other participants may offer insights as they are not as close to the issue (McGill and Brockbank, 2004). Aligned to our management learning pillars, peer learning encourages reflection, making sense, learning from others, and experimentation. It creates space to challenge participants' underlying assumptions about what they are taking for granted, encouraging double loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1974).

Adapting our design to flash peer learning

Our pilot design was based on six participants from different organisations meeting online three times over a five-week period for three hour sessions. Three groups were established for the ASC lab focused on the topic of VBR and three for Greater Manchester on managing agile and secure teams. The structure and agenda for the three-hour pilot sessions is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The Pilot Peer Learning Agenda

Session 1 Agenda	Approx. timings	Session 2 & 3 Agenda	Approx. timings
Introductions Getting to know you activity	10 mins	Recap and participant updates since last session	15 mins
What is Peer Learning? What is the management challenge? Agree ways of working	20 mins	Participant rounds (20-25 mins each)	50 - 60 mins
Participant rounds (20-25 mins each)	40-60 mins	Break	15 mins
Break	15 mins	Participant rounds (20-25 mins each)	60 mins
Participant rounds (20-25 mins each)	60 mins	Learning review Session 3 - reflections on overall learning Close	20 mins
Learning review Close	15 mins		

We learned from the pilot groups that three hours was intense for both facilitators and participants and we struggled to retain participants for the series of three sessions. We, therefore, amended our design by adapting the 'gossip method' of peer learning (De Haan, 2004) for online delivery. We called this 'flash peer learning'. In these 90-minute sessions, participants discuss each challenge in 15-minute 'sets'. The participant who shares their challenge then 'listens in' on other participants generating solutions (see Figure 2). At the end of the set, the participant returns and articulates their 'I will' statement: a commitment to experiment. The group then rotates as the next participant shares their challenge.

Participants who experienced both the pilot design and flash peer learning stated that they enjoyed the new format. For example, "we got to the same place we got to before but were more focused" (P242) and another participant "loved the speed" (P037). We found it easier to recruit participants to the 90-minute sessions and retained more participants through the series than in the pilot groups.

Figure 2. How a Flash Peer Learning Set Works

| Manager shares their challenges/opportunities (2 mins) | → | Other participants ask clarifying questions (5 mins) | → | Manager turns off their camera and mutes themselves |
| Other participants discuss the challenge and generate ideas, suggestions and advice (6 mins) | → | Manager re-joins acknowledges and shares what was most valuable. Shares action(s) with "I will" statement (2 mins) | → | Group switch to next manager |

3.5 Skills Coaching

Whitmore (2014:9) states that the effectiveness of coaching is due to the communication style and supportive relationship between coach and coachee. "The coachee does acquire the facts, not from the coach, but from within himself, stimulated by the coach." We deployed these coaching techniques and also shared knowledge about people management and the particular management challenges we were addressing by deploying coaches who are also experienced HR professionals.

Recognising the variety of knowledge, skills, confidence and experience of our participants, we developed our own approach called skills coaching, which retained the curious questioning approach of traditional coaching, whilst allowing the coach to adapt to the participants' needs by providing people management knowledge where participants lacked knowledge or experience. Our coaches are skilled HR professionals who are able to 'drop in' knowledge about basic people management practices (e.g. recruitment processes) in a bespoke fashion and to let participants know when a practice may contravene employment law (or, indeed, when they over-interpreting what they are not allowed to do under the law). Their experience was vital to offering skills coaching in people management and much richer in people management knowledge than if they had been general leadership or small business coaches.

Participants were offered three one-hour online coaching sessions, held approximately fortnightly. The coaching was centred around our three sets of management challenge topics (see Table 1).

As is best practice with coaching, we had 'contracting' meetings and provided information on 'What to expect at skills coaching' materials. These helped to clarify what coaching is – and isn't – and enabled participants to prepare and get maximum benefit from the sessions.

During the session, the coaches used the GROW model (Whitmore 2014: 52-57), which guides participants through questions relating to their goals, reality [context], options and will. The coach referred to content from the masterclasses where appropriate – particularly to address gaps in participants' knowledge or experience.

Our approach to coaching involved several management learning pillars. In particular, we created a safe space in which to reflect deeply, make sense of the situation and context, and experiment with a range of options. The participant was also able to gain knowledge from the coach, particularly where they lacked knowledge or experience and benefited from suggestions. A key aim of the coaching sessions was to facilitate double-loop learning. For example, curiously questioning what the root cause of the challenge was, what was holding them back from taking action, and what assumptions might they be carrying about the situation.

4.

Recruiting Managers And Delivering The Training

4. Recruiting Managers And Delivering The Training

4.1 Attracting Line Manager Attention

We sought to recruit line managers (people who managed or supervised at least one other person's work) to take part in our learning interventions. Our approach to attracting line manager attention was by using a multi-channel marketing approach, supported by our place-based and sector-based partners and our wider networks. This was sustained throughout 2021. Information about our offer and how to get involved was presented on our website. This was communicated to line managers in Greater Manchester and the Adult Social Care sectors through multiple channels including items in newsletters, postings on websites or in blogs, direct approaches by email or other media and using social media (including advertising on LinkedIn). We encouraged more informal cascade of information through the social media used by partners and groups of workers (e.g. Whatsapp groups) and personal recommendations from managers engaged in our training.

4.2 Signing Up To The Good Employment Learning Lab

We asked line managers to sign up to becoming part of the Good Employment Learning Lab. This was the threshold process for receiving regular information about our offer and to signing up for training. As we are conducting a research project, it was vital that we sought informed consent from participants to take part in the research as part of the registration process.

This meant there were additional elements of the sign-up process (i.e. reading a Participant Information Sheet and signing a Consent form). As part of this, we informed participants about how we would manage programme and research data and how they could opt out at any time. Although important, these processes demanded time and attention and were clearly hampering recruitment. We responded by converting from a paper-based consent process to an online sign-up system. We also started to support sign-up and induction to the Good Employment Learning Lab through a short telephone conversation with

our Project Co-ordinator. This onboarding process helped managers to understand our programme and to select a learning intervention that suited their needs.

By the end of our delivery programme for all three waves of our evaluation, we had signed up 1,018 managers to participate in the Good Employment Learning Lab and 885 were eligible for our learning interventions. Eligibility criteria were: currently supervising the work of at least one other and working in any sector in Greater Manchester (Greater Manchester Learning Lab) or in the adult social care sector in the North West of England (Adult Social Care Learning Lab). Ineligible managers were often not currently supervising the work of another person, perhaps suggesting interest from the talent pipeline of future line managers or the fluctuating nature of line management responsibilities. As we worked with local partners to recruit and think about place-based learning communities, most of our participants worked in Manchester city centre, Tameside or Salford and, in the Adult Social Care Lab, also in Cheshire. A total of 366 managers undertook a learning intervention across our three waves of provision.

4.3 A Flexible Place-Based Delivery Programme

Our delivery programme was initially designed pre-Covid and premised on delivering in-person in three locations. When we launched our online learning interventions, it became apparent that restricting managers to signing up to a local group was constraining take-up as some managers could not find a date that fit with their busy schedules. We needed to allow managers to sign up to training outside of their area so that we could offer a wider range of event dates. As our programme was delivered online, the potential value of bringing line managers together face-to-face was lost and the chance to learn with more distant peers arose. This meant offering a more flexible programme was justifiable and efficient. Nonetheless, most managers were still from the target local authority areas (Manchester City Centre, Salford, Tameside and, in the Adult Social Care Lab also Chester and West Cheshire). However, eligibility for the Greater Manchester Lab was extended to all line managers in Greater Manchester and eligibility for the Adult Social Care Lab was extended to all line managers in the North West.

4.4 Reflections And Conclusion On Recruitment

Recruiting managers to sign up for GELL was relatively challenging and required persistent effort to sustain a marketing campaign, learn which approaches were more effective, check eligibility and to onboard learners. As researchers, our challenge was made more strenuous than in a learning only programme as we needed to explain both the learning offer and the research process and gain informed consent for participation.

Nevertheless, commissioners should be aware that recruiting to a similar place- or sector-based programme would demand considerable recruitment resource. Of course, line manager training can be offered to pre-established communities such as staff within an organisation, a network or a membership organisation. This is likely to demand less arduous recruitment effort. We were also recruiting during the Covid pandemic when line managers were under intense pressure and often under-staffed and juggling home-schooling. This may have suppressed demand for training, despite the intense reliance of organisations on managers' people management skills to cope with the crisis. The pandemic certainly caused no-shows in which managers signed up for GELL and for a particular learning intervention but felt unable to attend due to urgent organisational or personal pressures or, indeed, because they were unwell with Covid19. While it is difficult for organisations to prioritise time to develop line managers during a crisis, doing so may well enable them to manage the crisis challenge. We recommend that organisations consider including line manager's people management training (and the time it takes to attend and use new learning) in their crisis management plans.

The GELL research team are experienced diversity leaders and so had good intentions regarding recruitment of a diverse community of line managers to GELL. We spoke to diversity advisers and took advice about new marketing channels for our programmes. We also ensured that our programme materials were inclusive. We are also small business researchers and we made particular effort to ensure that small firms were well represented in GELL. However, the intensity of effort demanded by establishing the programme, research process and recruitment meant we did not have the time we would have liked to focus more attentively on ensuring our programme reached line managers from ethnic minorities or ethnic minority businesses. In future work, we hope to shine a light on diversity and small firms when analysing our findings in greater depth. At this stage, we note that it would be useful for future projects to have more time to plan means of reaching line managers from minority groups and from small firms, particularly ethnic minority micro and small enterprises.

4.5 Our Programme Participants

A total of 366 managers participated in GELL learning interventions (Table 4.1). Take-up was higher in the Greater Manchester Lab (213 managers) compared with the Adult Social Care Lab (153 managers) due to its wider sectoral reach and the time pressures on Adult Social Care managers during the Covid19 pandemic which prevented some from participating. Most managers were involved in one managemnt challenge but 36 engaged with two management challenges and 2 were involved in all three management challenges.

Table 4.1. Managers Participating in GELL Learning Interventions

Learning Journeys of Participants	One management challenge	Two management challenges	Three management challenge	Total
	Number of Participants			
Total	328	36	2	366
Greater Manchester Lab	196	16	1	213
Adult Social Care Lab	132	20	1	153

Table 4.2 presents the number of participants who completed each different type of intervention per management challenge. It should be noted here that the "total column" refers to the total volume of delivery (managers engaging in types of interventions) and not the total number of unique managers.

Table 4.2. Managers who completed an intervention per management challenge

	Masterclass	Peer learning	Coaching	Total
Management challenge 1	105	18	22	145
Management challenge 2	109	26	27	162
Management challenge 3	172	25	32	229

Table 4.3 presents the number of managers who participated in different combinations of interventions. For example, a masterclass and coaching (M + C). The proportions participating in different combinations of interventions were similar across the three management challenges.

Table 4.3. Managers within a management challenge who completed combinations of interventions

	M	M + C	M + P	C only	P only	M + C + P	Total
Management challenge 1	104	10	6	6	2	6	134
Management challenge 2	70	16	14	3	4	8	115
Management challenge 3	131	21	17	4	1	5	179

Key: M-Masterclass only; M + C-Masterclass and Coaching; M + P–Masterclass and Peer learning;
C-Coaching only; P-Peer learning only; M + C + P – Participated in all three interventions.

In terms of demographics, more than three quarters of our participants were women (of the 260 giving sex/gender identity data, 199 reported as being female) (Table 4.4). This strongly suggests that our learning interventions were more attractive to women managers.

Table 4.4. The Sex/Gender Identity of Participating Managers

Learning Journeys of Participants	Male	Female	Other	No Data Available	Total
Total	59	199	2	106	366

A total of 42 managers (16%) who reported their ethnic status are non-White (Table 4.5). This is a similar proportion to ethnic minority residents in the UK, although we cannot be sure that it is representative of our target communities.

Table 4.5. The Ethnicity of Participating Managers

Ethnicity of Participants	White	Asian/ Asian British	Black/Black British	Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups	Other	No Data	Total
Total	218	15	16	8	3	106	366

We have data on the age of 262 participants and this suggests the kind of age distribution we would expect: most managers are aged 30-60 but there is also representation at younger and older ages (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 The Age of Participating Managers

Age	Number of participants
21-30	43
31-40	83
41-50	74
51-60	53
Over 60	9
unknown	104
Total	366

*We do not have age data on the remaining managers

Our learning interventions attracted managers with widely varying duration of line management experience (Table 4.7). A minority (40 managers) have been managing or supervising people for less than a year, whereas 54 managers have been managing for 1-2 years, 50 managers for 3-4 years and 116 managers had five or more years of line management experience.

Table 4.7. The Duration of Line Management Experience Among Participating Managers

Learning Journeys of Participants	Less than 1 year	1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5+ Years	No Data	Total
Total	40	54	50	116	106	366

105 managers supervised a small team of 1-5 staff (Table 4.8), while only 46 managers managed a team of over 10 staff. Only 16 managers managed a team that was over 50 employees.

Table 4.8. The Size of Team Managed by Participating Managers

Learning Journeys of Participants	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-50	50+	Unknown	Total
Total	105	63	46	30	16	106	366

Unfortunately, only a small minority of participants reported their company size. This may reflect difficulty in estimating their organisation's total number of employees. We are therefore unable to report on representation by company size. However, through our delivery and evaluation work, we are aware that we have captured businesses from a range of sizes and our analysis does point to the effect of company size where this arises.

5.

Our Realist Evaluation Methodology

5. Our Realist Evaluation Methodology

5.1 Data Collection

We sought to learn about the context of our programme participants and to track their learning as intensively as was feasible within the project. We collected data via the following approaches:

• **Programme sign-up.** We collected some demographic, organisational and experience data at sign-up to the GELL programme. This process was further improved when we switched from a paper-based to an online sign-up part way through recruiting to management challenge 1. We also started to support sign-up with an induction meeting.

• **Facilitator and researcher observations**. The staff delivering our learning interventions made observation notes about participants and learning processes. On occasion, researchers also observed masterclasses or peer learning sets and made observer notes. They did not observe coaching sessions as this may have unduly influenced the learning experience. Observation and reflection notes became research data.

• **Learning portfolios and surveys.** At the beginning of wave 1 learning interventions, all participants were given a reflective learning portfolio to complete and asked to return this to us by email. Its purpose was twofold: to encourage reflective thinking and to record learning. The portfolio consisted of a series of questions asking what the participant had learnt during the intervention, what they had experimented with in practice following the intervention and how they had found the intervention overall. We also asked about changes to knowledge and skill and confidence in handling the management challenge before and after the learning interventions. The portfolio was created using MS Word and had blank spaces for the participants to complete. It soon became clear that a disappointingly low amount of masterclass participants were returning portfolios. We therefore changed our approach, asking masterclass participants to complete a short online survey instead. This survey was a reduced version of the portfolio that required less user administration effort (clicking on a survey link and completing some questions rather than having to download a portfolio document, complete it, upload it and send it). The survey link was emailed to participants immediately after their participation in the masterclass. The research team found that the response rate to the survey was much higher than the portfolio for masterclasses. The portfolio method continued to

be used for the peer learning and coaching participants who seemed more motivated to engage with this more extensive reflection process.

• **Interviews.** We approached all participants in our learning interventions to take part in an online research interview. We requested one interview per management challenge (and so one interview regardless of whether the manager had undertaken a masterclass and/or peer learning and/or coaching within a management challenge and another interview when they took part in a second or third management challenge). Participants were approached two or three times to take part and involvement was voluntary. Interviews were conducted online, lasted for approximately 35-40 minutes each, were audio recorded and fully transcribed. They were conducted a minimum of eight weeks after the manager completed their learning interventions in that management challenge. This time elapse provided a chance to observe the effect of learning after the learning intervention.

We secured 29 interviews from participants of learning interventions on managing secure and agile work and 15 interviews for participants on learning interventions for managing VBR. In management challenge 2 we received 51 interview responses and in MC3 we received 51 interview responses. Across the whole project 146 interviews were conducted

• **Depth follow-up of better outcome cases.**
We commissioned an external consultant to conduct a further interview with a small selection of participants who seemed to have made good progress in experimenting with practice change. This aimed to track outcomes over a longer period and to understand how better outcomes can happen in greater depth. We also asked these managers if we could contact staff who may have experienced a change to how they are managed as a result of the line manager's learning. This aimed to check or corroborate line manager reports about effects on employees and teams and to hear about change from the employee perspective. This yielded three interviews with managers learning about managing agile and secure working (plus an interview with one member of staff from one of these managers) and one interview with a manager learning about managing VBR. This response rate is disappointing. It reflects the time already invested in our research by managers in initial interviews and the barrier that research ethics and data protection clearances created to gaining consent. In the next wave of our

project, the methodology of this follow-up approach was amended to try to foster greater follow-up data.

In Management challenge 2 we conducted six follow up interviews and secured interview with five employees of managers. In management challenge 3 we secured three manager interviews and one employee interview.

• **Case Studies.** In order to discern how programme mechanisms and outcomes relate to one another and to contexts within individual experiences, we needed to do some depth analysis within individual cases. We therefore selected 11 managers in management challenge 1 and 12 managers in management challenges 2 and 3 to write up a total of 35 case studies. We intentionally selected these cases to ensure they relate to different programme mechanisms (masterclasses, peer learning or coaching) in each Lab, and more or less intensive outcomes.

5.2 Data Analysis

Interviews were fully transcribed and all evaluation data was anonymised and stored securely. Programme management data was stored separately to anonymised research data to further ensure the confidentiality of research data.

• **Data coding.** All qualitative data (interviews, facilitator and research observations and portfolio/survey data) was coded using the qualitative data analysis package NVivo. Coding involves creating a hierarchy of themes that are of interest to researchers and identifying text that relates to those themes. It effectively files data under thematic headings so that text on the same issue can be analysed together. Our coding themes related to categories in our Theory of Change.

• **Learning and outcomes analysis across all qualitative data.** Thematically coded data was deployed to conduct analysis of manager learning and outcomes across all qualitative data within each management challenge.

• **Case studies.** Case studies were developed by looking at all interview, portfolio and facilitator observer notes held on selected participants and summarising their experience using a case study template that focused on context, learning interventions and their mechanisms and outcomes. We also produced a diagram of the context + learning intervention = outcome configuration for each case study. This approach emerged after several abandoned attempts to summarise cases using matrices, vignettes or different case study structures. This reflects the normal 'struggle' to make sense of qualitative data.

• **Comparative analysis of case studies.** In order to think at a higher level about the relations between context, learning interventions and outcomes observed in case studies, we conducted some comparative analysis of case studies. This involved summarising findings and then drawing out higher level observations that help to make sense of the different context + mechanism = outcome relations we observed.

We offer a diagram for each case study where we summarise the level of learning and outcomes observed, using a star rating system as follows:

No stars – no/negible signs of learning or identifiable outcomes
1 star – small signals of learning or identifiable outcomes
2 star – moderate signs of learning or identifiable outcomes
3 star – extensive signs of learning or identifiable outcomes

• **Rapid estimation of line manager learning and outcome journeys.** In a later phase of data analysis, we decided to conduct a rapid estimation of line manager journeys in terms of learning and across the outcome categories in our Theory of Change (gaining knowledge, experimenting/improved manager practice, improved organisational practice, positive impact on staff, improvement to good and/or productive work and better practice in the place/sector). We conducted this exercise with a degree of trepidation. Our project primarily adopts a qualitative approach because it is concerned with probing the relationships between contexts, learning and outcomes, rather than quantifying outcomes or outcome patterns. Outcomes reported in qualitative data are often complex and simplifying them in binary terms as achieving an outcome or not requires a degree of subjective assessment. We are also very conscious that we can only report on observed outcomes and we will not have a full view of outcomes due to the methodological challenges of enabling managers to identify these themselves and report them within time-constrained interviews that are conducted quite soon after the learning intervention and so cannot track longer-term outcomes. Organisational change and other broader outcomes are particularly vulnerable to being unobserved as they are more difficult for managers to perceive and may happen over longer periods. This means that our observations are likely to be an under-estimation of outcomes. Nevertheless, we are aware that the commissioners of line manager training will be interested in the general degree of impact we can evidence from our learning interventions and, hence, we decided to conduct a rapid estimation of line manager learning and outcome journeys. We did this by briefing team members to review core parts of our data to identify changes for each participant and make an assessment of whether outcomes occurred for each manager. Time pressures meant that we were not able to cross-check these by comparing results from more than one analyst scrutinising data, as would have been preferable, but we did invest time in becoming more clear about the definitions of our outcome categories. We advise that our rapid review of learning and outcome journeys is treated as a good indication of outcomes (and quite possibly as an under-estimation), albeit with the caveats offered above.

• **Change to manager self-reports of confidence and capability.** In surveys and portfolios, managers were asked to rate themselves on two scales, relating to their knowledge and skill and their confidence in handling the management challenge (e.g. conflict) prior to the GELL training. At the end of the documents, we asked managers to report their knowledge and skill and confidence following the training. We then analysed self-reported changes resulting from the learning interventions.

Independent sample T-tests and one-way Anovas (as appropriate) were used to test for differences between groups in mean reported increases in 'knowledge and skill' and 'confidence'.

5.3 Our Research Participants

We collected research data by various methods (interviews, masterclass surveys, peer learning and coaching portfolios and/or notes from facilitators and observers) from 230 managers of 366 managers participating in the GELL programme. In this section, we focus on the 248 learning journeys undertaken by managers participating in the research. A learning journey is the progress a manager made within a particular management challenge (e.g. their learning and outcomes within Values Based Recruitment). The number of learning journeys is higher than the number of managers as 18 managers who participated in the research were involved in more than one management challenge and so had more than one learning journey. We analyse learning journeys for which we have sufficient data to assess progress within our rapid estimation of learning journeys.

Table 5.1 represents the number of learning journeys for research participants per lab. Reflecting the larger number of participants in the Greater Manchester Lab, 57% of research participant learning journeys also came from this lab.

Table 5.1. The Size of Team Managed by Participating Managers

Labs	No.	%
ASC	107	43
GM	141	57
Total	248	100

In Table 5.2, we can see the number of research participants who completed each different type of intervention per management challenge. The greatest number of managers attended masterclasses across all three interventions. It should be noted here that the "total column" refers to the total volume of delivery (attendance at interventions) and not the total number of unique managers.

Table 5.2. Research participants who completed an intervention per management challenge

	Masterclass	Peer learning	Coaching	Total
Management challenge 1	53	18	19	90
Management challenge 2	77	25	26	128
Management challenge 3	99	23	32	154

Table 5.3 presents the number of managers who participated in different combinations of interventions for example a masterclass and coaching (M + C). The numbers participating in different combinations of interventions were similar across the three management challenges. The total relates to the number of managers completing the various combinations of interventions per management challenge.

Table 5.3. Research participants within a management challenge who completed combinations of interventions

	M	M + C	M + P	C	P	M + C + P	Total
Management challenge 1	32	9	6	9	2	6	64
Management challenge 2	39	16	14	2	3	8	82
Management challenge 3	60	20	14	4	1	5	104

Key: M-Masterclass; M + C-Masterclass and Coaching; M + P–Masterclass and Peer learning; C-Coaching only; P-Peer learning only; M + C + P – Participated in all three interventions.

In terms of the demographics of our research participants' learning journeys, more than three quarters of learning journeys were undertaken by women (144 out of the 182 that gave us data, see Table 5.4). This corresponds with our participant data more generally.

5.4. The Gender of Research Participants (all interventions)

Learning Journeys of Participants	Male	Female	Other	No Data Available	Total
Total	37	144	1	66	248

A lower proportion (20 managers) of research participants' learning journeys are from ethnic minority groups, compared to the 42 of our programme participants, suggesting some under-representation in our study (Table 5.5).

5.5. The Ethnicity of Research Participants (all interventions)

Ethnicity of Participants	White	Asian	Black/Black British	Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups	No Data	Total
Total	162	10	5	5	66	248

Table 5.6 presents the amount of line management experience within our research participants' learning journeys. As with our programme data, there is a good spread here.

5.6. The Line Management Experience of Research Participants (all interventions)

Learning Journeys of Participants	Less than 1 year	1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5+ Years	10 + years	15 + years	20+years	No Data	Total
Total	21	36	37	50	17	8	14	65	248

Finally in table 5.7 we present data on the size of the team managed by our research participants. There is a good spread here.

5.7. The Size of Team Managed by Research Participants (all participants)

Learning Journeys of Participants	1	2-5	6-10	11-20	20-50	20-50	100+	Unknown	Total
Total	22	50	51	33	19	19	6	65	265

6.

Evaluation of Management Challenge 1: Agile and Secure Working and Values-Based Recruitment

6.1 Conceptualising the Management Challenges

In this section, we summarise the management challenges we addressed in management challenge 1. Our partners in the Greater Manchester Good Employment Learning Lab (which works across sectors) asked us to help line managers improve their practice in both agile working and secure working. The focus on agility related strongly to timing: we were coming out of the Covid crisis and many organisations were learning from home working and pioneering new agile working policies. The priority of secure work was advanced by several partners concerned with the hidden strain often experienced by workers in insecure work. Our partners in the Adult Social Care Learning Lab were interested in agile working but they were also worried about a recruitment and retention crisis. They asked us to focus on the sector-specific challenge of raising skills in Values Based Recruitment (VBR). These learning interventions occurred in March-August 2021.

6.1.1 Managing Agile And Secure Work

The concept of agility in an organisational context refers broadly to a businesses' ability to optimise the match between the supply of, and demand for, labour and skills (Agile Future Forum, 2013) and its system and culture being responsive to demands for change (CIPD, 2011).

In keeping with our focus on good employment, we focused more narrowly on flexible forms of working that impact on people's experience of work as well as on the productivity and responsiveness of the organisations that they work for. We drew on the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (CIPD's) agile working framework, focusing primarily on issues around where and when people work – for example flexible working hours and homeworking. Accordingly, there was a strong emphasis on the work-life balance in our interpretation of agile work. Again, the pandemic brought these issues to the fore, particularly the issue of managing remote workers – which very many of us became. Accordingly, and also as a result of participant demand, there was a greater emphasis within the sessions on the 'agile' element of agile and secure work.

The concept of security, in relation to work, incorporates a number of related aspects (CIPD, 2019). Job (in-)security refers to the likelihood of someone keeping their job, and

employment (in-)security to likelihood of them being able to get another one if necessary. Wage (in-)security refers to the extent to which employees can rely on a stable and sufficient income. Finally, contract (in-)security refers to the stability of employment that workers experience, and relates to the experience of workers, for example, on temporary or zero-hours contracts. Prior to the pandemic, there were concerns around increasing insecurity for workers in the UK market, with rising redundancy rates, an increasing share of low wage jobs, and growth in agency work and the gig economy (CIPD, 2019). The pandemic is likely to have exacerbated these trends.

Flexible working and job security for employees both feature prominently in models of good work, for example the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's 'Good Work Index', the UK Government's Good Work plan (arising from the Taylor Report, 2017), the International Labour Organisation's Decent Work definitions and the QuinnE Job Quality Model. They also feature as two of the seven characteristics of good employment in the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, our key delivery partner locally. In research, there is also sound evidence that workers with high quality work that is secure and flexible are more engaged, well and productive (Bailey et al, 2017; Atkinson and Crozier, 2020; Avgoustaki and Bessa, 2019; CIPD, 2018).

The Theory of Change we propose to develop management skills in managing agile and secure working is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3.The GELL Theory of Change for Managing Agile and Secure Work: How We Propose That Learning Interventions Will Improve Line Management Practice, In Values Based Recruitment (VBR)
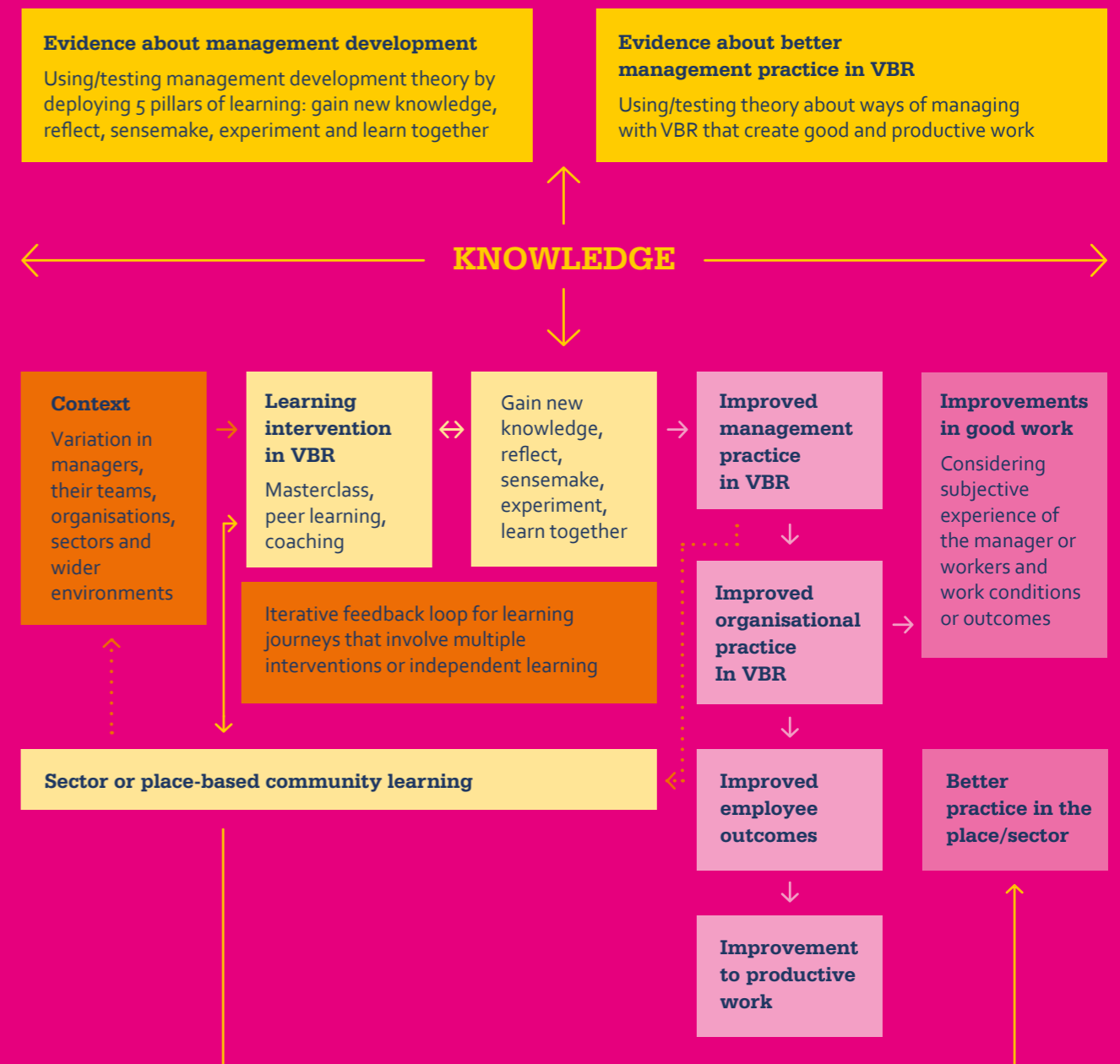
In total, for Managing Agile and Secure Working we delivered 5 masterclasses, 2 peer learning sets and 13 coaching sets. In total we delivered 80 learning interventions (58 managers attended a masterclass, 9 attended a peer learning set and 13 attended a coaching set). Some managers took part in more than one form of learning.

^ Please note that recruitment to this, our first wave of programmes, was from a standing start and were more able to fill places once we had signed up more line managers to the GELL programme. We also learned a great deal in management challenge 1 about how to reach line managers and attract them to our offer. In addition, we were delivering in the height of the Covid19 pandemic (March-August 2021) and, as noted above, suffered high rates of no-show that managers attributed to being called into urgent work problems, providing cover for absent staff, having Covid19 or home-schooling. We sustained pressure to over-recruit to offset this whenever possible and are confident that our delivery programme provides sufficient data to draw conclusion in our realist evaluation.

6.1.2 Managing Values Based Recruitment

In line with our focus on good employment, the Values Based Recruitment (VBR) intervention was designed to support line managers to engage effectively with the labour market via recruitment and selection practices that attract, engage and retain productive workers (Bailey et al., 2017). This draws on evidence that effective recruitment and selection is important to creating high quality work that promotes employee well-being and organisational productivity (Jiang et al., 2012, Avgoustaki and Bessa, 2019).

Effective recruitment and selection is particularly important in adult social care which has, for many years, experienced crises in recruitment and retention (Atkinson et al., 2019, Rubery et al., 2011), crises which have only been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Drawing on initiatives in the health care sector designed to address scandals arising from poor care (Cavendish, 2013), VBR has been promoted as a mechanism to both improve recruitment and retention and improve care quality. It is based on a logic of ensuring those delivering care espouse an appropriate set of values that support it being of high quality. We drew on a range of evidence and sources, but were particularly informed by Skills for Care's VBR resources (https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Recruitment-retention/Values-based-recruitment-and-retention/Values-based-recruitment-and-retention.aspx). This is premised on a '5As' process (articulate, attract, apply, assess and assimilate) designed to communicate and test out applicant values. Evidence suggests that values should act as signals during the recruitment process (Hentschel et al., 2020) and increase value congruence (Huhtala and Feldt, 2016) so that those recruited have values that fit with the organisation and underpin delivery of good quality care. Good fit should

also improve employee engagement and reduce labour turnover (Winter and Jackson, 2016).

Recruitment and selection processes feature in models of good work. For example, Greater Manchester's Good Employment Charter, one of our key delivery partners locally. There is also extensive research evidence linking sophisticated practice with better employee engagement, wellbeing and productivity (Avgoustaki and Bessa, 2019, Bailey et al., 2017, Jiang et al., 2012).

In total, 50 managers attended learning on Managing Values Based Recruitment (VBR) (see Table 5). We delivered six masterclasses, three peer learning sets (three sessions each) and eight coaching relationships (three sessions each) in three geographical communities. In total we delivered 62 learning interventions to managers on managing VBR.

The Theory of Change we are proposing to develop management skills in VBR is illustrated in Figure 3.

In total, for Managing Values Based Recruitment we delivered 5 masterclasses, 3 peer learning sets and 9 coaching sets. In total we delivered 64 learning interventions (46 managers attended a masterclass, 9 attended a peer learning set and 9 attended a coaching set). Some managers took part in more than one form of learning.

Figure 4. The GELL Theory of Change for Managing Agile and Secure Work: How We Propose That Learning Interventions Will Improve Line Management Practice, In Values Based Recruitment to Manage Agile and Secure Work

Evidence about management development
Using/testing management development theory by deploying 5 pillars of learning: gain new knowledge, reflect, make sense', experiment and learn together.

Evidence about better management practice in Agile and Secure Work
Using/testing theory about ways of managing agile and secure work that create good and productive work.

KNOWLEDGE

Context
Variation in managers, their teams, organisations, sectors and wider environments'

Learning intervention
Masterclass, peer learning, coaching in Agile and Secure Work

Learning Pillars
Gain new knowledge, reflect, make sense, experiment, learn together

Improved management practice in Agile and Secure Work

Improvements in Good or Productive Work
Considering the subjective experience of the manager or workers, working conditions and work efficiency

Sector or place-based community learning

Iterative feedback loop for learning journeys that involve multiple interventions or independent learning

Improved organisational practice in Agile and Secure Work

Better practice in the place/sector

Positive impact on staff

6.2 Management Challenge 1: Thematic Analysis Of Learning

In this section, we use our thematic analysis of the qualitative dataset to explore which learning pillars in our Theories of Change (Figures 1, 3 and 4) were activated in our management challenge 1 interventions (managing agile and secure work and VBR). And, how this led managers to make new sense of their contexts and management options and to form intentions to experiment.

This initial thematic analysis is the first stage in our data analysis. The outcomes of learning (in terms of actually experimenting, improving manager practice, organisational practice, employee outcomes and good or productive work) are analysed in section 8. In sections 9 and 10, we take another view of the data by presenting case studies and offering a cross-case analysis. This enables us to focus on connections between context, learning and outcomes for particular managers. All of our evaluation findings for management challenge 1 are summarised in section 10.

6.2.1 Masterclass – Managing Agile And Secure Working

In terms of gaining knowledge, many participants referred to a range of new and useful things that they had 'picked up' about agile and secure working from their participation in the masterclass. They valued tips and ideas about good practice when managing an agile team and how to manage an agile team effectively: many were interested in learning the official definition of agile working and some valued learning about the academic theory in relation to agile and secure work.

> **Participant 65 (Third sector, GM lab):** "It's just good to know. I liked knowing what was in an official definition, so we can then see if we've got all of those things in there. Because we'll probably have things in our policy about high trust. I'm just seeing, I've written here, and it's about being flexible about work, location and hours."

Managers had some familiarity with agile working but commonly reported that the masterclass 'fleshed out' their understanding of what agile working looks like in practice, resulting in them having a better comprehension of what agile working involves and what it can look like outside of their own organisation. For example, some of the

participants explained how they went into the masterclass thinking that agile working was simply about hybrid or remote working but the masterclass had taught them that agile working was much more than this.

Crucially, some managers had previously thought that agile working was only about flexibility for the employee. The masterclass helped them realise that this was a narrow understanding and that agile working had benefits for both the employee and the business. This led to reflection and a new way of thinking in the workplace and the start of making sense of their context in a different way and realisation of new management options:

> **Participant 179 (Public sector, GM lab):** "I think the whole thinking of agile more thoroughly than it just being a location thing. I have used what I've learnt in… not in any structured way. I've not sort of said to the team, 'Right, here's the thing, XYZ'. But it's because it's in my mind now, it actually sort of permeated, our discussions about agile working."

A small number of managers, who had previously been trained in agile working, felt they did not gain new knowledge from the masterclass. This gives us an insight into the boundary conditions for the effectiveness of knowledge gains and the need to target masterclasses to managers according to their pre-existing expertise and experience:

> **Participant 129 (Public sector, GM lab):** "Not for agile working, no. I had a pretty solid understanding of that, partly because we have already done it in [their organisation] and partly because I've done it in other roles as well, prior to being in this administrative role."

Many managers reflected on agile working in their own workplaces. This led some to conclude that their organisations were using agile practices quite well already. Masterclasses prompted participants to recognise that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach to flexible working and encouraged a more flexible managerial style that is tailored to individual needs and preferences. Some participants explained that the masterclass was a helpful reminder that they needed to listen to the needs of their individual employees and not see staff as one homogenous group. They deployed new knowledge to make sense of their management challenge and to realise a need to be bespoke in their relational management regarding agile working.

The masterclasses provided some limited chance to share experiences and learn together and participants particularly valued learning that other managers were experiencing similar challenges in managing their agile teams. Through the breakout rooms, in particular, they were able to 'see' and 'hear' about the challenges that other managers were experiencing and this helped remove the obstacle that isolation poses to becoming a more confident manager of a contemporary line management challenge. Some of the newer managers found this especially helpful, feeling reassured that other managers, even those more experienced than them, were struggling with some of the challenges of managing an agile team:

> **Participant 62 (Private sector, GM lab):** "But I think I listened to others, and that was kind of making me feel a little bit secure in myself, like all right, okay, that's not me alone having this problem. That other people also are having a problem because of the agile working, even though it's not exactly the same."

The timing of the agile and secure masterclass (March-June 2021) lent itself to particular forms of knowledge being more readily absorbed. Organisations had been through Covid restrictions and were beginning to re-think how to structure work post-pandemic. They were often creating hybrid models of working. Accordingly, many of the managers were experiencing a myriad of remote working issues and were keen to learn how to mitigate potential pitfalls of a hybrid model of working. This issue of timing and national context caused managers to take most of their learning from the agile working section of the masterclass because it enabled them to make sense of immediate challenges. Reminding managers of even quite basic people management practices that could be implemented immediately to help manage change was valued as they negotiated this intense challenge:

> **Participant 1 (Public sector, GM lab):** "The session was fantastic. Firstly, it was really good to hear that others are having similar challenges, so I do not feel so alone in that respect. Equally, on that point, I don't think I appreciated that how much of a long-term cultural change we are going through in relation to the workplace, and management skills really need to change to accommodate that change. It also made me realise that I need to find time to remember the basics like regular 'virtual' check-ins with the team, and so on."

In contrast to agile working, managers were much less aware of secure work before the masterclass. Some reported that the masterclass helped them to 'understand it a bit more', indicating that some gained knowledge. When asked what secure work meant to them, participants made comments such as 'feeling secure in how you are treated at work', 'feeling secure in your job' 'knowing you can pay your bills', 'feeling valued', 'whether people fear redundancy' and 'what kind of contract people are on'. Some participants reflected back on what was taught or discussed in the masterclass in relation to secure work, making reference to the provision of secure contracts as well as some of the negative aspects of zero hours contracts in interviews.

This shows that they have taken on board some new knowledge.

Lots of managers said secure work was related to safety; for example, people feeling safe around colleagues and feeling able to share information freely and openly with team members. This is different to the usual academic discourse taught in the masterclass:

> **Participant 190 (Private sector, GM lab):** "I think it's the being physically safe, and having a safe environment where you're going to definitely go home at the end of that shift."

> **Participant 44 (Private sector, GM lab):** "Off the top of my head, if someone comes into work, they've got to understand that they're secure in that workplace for that day, if that's in an office, if that's within people's homes, working on the estate, working in a pandemic, even secure on the way to and from work, sometimes. You know, you might have vulnerable people working for you, disabled people working for you."

Many of the participants said that they hadn't come across the term secure work before the masterclass, with some stating that they didn't realise it was a concept. Nonetheless, they found learning what secure work is interesting, with some saying that they had come to realise that this was an area that they needed to "think about a bit more." It seems that managers were only at the start of the process of reflecting on secure work in their organisations. Others who did have some prior understanding of what secure work was mentioned that their understanding had been 'enhanced.'

Some of the managers did not engage with the new learning about secure work. Recall about the masterclass content was poor and they did not know what secure working is, suggesting they have not gained knowledge.

> **Participant 12 (Private sector, GM lab):** "So, I can't remember what secure working is, is it…? I don't know, is it remote working?"

> **Participant 62 (Private sector, GM lab):** "That's the bit I'm not quite sure of, even before I started the masterclass, this secure… I thought the secure, my kind of thinking of secure, the security, you use equipment, how secure then is your working with others and things like that."

Poor recall about secure working content may reflect how secure work did not seem like a timely problem for managers, especially in comparison to agile work which caught all of their attention as it was an obvious immediate challenge. Some said that secure work wasn't a term that was used frequently in their organisation and they were not familiar with it. This suggests that organisational and wider culture may be a further contextual factor when we consider how to gain manager attention. Low recall may also reflect the secondary role that secure work played in the masterclass: some commented that secure work wasn't covered in much detail and it felt "tagged on" (Participant

15). It may be that managers are less able to absorb information on two topics within a masterclass, especially when one is so timely it grabs all their attention and is given centre-stage.

6.2.2 Masterclass – Managing Values Based Recruitment

The Values-Based Recruitment masterclass was received positively by most of the participants. Comments such as 'it was very interesting', 'it was very good' or that the material was 'insightful' or 'refreshing' were common in participant interviews and portfolios. One participant stated that she felt that the topic of VBR was part of a revolutionary discussion. Widespread enjoyment of the masterclasses reflected the identification of a timely management challenge and construction of an online session that introduced new concepts and ideas for better practice that were interesting and practically useful.

In terms of learning, the VBR masterclasses enabled managers to gain knowledge, reflect and begin to make sense of their contexts and management options in new ways. It was common for them to report an improved understanding of what VBR entails and for it to land as an idea that was relevant to their practice. As one manager said: "VBR meant a lot more".

When asked about what new knowledge they had picked up about VBR in the masterclass, participants said they had learnt how to integrate a VBR approach into interviews, how to get the best out of a candidates in interviews and how to find out about candidate's values and personality as well as their qualifications and legislation:

Participant 240 (Public sector, ASC lab): "You know, what parts of the role do they enjoy, what challenges have they come up against; how do their life experiences and preferences fit in to what it is that I'm creating."

Much of this learning was generated in the exercise where participants were encouraged to think about how to bring in values to different areas of recruitment. This exercise was received well and many of the participants expressed that it had encouraged them to reflect and think about what they could do differently when they returned to their organisation.

Making sense of new knowledge led managers to think differently about their current recruitment practices and to start to think practically about how to incorporate VBR:

Participant 211 (Public sector, ASC lab): "So the value-based recruitment for me was a really good one, because it made me really think about when I do the recruitment, and question more things than I did previously…. and I'd just run with the questions that someone had set up and everything. Whereas now,

whenever I interview people, myself and the other [job title] manager, we do the interviews. So I've changed quite a few of the questions."

Throughout our data, managers talk about how our interventions improved their confidence. In the VBR masterclass, the combination of gaining new knowledge and reflecting boosted confidence because managers felt they were on firmer footing in understanding what VBR is and how it can be practised on the ground. As they made sense of VBR, some also felt confident to engage with other organisational actors involved in recruitment when using VBR:

Participant 203 (Public secto, ASC lab): "I now know more about this and how to apply this in practice."

Participant 71 (Public sector, ASC lab): "I feel more at ease with the topic now and able to have a dialogue with HR colleagues."

The generally positive reception to the VBR masterclass suggests that the topic was timely and relevant and so the line managers were open to learning and putting knowledge to work to change their practices. The material was also 'pitched' in an accessible way that helped them make sense of the implications of knowledge for practice. The masterclass provided new information and approaches in a practically useful manner. This reflects the value of working with stakeholders to identify the management challenge to be addressed and taking care to use both best practice evidence and knowledge about effective management learning approaches to design the masterclasses. It is evident that well designed online masterclasses can be enjoyable and useful for line managers in the Adult Social Care sector. In particular, they can enable managers to gain knowledge, enter a degree of reflection and start to make sense of their contexts and management options.

Some managers felt that the masterclass had offered an introduction to VBR but they wanted further knowledge and space to make sense of ideas and experiment with them. For example, managers became curious about the value of VBR for retention as well as recruitment and wanted to think about this more. This shows how a masterclass can act as a gateway for further learning:

Participant 133 (Public sector, ASC lab): "I still have more to learn as I feel I have only started to scratch the surface; I haven't yet looked at retention, for example."

It may have been that there was appetite for a series of masterclasses on different topics within the subject of VBR. However, our approach was to offer Peer Learning or Coaching as next steps because we proposed that these learning approaches would prompt more making sense and experimenting.

Contextual factors had in inevitable impact on what new knowledge managers acquired in the masterclasses. Further analysis of the data revealed that managers who had particularly pressing problems or challenges tended

to 'focus in' on aspects of the masterclass that were most relevant to the challenges they were experiencing. For example, managers who attended the VBR training and had upcoming interviews to run tended to focus on parts of the masterclass where values were discussed in relation to interviews and, when asked what they had learnt post masterclass, tended to highlight learning that linked to their most pressing issue. This 'type' of learner also had an influence on what information was taken from the masterclasses. Some managers explained that they were 'sponges' for new information and keen to attend as many things as possible. These managers seemed to absorb information from lots of different parts of the masterclass rather than being focussed on extracting knowledge that linked to a specific issue or pressing problem.

6.2.3 Peer Learning – Managing Agile And Secure Working

When asked what they had hoped to learn through the peer learning experience, the agile and secure participants explained that they were keen to gain others' views and thoughts on a variety of issues in relation to managing an agile team. They also wanted to network with people from other organisations. This reflects their appetite to gain knowledge from one another and to reduce the isolation that tends to militate against learning together.

Participants brought a range of challenges to the sessions to discuss such as how to manage underperforming staff, how to help colleagues struggling with mental health challenges (brought on by remote working), how to deal with being micro-managed after a long period of working remotely and how to deal with feelings of not being supported by colleagues, given new patterns of working. Notably, there was very minimal discussion of any aspect of secure working with participants being predominantly focussed on managing an agile team.

Managers talked about a range of different things that they had learnt during the agile and secure peer learning sessions. One participant explained how, from conversations in the sessions, she had gained a better understanding of her colleague's mental health issues and, since the sessions, had a clearer idea of how to manage this individual. This participant had gone on to set more realistic targets with her colleague and also learnt the importance of having clear and direct conversations with her about where she is and how she is performing. Thus, she had moved from gaining knowledge through reflecting and making sense to then develop her practice.

Another participant gained new insights into how she needed to manage expectations better with her team. This participant had been struggling to manage a woman who kept demanding new tasks. She explained how she had learnt that "The juggling of finding extra work was taking time away from actual work. The idea of someone wanting more was good but needed to be managed. Expectations

needed to be a managed for the colleagues." Managing others' expectations and also one's own boundaries was a theme raised by several participants in the peer learning sessions. A number of the participants indicated that they had learnt the importance of setting clear boundaries around their work as well as being more direct with others about their own needs. Some reflected on how conversations in the peer learning session had reminded them of the importance of holding regular 'check-ins' with their team to monitor wellbeing. Again, they had moved from gaining knowledge all the way to developing their practice.

Many of the participants felt that peer learning was valuable in enabling them see the different approaches other managers took to similar challenges. Through listening to other participants' reflections and experiences, managers discovered new ways of making sense of their own problems and options for managing and to start experiment with using these. The peer learning setting also helped managers to learn how to reflect on their own practice and find new ways of handling the emotional aspects of their work:

Participant 28 (Third sector, GM lab): "I have developed the skill of taking time out to think about my situations. To pause and reflect and to empathise with others. And to find a way of removing excessive emotions from my work life through finding an outlet for these elsewhere."

During the agile working peer learning sessions, the participants committed to experiment with various new practices, as follows. Many also started to experiment with these.

• Finding new ways of leading their team

• Delegating more effectively and sharing responsibility with colleagues

• Finding new ways to support other team members and achieve common aims

• Having weekly "check ins" with colleagues

• Being clearer with their own managers about how they want to be managed

• Spending more time reflecting on their immediate professional needs and aspirations

• Taking more responsibility for their own development at work

• Having stronger forms of communication with their own line managers.

Many of the agile and secure peer learning participants expressed an increased level of confidence in dealing with some of their work-place issues. It seems the peer learning sessions reduced their isolation, normalised their management problems and developed awareness that people management could be learned:

Participant 182 (University – third sector, GM lab): *"I definitely feel more equipped to manage a secure and agile team following this session. In terms of knowledge, the tools we have learnt have definitely improved my knowledge in this area, as well as my confidence. I am not quite at a level 10 yet, largely due to the fact we are still in a period of flux, with things to learn from that, as well as the fact I am still relatively inexperienced as a line manager in comparison to some of my peers. I am confident over time that will increase."*

Participant 254 (Public sector, GM lab) *"I think the peer learning has helped my confidence in managing in this way. I have enjoyed the sessions and the time spent with the other peers. Thank you."*

On the whole, participants found the peer learning to be a positive experience. The value of learning together in a peer setting was mentioned frequently. Participants found it reassuring that others in the peer setting had (or had experienced) challenges similar to their own, and they found it useful to tap into the knowledge and sensemaking of others as to how to approach these issues. The participants found the peer learning was an open and supportive environment where they could be honest and vulnerable about how certain challenges were making them feel, something that was felt to be missing in their own workplaces. This enabled a deeper degree of reflection and making sense of what needs to change to move forwards. Peer learning seemed to be a step change in some managers becoming more confident, self-aware and developmental managers:

Participant 28 (Public sector, GM lab) *"I have found real value in learning and sharing from others in these sessions. This felt like a very open and supportive environment. At times, my workplace hasn't always shared these features. By sharing I have opened myself up to the possibility of learning and recognising where I can improve – the vulnerability that this brings has brought significant rewards in the sessions. Knowing that there are like-minded, supportive people within workplaces in the geographical area has been very reassuring."*

In terms of contextual factors that may have influenced learning, it is important to highlight that the model of peer learning was adapted half- way through the VBR provision, reducing the time input from three hours to 90 minutes (see section 2 for a rationale for this). The data reveals that the shorter 'flash' peer learning sessions had a positive impact on learning as participants were more able to stay fully engaged through the shorter session as well as being more available to attend these events.

Group dynamics were a further contextual factor that positively affected learning. In most of the peer learning sessions, rapport was established quickly and a high degree of trust and psychological safety was established between the participants. Participants stated that they felt able to be open and vulnerable with each other which led to richer conversations and new insights and understandings being

gained. This was a pleasing and somewhat unexpected outcome for online provision as peer learning is traditionally considered a media that requires face-to-face engagement to build trust. Comments such as the following were noted by the facilitators:

"As last time, the participants offered each other lots of support and got the impression they genuinely cared about each other's success. They shared lots of knowledge and insight, and although the session was primarily knowledge-sharing, there were some great open questions too from [particular respondents] in particular, which showed they were being curious and inquisitive."

6.2.4 Peer Learning – Managing Values Based Recruitment

In interviews and portfolios, we were keen to find out what peer learning participants hoped to obtain from the experience. The VBR participants had a range of responses from wanting to understand what VBR is to gaining a clear sense of whether their own organisation fully embraces VBR. Others wanted to obtain some tips, examples and good practice around VBR. For example, finding new ways of gaining insight into a candidate's personality type when conducting interviews. It seems that managers wanted to gain new knowledge, reflect and make sense of their contexts and management options.

During the peer learning sessions, a range of VBR challenges were discussed. These included how to get the right skill mix of people in the team, how to attract people with the 'right values' who will want to stay with the team, how to get the most out of candidates during an interview and how to run an interview that goes beyond finding out about skills, experience and qualifications to discover more about the values and behaviour of a person. One participant expressed this as wanting to learn how to "dig through personal presentation of a well 'schooled' candidate, to find the real person."

When asked what they had learnt about VBR during the peer learning process, participants talked about a range of things. Knowledge was gained on how to assess VBR questions and responses in interviews, how to embed VBR questions in interviews and the value for the organisation in embedding values into recruitment practices. Participants also explained how, through conversations with peers, they gained knowledge into some of the different ways 'others' had implemented VBR and this gave them some useful knowledge for their own practice:

Participant 133 (Public sector, ASC lab): "I learnt what others had tried and some of their challenges. My peers made me think about things in a different way too and I thought this made me more reflective and open to learning."

Many of the participants also felt reassured that many of the recruitment challenges they were experiencing were shared by others. As they became more familiar with each other, the peer learning environment became a 'safe' space and a sense of community began to be fostered in many of the groups leading to a feeling of being professionally supported to develop:

Participant 125 (Public sector, ASC lab): "Yes, because it is better to work together and use each other as a point for reflection and planning. It also ensures we feel supported in our professional development."

During the sessions the participants reflected, made sense of their context and options and committed to experiment with various new VBR related practices. These included:

• Embedding new VBR questions in the interview process

• Introducing VBR ideas into the team

• Reviewing the recruitment process more broadly

• Changing job advertisements

• Reviewing methods of interviewing i.e. adding scenarios and role playing

• Developing a new recruitment tool kit.

Changing questions in recruitment interviews was one experiment that several participants committed to undertake. One manager explained, for example, how she wanted:

Participant 125 (Public sector, ASC lab): "To rethink the way I structure interview questions. The interview needs to be more of a 'story', the interviewee's story and interviewer's story, with questions that explore for the right connections (rather than just question and answer); e.g. values, principles, personality type, attitude, behaviour, self-awareness, reflection etc."

Many participants reported that peer learning led to increased confidence in dealing with some of the issues and challenges they had been facing in their organisations. Confidence arose from gaining knowledge, reflecting, making sense and experimenting. It also seemed to fuel the process of learning and experimenting and, so, becoming a more reflexive and developing line manager:

Participant 125 (Public sector, ASC lab): "More confidence in why it is important and the benefits of this approach."

Several line managers were still aware that, whilst new knowledge had been gained in relation to VBR, there was still much to learn. They may have benefited from a longer peer learning process. However, there were signs that they were better equipped to support this learning process themselves:

Participant 133 (Public sector, ASC lab): "I still believe I have a long way to go and more experience to gain and learn from before I can feel confident. However, I have enough knowledge, resources, and support to keep moving forward and learning."

On the whole participants, found the VBR peer learning process a positive experience in terms of learning and developing practice, with many stating that they had found the sessions 'really good' and there had been a lot of shared learning on all the issues raised. Others reflected on the range of different topics and sub-topics that had been explored and how making sense of new knowledge meant they were better equipped to deal with many of the challenges they were facing in their organisations.

6.2.5 Coaching – Managing Agile And Secure Working

When asked what they wanted to gain from coaching, managing agile and secure working participants made reference to a range of things. Some referred at the generic level to gaining people management skills and developing their own management style. Others wanted to learn to be more effective in the management of their team, to gain a better understanding of different types of secure and agile working, to look at ways of improving as a manager of agile work, to think and consider what good practice is and to gain a better understanding of the criteria and guidance regarding remote or agile working.

Participants brought a range of challenges to the coaching sessions such as managing capability issues when working remotely, effectively monitoring staff remotely, training staff with new IT systems when they are working remotely, managing staff with mental health issues in remote context and dealing with issues of employee engagement, motivation and productivity.

Managers gained knowledge on a range of issues and topics during the coaching sessions such as remote and agile working, new insights into how to adapt to the new world, different ways of thinking in relation to challenges (particularly the national challenge at this moment in history – returning to the office following Covid restrictions). From this, they reflected and made sense of their own situations better and considered their management options. They committed to experiment with a range of new practices such as booking days in the office with new members of the team, improving remote contact with their team, expecting more from their senior management in terms of updates and support, deciding on and adopting new hybrid working plans and discussing some of the mental health benefits of getting out of the office with the team.

6.2.6 Coaching – Managing Values Based Recruitment

When asked what they wanted to gain from coaching, some of the participants explained that they hoped they would come to understand VBR better and, in particular, how to begin to embed aspects of it in practice.

Some wanted to learn specific things such as how to incorporate values into interview questions alongside more skills based or competency questions. On the whole, the coaching participants did have some prior knowledge of VBR (some of which was obtained through the masterclass) but most had little experience of putting it into practice. When managers did not attend the masterclass, some of the coaching session was diverted into bringing the manager up to speed with key knowledge about VBR and the early ideas of how to use it shared in the masterclass.

All managers wanted to gain some new knowledge but the main task was making sense of their context and management options in light of knowledge and starting to experiment. Some 'newer' managers explained that VBR was an area in which they required development and they wanted to use the coaching experience to build confidence as a manager. Participants brought a range of VBR challenges to discuss in the coaching sessions. These included how to keep the interview process fair, how to frame interview questions around values, how to use the organisations' descriptions of values to develop interview questions, how to look at and identify flaws in current recruitment processes and how to overcome the subjective nature of scoring in interviews. Other challenges brought to the sessions included how to get the best from candidates and how to ensure that candidates fully understand questions in interviews.

Coaching participants explained that they had learnt a range of 'new things' during the coaching process. New knowledge and sense gained included how to improve existing recruitment processes in their organisation and embed values within them, learning around how their own organisation can support managers to develop confidence in VBR, increased awareness of the models and tools available to support with VBR and new awareness of their own personal values and how they link/ align with the organisation's values.

During the coaching sessions, participants committed to experiment with various new VBR related practices. Examples include:

- Extending and changing questions in recruitment interviews

- Updating job adverts

- Speaking with HR about changing job descriptions

- Speaking with newly appointed staff to review the induction process

- Looking at the qualities and skills of participants in a more in-depth way

- Updating job adverts, adding in video links to provide more insight into the job

- Speaking with people who are more senior in the organisation about changing recruitment processes and adding values questions.

One participant talked about how the coaching sessions had led to her wanting to undertake a 'project' about embedding values into interviews and linking this to retention. She explained how, through the coaching, she generated more ideas about the things she wanted to do in practice. As follows, she then committed to experiment with several things. Firstly, she planned on undertaking further research into the benefits of VBR. Then she planned on developing a detailed project proposal outlining how to embed values in interviews. She explained how through the coaching new ideas for things she wanted to do differently in practice were developed:

Participant 211 (Public sector, ASC lab): "I think the discussion became wider than my original thoughts as the conversations opened up more and generated more ideas, which was really positive. We discussed some of the challenges in relation to undertaking a project in relation to time and whether this would be alongside my normal work role / duties. As well as challenges around recruitment and retention."

On the whole, participants found the coaching to be a very positive and helpful experience. Many commented that they 'really enjoyed the sessions' and that they 'got a lot out of them'. Participants felt comfortable openly discussing challenges, concerns, and problems with the two coaches, noting that the coaches were 'supportive' and 'good listeners'. They felt that the coaching sessions generated a lot of new thoughts and ideas about how to improve recruitment and retention. Participants explained that they felt that the conversations in the coaching sessions created 'lightbulb moments' for them in relation to the topics that they brought to the sessions. This indicates that coaching enabled reflection and making sense that would not have been possible alone. Participants also mentioned that the coaching had increased their confidence in dealing with VBR issues:

Participant 200 (Public sector, ASC lab): "This has been very valued learning and enhanced my confidence and leaning."

Participant 11 (Public secto, ASC lab): "My knowledge has improved, I have become much more aware of models and tools available to support with values based recruitment and this will help build my confidence levels. I feel that it has led to positive changes in terms of recognising how we might be able to build on our recruitment process."

It is noteworthy that some learners also modelled the coaching approach of actively listening and questioning in a safe environment to develop their people management skills. So, the value of coaching went beyond learning about VBR.

6.3 Management Learning Challenge 1: Learning And Outcome Journeys And Thematic Analysis Of Outcomes

In this section, we follow the thematic analysis of learning in section 7 with an exploration of the outcomes of our learning interventions. First, we outline our rapid estimation of learning and outcome journeys. Then, we thematically analyse outcomes in our two Learning Labs. This is followed in sections 9 and 10 with case studies and across-case analysis, where we take a deeper dive into the relationship between context, learning and outcomes. An overview of our findings is found in section 10.

6.3.1 Rapid Estimation Of Learning And Outcome Journeys

Although our research is primarily qualitative and our key aim is to identify context, learning and outcome relations (rather than quantitative patterns), we know that commissioners of line management training are interested in the incidence of outcomes for our learners. Consequently, we present an estimation of line manager learning and outcome journeys that we produced via some rapid analysis (see Table 6 below). Two factors mean we report this as an estimation. First, our dataset is extensive and, as this task was undertaken after our thematic data coding was complete, it was not possible to re-visit every item of data to make a judgement about the journey of each respondent. We also did not have capacity to cross-validate judgements about whether outcomes have been achieved. Second, we can only report on outcomes that we observed and it is likely that there are more unobserved outcomes, perhaps particularly related to longer-term goals such as organisational change and good and productive work. For these two reasons, the figures that follow are likely to be an under-estimation of outcomes.

All interventions: gaining knowledge. Our first observation from Table 6 is that all managers (except for one) on whom we have data for the managing agile and

secure working and managing VBR learning interventions gained knowledge about better people management approaches.

Masterclass only. Three quarters of managers who took part in a masterclass only committed to experiment and 60% went on to experiment and/or changed their management practice (they expressed an intention to repeat the new practice or talked about it as a new norm or routine). For over a third of learners taking a masterclass only, there was evidence of a positive impact on staff and an improvement to good or productive work.

Masterclass and/or peer learning and/or coaching. Almost all managers who undertook a masterclass and one or two of the other learning interventions committed to experiment and four out of five went on to experiment and change their management practice. In around a quarter of cases, we detected a change to organisational practice, a positive impact on staff and an improvement in good and productive work. Taking all three interventions had the highest of these outcomes, although numbers here are small so caution is necessary in interpreting figures.

No masterclass but peer learning, coaching or both. Five out of six peer learners and coaches who did not attend a masterclass went on to experiment and improve their practice and one had wider outcomes. In our qualitative analysis, we discuss concerns about the depth of learning for some managers when they did not gain knowledge from a masterclass.

From this, we conclude that taking a masterclass alone has a surprisingly high degree of outcome in terms of beginning to effect management practice. As we expected, there is an even higher chance of managers experimenting and making changes if they also take one or more other learning interventions. In fact, a commitment to experiment was almost universal and follow-up and consolidation of new practice was observable in most of these cases. Learning also seems to have more spill over effects for organisations, staff and for good and productive work from longer learning journeys, particularly where these were underpinned by a masterclass, although the proportional differences here are more marginal. We explore the type and depth of changes made from different learning interventions more deeply in our qualitative analysis.

In Table 6, we also report the outcomes of managers who followed specific journeys (taking a masterclass and peer learning, a masterclass and coaching or all three interventions). There is some indication of lower organisational change following masterclass + coaching compared with masterclass + peer learning. This might relate to differences in the context of learners taking these routes (e.g. more experienced managers opting for peer learning) or it might indicate greater potential to learn practices that can change team working or have spill over effects in peer learning. As numbers in each group are small, these patterns are treated with caution and this finding is taken as raising an interesting question for our qualitative analysis.

Surprisingly, learners who took all three learning interventions had, on average, poorer outcomes than learners taking masterclasses and peer learning or coaching. Again, this may relate to the type of learner pursuing all three routes (e.g. they may be the least experienced, skilled or confident and they may be need greater scaffolding in basic people management skills to approach the specific challenges of managing agile and secure work and VBR). It may also be that three interventions consumes time that effectively displaces capacity for spending time on experimenting and creating changes, or that creating change from a longer learning journey takes more time. Again, these are questions to explore in our qualitative analysis.

Table 6. Rapid Estimation of Learning and Outcome Journeys in Management Challenge 1

Observed Outcomes	Learning Interventions Undertaken by Managers*					Total
	MC only	MC+PL	MC+C	MC+PL+C	P/C/P+C (no MC)	
Number of managers on which we have data	32	6	9	6	6	59
Gained knowledge	31 97%	6 100%	9 100%	6 100%	6 100%	58 98%
Commit to experiment	24 75%	6 100%	8 89%	6 100%	5 83%	49 83%
Experiment	19 59%	5 83%	7 78%	5 83%	5 83%	41 69%
Improved manager practice	20 63%	5 83%	7 78%	5 83%	5 83%	42 71%
Improved organisational practice	6 19%	2 33%	1 11%	2 33%	1 17%	12 20%
Positive impact on staff	12 38%	2 33%	2 22%	2 33%	1 17%	19 32%
Improvement to good and productive work	12 38%	2 33%	2 22%	2 33%	1 17%	19 32%

*MC – Masterclass; PL – Peer Learning; C – Coaching.

6.3.2 Outcomes From Managing Agile And Secure Work Learning Interventions In The Greater Manchester Lab

In this section we examine the 'evidence for better management practice' aspects of the Theory of Change for our managers Agile and Securing Work learning interventions (see Figure 2). We look at how Mangers experimented with, and implemented, practices to promote agile and secure work, examine the impact of these endeavours and their implications for good and productive work.

Experimenting with management practices.
In all the learning interventions, participating managers were encouraged to commit to experiment with new ways of managing for agile and secure work. There was a good deal of evidence in the research data of such experimentation taking place.

For some respondents, experimentation took the form of translating a new outlook developed from the training into a new way of approaching management tasks, or being more conscious of applying existing understanding. In the latter case the training had helped reinforce existing learning, and nudge it into a practical application:

Participant 129 (Public sector, GM lab): **"And therefore, I think that actually, you probably instinctively bring that knowledge through into some of your practice."**

Participant 44 (Line manager, Large private sector, GM lab): **"I think that was probably one of the things that I picked up 12 months ago when I was on my [different] course, that it's really important to check in, and I think it was a really good refresher point to think I need to remember that kind of commitment. So, I think I've tried to be more intentional about that goal and making that happen."**

In some cases, experimentation wasn't reported as a particular activity, but as willingness to try out new ways of managing – a genuine process of experimenting with developing as a people manager:

Participant 28 (Third sector, GM lab): **"I am very much keener to experiment with different approaches in style since these Peer Learning sessions. They have increased my confidence and made me feel supported in my work. The commonality of a lot of the issues we face about secure and agile working is similar and knowing that there are always solutions to challenges that can be talked through has been a real pertinent reminder for me."**

Participant 1 (Public sector, GM lab): **"I am going to try out a variety of the ideas that were expressed today to see which work for my team. This includes more virtual**

social interaction opportunities and more informal check-ins. I'm also going to start daily meetings with a 'Wacky question of the day'."

There were a number of respondents who gave examples of particular 'agile and secure' experiments that they had undertaken – as these extracts illustrate. The next quote shows how successful experiments can stimulate further experimentation:

Researcher (R) In the masterclass we asked you to experiment with trying out a different way of managing secure and agile work; what did you commit to trying out during the postcard activity?

Participant (P) Ask team how they are feeling, leading by example, giving time and space to talk.

R. How did that work out?

P. The above went well. I will action the other objectives in our mid-year reviews – career ambitions, development beyond the scope of the role, etc. Participant 16 HR Manager (Large private sector).

Others made small, but potentially significant changes around communication, to enhance employee experience of agile and secure work:

R. So you have done these more regular check-ins?

P. Yeah, sort of one-to-one stuff, and then also looking at better ways to communicate with the team……so we're trying to communicate with them to keep them updated so they feel safe and secure, and that they know that , actually, even if the company has lost loads of money, and that they know about that in Covid, that they've still got a job. Participant 190 (Owner Manager, Medium Private Sector, GM lab).

P254 Senior Manager (Third Sector, GM lab): "[I've been] Blogging about office return and discuss[ing the] benefits at our monthly huddle."

P254 Senior Manager (Third Sector, GM lab): "We are still experimenting and looking at how to encourage people in to the office to take a break from 'wfh' [working from home] and use the space as a social collaboration . The agile approach is still work in progress and individuals need to try all aspects out before we make a final decision on what is best. We are aiming to have all colleagues work in an agile way going forwards."

Finally, there were some reports of managers changing their own practices in ways that went beyond a focus solely on secure and agile work and which they felt benefitted them and those that reported to them:

Participant 55 (Public sector, GM lab): **"[I'm] Committed to being more fastidious about filling in my diary to show more than just meetings – needed to get into the**

habit of block booking work rather than just be doing it and leaving diary more available to others."

Participant 28 (Third sector, GM lab): **"I want to experiment with different ways of leading my team through delegating, sharing and admitting more vulnerability. I want to reflect on how I am working with a team of professionals and how we can support each other to achieve common aims – as a manager and leader, I do not necessarily always need to be aloof or distanced from the challenges my team are experiencing."**

6.3.2.1 Improved Manager Practice

There was good evidence of improved manager practice arising from the training. Some of these were concrete changes to practice – that we discuss later – others were changes in managers outlook and approach to being a manager. We start with some examples of that. The first two examples related to managers undergoing a process of 're-orientating' themselves, or preparing to do things differently as a result of the learning:

Participant 148 (Public sector, GM lab) **"So I think I'm preparing myself, should we say, to answer your question. I'm preparing myself as to what's to come. And I think what's to come is that the hybrid approach and how I'm going to communicate that to the rest of the team. And even action it myself".**

Participant 65 (Talent manager, Third sector, GM lab) **"I would like to do something based on those reflections I talked about before. Sort of my style, and think about how I am connecting to my team, or giving them something other than just tasks and things. So, I will carry on with that reflection piece. But I don't know if I would do anything specific to do with agile, or secure. Well, we will be doing things on agile, but it's coming organisationally, anyway."**

Other managers were further along with actioning learning and beginning to approach their management role differently:

Participant 179 (Public sector, GM lab): **"I committed to trying to think of agile working in a more rounded way (i.e. not just thinking about the location…….). I feel like my knowledge of agile working has informed discussions that my team and colleagues have had regarding a potential return to campus. I also try to think of my team's work in terms of outputs rather than just being present at set times, since people will work at the rhythms that best suit their particular set of personal circumstances and arrangements at home…… I hope to bring the new insights I have acquired to bear on any directorate discussions on a return to campus in the autumn."**

Participant 12 (HR Manager, Large private sector, GM lab): **"I listen and I take things in, and I'm always questioning. And I remember at the time I learnt stuff about agile, but I just brought that now into… it's gone in, the information's absorbed, I don't know."**

The latter quote touched on something that was commented on quite regularly, that the opportunity to do things differently, and the nature of the experiment and its timing, depended to some extent on the organisation context and other organisational initiatives.

There was evidence in the data of improved management practice in relation to agile and secure work which had appeared to have gone beyond a changed mindset and been translated into practice. For some managers these changes to practice were incremental:

P. I would say I'm doing a little bit of a better job with that at the moment, which is good. Yeah, just a little check-in to people, 'How are you going? How are you finding this?' There's been that change. 'Is it going all right or are there any issues you're facing?' I quite like hearing some of the issues people face and saying, 'Let's think about that problem a little bit. Have you tried this, or did you consider doing that?'

R. Do you think it's changed your practice as a manager?

P. I wouldn't say changed, like a from the top to bottom change. For me, you've got to be continuously improving, so I think it might have been one degree better or two degrees better or something like that. So, yeah, I think slightly more effective overall. (Participant 44 (Large private sector, GM lab).

Other managers reported changes in their approach which exemplified a move towards reflective management practice. In these cases, the reflection went beyond concern with secure and agile working to their management practice more generally. These are examples of responses to a question as to how respondents felt that the training had changed their management practice:

Participant 154 (Public sector): **"Definitely made me think more. It's definitely made me ask people if they're okay more. That's one thing that I took away from it, that I wasn't doing enough. You know, I think I'm a caring manager but I think that's one thing that I had a bit of a blind spot to, 'Is this working for you? Can we be doing this in a different way?' and asking them the question. Instead of just saying, 'This is what we're doing', saying, 'Okay, we are doing this but are you getting the benefits from it?' you know, the people who are working from home, are they okay? Do they need more interaction?"**

Participant 27 (Public sector): **"I previously have had the tendency to not spoon feed, but kind of you need to do this and you need to look at that and you need to do it this way, and be quite prescriptive. Whereas I'm a bit more mindful of not doing that now in terms of being a bit more suggestive and more asking them**

the question around 'what do you think you should do in this situation?' and 'what do you think would be the best outcome in this situation?', or whatever. Trying to empower staff to make their own decisions rather than me telling them what I think they should do."

Participant 114 (Public sector, GM lab): "Yeah, yeah......... In terms of putting the ownership on them… and not making it seem like it's my piece work, for one thing, and making them take responsibility."

6.3.2.2 Improved Organisational Practice

Here we report evidence of change that went beyond individual manager practice. This was change to wider team or work practices or spill over into practice in the wider organisation.

In this example, a manager explains how the training had changed their approach to managing and communicating with junior staff in his team:

Participant 254 (Senior Manager, Third Sector, GM lab): "I just assume[d] that people don't want to constantly have somebody over their shoulder and being told what to do. But some of the team require that. Some of the team need that, especially if they're quite young in their career, to just check in on them. So that's something that I've taken away from the masterclass and thought, okay, what do team members need and what can I do to change? And those, that extra bit of 15 minutes every other day, really does make a difference."*

The following manager describes how he moved from a 'top-down' to 'bottom-up' approach to managing his team:

R. And did you have a go at doing anything differently in practice as a consequence of being an attendee at the masterclass?

P. The one thing we did do, we gathered concerns, gathered people's views around what they want to see. So, trying to move a little bit from a top-down management style to that bottom-up engagement and that was an interesting exercise. And that's informing where we go to next, so I suppose that's one bit of direct influence across that.

R. So that practice came as a result of going to the masterclass?

P. Yeah, it was after the masterclass, yeah. Participant 150 (Public sector, GM lab).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the timescales of the project and the various contextual factors that are likely to intervene, we found limited evidence of the training impacting more widely on the organisations that the managers worked for. There were a couple of reports of this kind. One manager explained how the training

interventions had triggered conversations about agile working practices which led to investment in a review of service provision:

Participant 242 (Public sector Participant) "I did, however, have the opportunity to flag with colleagues and my manager my concerns around adopting agile working for our service providers, which has led to us considering this way of working more robustly in our workforce strategy and has allowed me to bring in external consultants to do a needs assessment on the ways in which our services can work."

As mentioned earlier in this section, most of the changes reported by managers related to, or emerged from, their learning on the topic of agile working. Changes to practice around secure working were much less in evidence. However, one respondent – a line manager in a public sector organisation - did report a seemingly significant change in organisational practice around security for employees. This manager reported that staff were feeling insecure:

Participant 15 (Public sector, GM lab) "… a lot of the team members were almost on six week rolling contracts because they are agency staff. Some of them felt like they were working incredibly intensely, but not knowing whether or not it would cease, if the programme would continue, if they were doing well".

He also recognised that this was creating a problem for motivation and performance and that there was something he could do about this, even if he could not give a secure contract:

Participant 15 (Public sector, GM lab): "But I think we reflected very strongly at that point that to get the most out of the team we needed to give them security that the job was still needed even if we couldn't physically change their contracts."

Following the masterclass, this respondent and their manager ran a training day to address this issue, which reassured employees by communicating commitments about job security, and...

Participant 15 (Public sector, GM lab): "built structures in there to give development pathways…."

Reflecting on the impact, the manager suggested,

Participant (15, GM lab): "and I think that intervention has helped the most from a teamwork side and is something that we have drastically grown…..To have formalised it a little bit more for them I think has helped."

The manager reflected on the role of the masterclass in bringing about this change, again underlining the theme of the training interventions building on existing understanding and tipping them towards a course of action:

R. That learning, was that something that you picked up directly from the master class? Did I pick that up correctly?

P. Something that maybe brought it a little bit more to light in terms of how important.. we needed to fix it. Because I think we ran then a session two weeks afterwards with our team. (Participant 15 (Public sector, GM lab).

6.3.2.3 Positive Impact On Staff

We endeavoured to track the impact of improvement to management practice on employees through the self-reports of managers who had been through the training. Evidence of direct impact on employees was less prevalent in the data than evidence of experiments with, and changes to, practice. This in part arises from our evaluation methodology where we primarily spoke to managers. However, there were some indications of positive impacts on employees.

In this first example, a manager explains how improvements in communications introduced since the training has led to a more tailored approach which enabled them to address individual needs in relation to agile working:

P. Since the masterclass, I've had conversations with my team to understand how they feel… really feel about returning to work [or] working from home. Having such conversations makes me understand as a manager how the team feels, and this will certainly guide my approach in returning to the office.

R. How did that work out?

P. Very well – I can guide my approach to each individual and work with them to make sure any changes best reflect their comfort. (Participant 148 (Public sector, GM lab).

A second respondent explained how her change in outlook and approach to managing agile work since the training had a practical benefit for an employee:

Participant 129 (Public sector, GM lab): "I've managed to sort out a colleague returning back to the office because that's what she needed for her own wellbeing. I'm being very mindful about how people feel about their roles [whereas] maybe [I] haven't before."

We were able to corroborate change with an employee in once case (Participant 52, Private sector). The manager reported prioritising staff activity to be more aligned with organisational strategic priorities and sharing company progress with her team that she thought led them to feel more secure. Her employee reported having more one-to-ones with his manager, a supportive return to work process, help with workload priorities and more frequent company information. The staff member said they would be likely to stay for longer because they felt happy that their work was secure and flexible and that he was being well managed. The productivity gain arising from strategic alignment of

priorities was a benefit of which the employee was less well aware than the impacts on their wellbeing.

6.3.2.4 Improvements In Good And Productive Work

We were interested to see whether the changes to practice as a result of the training led to improvements in good and productive work. Perhaps understandably, given relatively short durations of learning interventions and the relatively short time after interventions that we conducted interviews, we found limited direct evidence of this broader change, though there was some.

Here, one of the managers explains how their change in practice in managing remote working, fed through in the wider management of an employee's performance, with perceived positive outcomes for the employee:

Participant 44 (Large private sector, GM lab): "I just did the annual appraisal with the one staff member that I have at the moment … and that was good. I did say, 'I feel like over the last year you've really grown. I've given you a whole lot of space'. But I also said, 'Whilst I was willing to do that because I totally trust you and you do an amazing job, I do want to make sure we have some more check-ins just to make sure you're still on track and supported.' She was very pleased with how our conversation went. She said that she feels inspired and motivated again…. So, yeah, that's good."

In a similar vein, a different manager explained how the communication changes implemented to better manage agile working had led to a better, functioning, working relationship with a member of staff, with a specific outcome in the form of a training intervention for that employee:

Participant 62 (Private sector): "Yeah, I think it has been a lot better now. I now have very regular one-to-ones with him every four weeks, and then in between I'll call him, trying to speak to him [in a virtual meeting], because we have all the technology. So, it's better for me to just invest a bit more time to it. And without any sort of negative feeling about it, I just kind of take it on. So, thinking what I can do, making that change hopefully can help him. So, open up, be quite honest with him, but in a nice way; to let him know how I feel about it, and then to listen to what he wants to say. So, we have a lot better communication and we have it more often as well. So yeah, it has been improved a lot. I know that person better, and then I can put things that are a bit more suitable for him. And then purchased the online training for him, so he can use that as a resource to do a bit more training himself – like Excel and things like that – rather than depend on me to kind of teach him on the day-to-day."

A third respondent explained how changes in their approach to management led to better two-way

communication, which in turn, they felt, resulted in greater empowerment of staff, and better utilisation of their skills:

P. I've tried to share the learning, be more accepting of change and not feel as though it is always a failure of myself that I can't 'fix' things when in fact they aren't broken. Allowing staff to have a stronger voice and understanding that different mediums for conversations will result in different outcomes depending on the tone of the conversation.

R. How did that work out? What has helped or hindered you?

P. It has been working well and I do feel it has helped me feel less likely I have to fix the problems of others and allowed me to (what I feel) empower colleagues who have great skillsets but just need to be given a bit more freedom to deliver. (Participant 242 (Public sector, GM lab).

6.3.2.5 Conclusion

There is good evidence that many managers drew on the training provided to experiment with new approaches and techniques to manage secure and agile work. In some cases, this involved applying particular techniques that were discussed in the training sessions, in other cases it involved adopting a different approach or mindset. In some cases the experiments went beyond the specific focus of the training sessions, and into their broader management 'style'. Organisational circumstances strongly influenced the opportunity and need to experiment. The move to, and from, remote working during the pandemic provided opportunities to manage agile work, in particular, differently. However, particular organisational circumstances and rhythms affected the possibility for, and timing of, interventions. There was also evidence of managers embedding changes to their own management practice. Managers talked of adopting more 'bottom up' approaches to decision-making, empowering staff to make decisions, and generally more participative and communicative approaches.

There was also evidence of positive impact of experimentation and changes to practice for employees and organisational outcomes. This evidence was less plentiful, perhaps reflecting the time for interventions to take effect and challenges in tracking impact. That said, there were a number of reports of particular challenges that were successfully addressed, improvements to staff relationships, motivation and performance. Evidence, at this stage, of impacts on wider organisational practice, and good and productive work were more sparse, but there were some notable examples of this.

6.3.3 Outcomes From Managing Values Based Recruitment Learning Interventions In The Adult Social Care Learning Lab

In this section, we examine the 'evidence for better management practice' aspects of the Theory of Change for our Managing Values Based Recruitment learning interventions (VBR) (see Figure 3). We look at how managers experimented with, and implemented, practices to promote, examine the impact of these endeavours and their implications for good and productive work.

6.3.3.1 Experimenting With Values Based Recruitment

The interventions were designed to encourage managers to experiment with VBR practice. We report here on those who told us about their experimentation in either interventions themselves, learning portfolios or surveys or interviews. A high proportion of our learners experimented and made at least early signs of making changes to their practice that they intended to repeat or that had become new norms.

The SfC toolkits were felt to be a useful starting point for experimentation and some identified a need to open up conversations with senior management on VBR and to reflect on team values (P125/P133). Some appeared to focus more on their personal values than those of the organisation, perhaps reflecting a disconnect between wider value sets promoted at organisational level and those needed for caring. This was particularly so in public sector organisations, where values covered a wide spectrum of services and were not specifically focused on care. There was no sector-wide approach to value setting, as is found in the National Health Service (NHS, **https://www.hee.nhs. uk/about/our-values/nhs-constitutional-values-hub-o)** and the sector could usefully consider establishing these.

Discussions with teams to ensure that values resonated and reflected reality were also important (P4). A lack of a 'joined up' approach was noted, and one participant committed to redesigning the job specification criteria to reflect the necessary values (P229). A partial emphasis on values in only certain parts of the recruitment and selection process was noted by several participants, including a need to be clear on the values when using external agencies to recruit (P212). Another point raised on a number of occasions was the disconnect between values that employees were encouraged to display when working with service users and those displayed towards employees by organisations. For example, levels of dignity and respect afforded to front-line care staff employed on zero-hours contracts were questioned.

Context had an inevitable impact. Interventions were conducted during the pandemic, which created substantial pressures in the adult social care sector. This meant that, for some, while good intentions to experiment were created, it was not always possible to put these immediately into practice:

Participant 133 (Public sector, ASC lab):
"The values-based masterclass really set me off on that determination to do things in a very different way. So, I've re-looked at the job ad that we put out, as well. I haven't tweaked it yet, but... I think that when we do go back out to advert, that will be tweaked."

Others also wanted to change recruitment advertising, but needed to escalate this to gain organisational permission (e.g. P203). For many, there were limits to their autonomy which added a layer of complexity to their experimentation.

Nevertheless, we were able to identify numerous examples of experimentation, including working to translate values into real-life examples of practice that could inform interview questions (P299). Devising values-based questions was challenging for many: questions that reflected values were felt to be difficult to design and this was a key discussion point during the interventions:

Participant 212 (Public sector, ASC lab): "I want to discuss values in the team meeting to review recruitment questions used... ... Our bag of questions that we use and whether the team could come up with any other questions that we could ask. How are we attracting and how are we assessing that person? Do we need to do it a different way rather than always face to face? Could it be that we could be doing some practical scenario work with them? And/or some practical work-based assessments with them."

Others also wished to introduce case studies to draw out the values (P259) and scenarios and role plays (P52), but that this had not yet happened and these were felt to be challenging in a period of online recruitment (P133). The need for a more discursive interview to assess people's values and share the organisation's own was identified (p125), alongside involving employees in advertisement design so that values are reflected (P299 and P261). P11 conducted a survey of new staff to find out their experiences of the recruitment process and hoped to put together a project proposal around embedding VBR in the interview process. Others wanted training service users to be part of the VBR process (P53, P125), although the pandemic made this difficult, and some committed to reviewing induction programmes to ensure that they developed and reinforced the values, using team members as mentors (P204).

6.3.3.2 Improved Manager Practice

Following our theory of change, learning interventions may create improved manager practice. Given the relatively short timeframe of our data collection, we consider that an improvement to manager practice is an intention to repeat a practice after experimentation or the introduction of a new practice as a norm without first consciously 'experimenting'.

We note again contextual pressures, whereby the pandemic had exacerbated demands in an already strained sector and 'everything is done on the hoof at the moment as it's so busy' (P261). Despite this, there was evidence of improved VBR practice:

Participant 133 (Public sector, ASC lab): "I picked up some skills around how to ask a question especially around masked response. Also, I have picked up new skills to confidently recruit staff who have the values and skills I am looking for to join our team, be compatible with the team and have the right attitude towards the area of work they have applied."

Others also felt better equipped to conduct VBR processes and reflected:

Participant 125 (Public sector, ASC lab): "The five stages of [SfC] value-based recruitment was new to me... I really like the five stages. And what's really, really important for me is that I need to be more prepared when doing interviews. So, instead of that last minute, 'Oh quick I need to put some questions together'. I'll confess that does happen quite a lot, I need to be a lot more prepared about what outcomes I want... The interview needed to be more of a story.. with questions that explore the right connections, rather than just question and answer. So [for] example, values, principles, personality type, attitude, behaviour, self-awareness, and reflection should be some of the things that you're looking for, rather than just direct business questions."

Participant 200 (Public sector, ASC lab): "You know, I just thought this was so fascinating, and I learned more about him as a person, listening to his [story], than I would have done asking him, 'Well tell me about how do you...?'" So, I thought, "Yeah, ... that's brilliant. You're interested in people. You'll go that extra mile to..." .. So, yeah, it was good to do that because... the interviews felt richer."

VBR could make the interviews more 'fun', moving beyond a boring approach of getting the same things out of people to eliciting different responses, and the interviewer and interviewee being more involved. The benefits of a holistic assessment of the candidate were also widely cited (P235). Others suggested that VBR questions that replaced knowledge and skills questions had worked well and that:

Participant 133 (Public sector, ASC lab) "I was able to interact more freely with the interviewee without necessarily needing to prompt them around the question and candidates seemed at ease as the flow felt natural."

P133 spoke about how they researched VBR and identified 'non-traditional' questions that focused on 'Tell us about yourself' and 'What is it you want to get out of [the role]?'. Many participants identified the benefits of this approach:

P136 (Public sector, ASC lab): "One of the interview questions then was, 'When you're given a new case, how would you approach that case?' It's one of those where there's not necessarily a right answer or wrong answer, but what [candidate] had given me was all the values rolled into one, without even saying, 'I'm positive, I'm accountable, I'm courageous, I'm kind'. What she'd actually done was, she'd demonstrated all that in her answer, and I thought that's really good.... we felt that we'd given them all a good opportunity, we tried to get the best out of them. And we sort of put our values at the heart right from the beginning".

Participant 211 (Public sector) "It brought out a lot of different information really. Not your run of the mill stuff... It made them think on the spot."

Participant 133 (Public sector, ASC lab): "VBR has really opened up my mind and the way I look at people, more of an eclectic, what they can bring to a team to get, hopefully, a more rounded team."

VBR facilitated both the candidate in sharing their personal and professional values and the organisation in sharing its own, participants suggesting that the latter was important and could attract candidates to work for the organisation (P125).

Others noted that some candidates had struggled with the questions and needed support and prompting to answer them:

Participant 211 (Public sector, ASC lab): "It's almost like they're not quite sure what you mean by an ethical dilemma. So that's why we'd give them an example, such as you see someone take a purse, would you challenge them? That values stuff and everything. But I think it makes people think."

They also suggested that a move away from a traditional model could be 'nerve racking' and require confidence. A shift to VBR could require more support for candidates who are not used to this approach.

6.3.3.3 Improved Organisational Practice

The section above focuses on improved manager practice which, according to the Theory of Change, can create benefit wider organisational practice. We define improved organisational practice as

a positive change to team or organisation work practices or spill over to wider organisational practices or policies. There were several examples of this. For example, some had completely redesigned the recruitment and selection process, starting with reworking recruitment advertising, changing interview questions and revising job descriptions. They had also discussed revising the approach to seeking references with HR, and with senior leaders the need to revise the team web profiles so that they reflected the values presented in the job advertisements (P203, P211). Others had used videos linked to recruitment advertisements to communicate the values (P200):

Participant 203 (Public sector, ASC lab): "It actually starts much sooner that I imagined. For example, publishing the organisational values on our website, tailoring the job advert etc... Most of the questions we use are skills based and do not actually demonstrate someone's skills, just their knowledge."

Participants also noted that VBR required changes post-selection and that, for example, induction needed to be revised to reinforce values:

Participant 133 (Public sector, ASC lab): "The staff, themselves, have gone off and found their own materials.... people have been sharing materials, and said, "Right, put that in our induction pack." That'll be good to be used as people are building their induction pack. Now we've got a small group of new, and existing staff working on the induction pack, as well."

Another manager worked to set up a buddy system for new starters (P261), using Skills for Care processes. They identified both a buddy with the desired values to support recruits and support for the buddy in the role so that they would feel valued.

6.3.3.4 Positive Impact On Staff

Again, following the theory of change, improved VBR practice could have a positive impact on staff. Some participants reflected that they had positive feedback from candidates who felt that the organisation was genuinely trying to get to know them (P133). One had used VBR and had:

Participant 299 (Private sector, ASC lab) "Some lovely feedback that [the new employee had] got a really good insight into the organisation, [we] made a really good appointment."

Another candidate reflected on their experience:

Participant 200 (Public sector, ASC lab): "There was three of us on the panel and [the candidate] didn't feel that they had been successful at the end of the interview, but we can't give things away because we have to treat everybody as equal. They had emailed

us shortly after the interview and said how welcoming and how calm and she was listened to and how we made her feel."

The participant went on to say that the candidate felt that they had not performed well at interview, but had in fact been offered the job. The participant went on to say:

Participant 200 (Public sector, ASC lab): "I've never known anybody after the interview emailing you to say that they felt comfortable and that I made them welcome and at ease, that's the word."

Another suggested that some of their new recruits were displaying really positive behaviours, taking a real interest for example in induction:

Participant 240 (Public sector, ASC lab): "Respecting and trusting individuals' rights, their abilities, their choices, their resilience. And I think that that is the closest I've come to any training to address some of the issues that I've created, that I've ever had."

Values could also be used to holding each other to account and drive ownership and delivery (P133). Adopting VBR was also felt to have supported employee well-being, particularly during the pandemic:

Participant 25 (Third sector, ASC lab): "Certainly, the newer members of staff kept saying to me and the other managers, 'Well, this is such a great team to be part of. Everyone supports each other. It doesn't matter who you go to, you're going to get support and you're going to get help. Nobody says I haven't got time to answer you'. That was exactly the sort of team we'd been trying to create and it has shown that it [VBR] works."

6.3.3.5 Improvements In Good And/Or Productive Work

The end point of the theory of change is that there will be improvements in good and productive work. We recognise that inevitable limitations in access to participants plus data collecting relatively quickly post-interventions mean our data here are somewhat sparse. Although our rapid review of manager learning and outcome journeys, above, does detect these kind of changes in around a quarter of cases. Here, we outline what is possible based on the experience of a relatively small number of participants and consider improvements in quality of recruitment, performance, and retention.

Taking first quality of recruits, a number of participants felt that using VBR had significantly improved this:

Participant 133 (Public sector, ASC lab): "The couple of people we've recruited to recently. Well, [person

1]'s only just started, but we appointed [person 2] on the back of that[VBR] process, and she's fabulous. She's.... such a can-do, thoughtful person. So, I'm certainly really chuffed with the appointments.... So, I think the interview experiences have been different, and have been better."**

VBR had supported selection of staff that had potential, rather than not being able to appoint:

Participant 200 (Public sector, ASC lab): "I've had a success with the last two recruitments. They are very good staff. ... I was off two weeks ago and [one of the other managers was] finishing off the recruitment part for me and they turned around and said 'you've got a good egg there', meaning that I've done well with the recruitment."

VBR also supported performance, both improving it and tackling under-performance. One participant suggested, for example, that they had noticed newly appointed managers displaying really positive behaviours, e.g. taking a personal interest in staff induction (P4) and another even that it had improved their own performance:

Participant 240 (Public sector, ASC lab): "Whenever I'm supervising staff, particularly maybe staff that I find a little bit challenging, I feel like [the values] have made me take more of a stance of listening, rather than telling and saying. And being less directive in the advice that I give to the team."

The values also provided a framework for tackling under-performance:

Participant 133 (Public sector, ASC lab): "Rather than kind of get drawn into all the things that I'm struggling with them about. ... yeah, some of her behaviours and values are lacking too. So, I thought, "Right, really, really model values, and behaviours, and attitudes, and so on." In the hope that it will rub-off on her, as well, and get her very much involved in the values contract that we did with the team."

Participants found the interventions motivational, one who did the masterclass and then peer learning saying:

Participant 133 (Public sector, ASC lab): "I felt so motivated after the masterclass- we are a nugget away from making a difference."

A theme of team identity (P133), and looking after each other despite a difficult context and fatigue, was apparent, alongside the beginnings of a wider cultural shift.

Finally, there were some example of VBR's role in retention. One participant was using SfC resources and working to embed values in a retention strategy, seeking to inform and influence senior management to work more proactively with values:

That said, some participants did note that VBR did not always support retention. One example was given of using VBR to recruit strong employees, but there then being a tension between that and the requirements of the job. For example, those with strong values may not be sufficiently flexible to take on the required shifts. How to accommodate that within a values-based approach could be challenging.

6.3.4 Conclusion

Values based recruitment is a relatively complex set of practices that sit within a wider question about the values that underpin the adult social care sector and how that relates to employment relationships with staff, team dynamics and wider organisational practices. The need for a sector-wide approach to value setting and deeper organisational engagement with values based

management is an underlying condition on which a deeper engagement with VBR depends. Managers welcomed a chance to experiment with a range of ways that values can be embedded in attracting applicants, recruiting, onboarding and retaining staff. Some needed to gain organisational permission to make even quite small changes, while others had more discretion to innovate. Managers did often experiment with the interview process, in particular, and some shared the process of making sense of how to experiment in teams and this created organisational change.

There was some evidence of VBR supporting efficiency by enabling better appointments, building team motivation and identity and offering a framework to tackle under-performance. VBR also motivated managers themselves and there was some evidence of it supporting retention. Working with staff with the 'right' values also raised challenges, particularly in matching the availability of staff with the right values with the hours and locations of care demanded by service users. Adult social care also continued to struggle with a lack of quality of applicants. Under-staffing continued to create pressure for managers and often leads to the use of agency workers who are not necessarily recruited using VBR.

6.4 Deeper Exploration Via Case Studies

In the sections above, we used thematic analysis to explore how learning works and what outcomes occurred from our learning interventions. We have also begun to identify how contexts shape this process. In this section, we use case studies of particular managers to explore in more detail the relationships between context, learning and outcomes. This is crucial to achieving our ultimate aim of identifying how context + mechanism = outcome (C+M=O) and identifying CMO configurations that do or do not work to produce our desired outcomes.

We initially selected cases with positive outcomes so we could explore in detail the context and learning relations that produce success. We also commissioned some additional follow-up interviews with some of these managers to find out longer-term outcomes and to hear from employees about impacts on staff. Unfortunately, there was a low response to this endeavour but where we have this data we do use it in case studies.

In order to explore what factors inhibit success, we supplemented our more positive cases by analysing managers with few or no outcomes from participating in learning interventions. We have also ensured that all styles of learning intervention are included in our case studies. We present these in two sections, focusing on the managing agile and secure work learning interventions in the Greater Manchester Learning Lab and the managing values based recruitment learning interventions in the Adult Social Care Learning Lab.

Following our case studies, we present some comparative analysis of cases in section 10. This is where we start to really pull out C+M=O relations. Our report then concludes with an overall discussion of our findings in section 11.

6.4 Case Study 1: CARRIE
(Greater Manchester Learning Lab)
(Participant 65)

Developing Capability to Manage Agile and Secure Work

Context (Third sector)

Carrie is the manager of a small specialist team for a service provider. She has five years management experience. Carrie explained that her organisation doesn't have any policies on agile working – 'they are being written', but nonetheless managers were facing challenges in managing agile working, particularly in the context of changing working patterns that resulted from the pandemic. Carrie felt that a particular challenge for managers was trying to be supportive of staff in dealing with their own personal challenges in remote working – as was encouraged by the organisation- but at the same time delivering on the organisation's agenda to move to a high performing culture. Also, she found that the general job of being a good manager was harder when working remotely from her team. So, a combination of the wider context of the pandemic, organisation specific factors and her own thirst for knowledge, made the training timely for Carrie.

Carrie attended a masterclass, but not peer learning or coaching sessions. She was attracted the masterclass as it was on a topical issue for her organisation (particularly agile working) and the approach suited her learning style – learning from experts, acquiring knowledge and limited interaction.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass. Carrie explained that, in relation to agile working, "there was a lot that I know already", but that she liked learning the academic theory that lay behind this **[Gain knowledge]**. 'Secure work' wasn't a term that she was familiar with, and not one used in her work, so she approached that aspect of the training with an open-mind, though she didn't feel that she came away from the masterclass with "anything new" on that subject. Carrie describes herself as a 'terrible note-taker' and said that she had taken extensive notes in the session, particularly around different conceptions and aspects of agile working. As she later used these notes as a structure for making sense of her own practice and helping other managers to do the same, we can say that they enabled making sense. The content on secure working was less relevant, though she was interested to hear definitions.

Carrie said that she was aware that many people like a more participatory style of training, but she liked the masterclass as it was "input" rich, and she could learn from experts **[Gain knowledge]**. Though she also felt she benefited from the discussion in the 'chat' during the sessions, and also some of the questions posed by the facilitators **[Learning together]**. A question about how managers can 'role-model' behaviour caused her to reflect on her own practice in a novel way [Reflect]. Conversely, she said, the very interactive peer-learning and coaching sessions would not have suited her learning style. Overall, Carrie felt that the session was "really informative", she 'wanted to hear everything the academics were saying', and described that as her "favourite bit" **[Gain knowledge]**.

Outcomes

In this section, we record outcomes with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to outcomes in our Theory of Change.

We asked Carrie whether she had done anything differently as a result of the training and she replied, "I'm not sure that I have, which is useless, isn't it". This wasn't helped, she said, by the fact that she was away from work in the fortnight immediately after the masterclass; it appears that she lost some momentum. Carrie then qualified her view that she had "done nothing". She explained that she keeps her notes on agile working and uses them as a checklist when working with managers who have a less good understanding of the topic to ensure that no issues are overlooked **[Improved manager practice]**, **[Improved organisational practice]** She also said that she often reflects on the content of the training when thinking about her own challenges as a manager. As a result, she is less sympathetic to discourses around management "failure" in her organisation, recognizing that managers themselves are facing their own challenges in working in an agile way which will affect what they can reasonably achieve. This has made her more supportive as a manager herself, she says **[Improved manager practice]**. Equally, the pressures that she has been facing in her management work made it difficult for her to implement things she learnt in the training. "It is easy to forget, 'Oh, am I role-modelling now?', because you are just trying to get through". Also, she suggested that constant organisational change makes it harder to 'fit in' basic things (suggested in the masterclass) such as having regular informal 'check-ins' with staff.

Carrie: How Context + Learning = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge ***	Learning together *
Reflect*	Experiment*
Make sense*	

Outcome

| Improved manager practice ** | Positive impact on staff |
| Improved organisational practice* | Improvement in good and/or productive work |
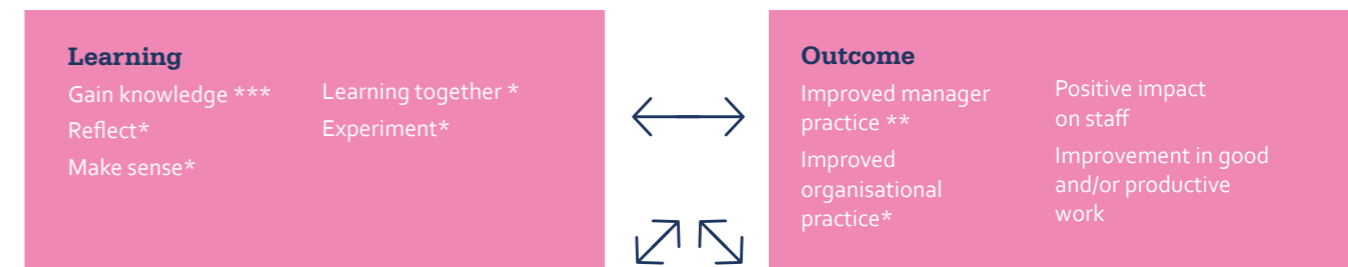
How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Carrie's own inquisitive outlook and specific learning style made the masterclass attractive.

+ The agile working aspects of the training were made timely by pandemic conditions, organisational challenges around agile work and, in particular, pressures on Carrie to manage competing organisational agendas. Carrie's own challenges in working and managing remotely gave the training additional relevancy.

+ The match between the delivery of the masterclass and Carrie's own learning preferences facilitated learning.

- The opportunity to learn more from peers or the facilitators, reflect and make sense that was available via peer learning or coaching was not accessed; this learning says she would prefer longer masterlcasses to fit with her management style although it is possible that she would benefit from more interactive learning if she was incentivised to give it a try.

+ Carrie's own position as a manager of agile workers, and an agile worker herself, enabled her to draw on the training to reflect on her own practice immediately.

- Personal circumstances (absence) and day-to-day organisational pressures constrained Carrie's capacity to put learning into practice.

6.4 Case Study 2:
DAVE
(Greater Manchester Learning Lab)
(Participant 28)

Developing Capability to Manage Agile and Secure Work

Context (Third sector)

At the time of the training, Dave was a senior manager in a small third sector organisation. He was new to the sector though he had management experience in his previous role. He has since been promoted. Dave had not previously had any formal management training – his manager was not proactive about him engaging in management training, but was supportive when Dave suggested attending the GELL training sessions. Dave felt that the training would be useful as he was new to the sector, and wanted to "step back and reflect". The organisation had limited HR policies and only one HR officer, which led to a lack of direction for managers on HR issues, and a lack of operational support. Dave explained that some HR decisions were taken centrally, while in relation to others there was scope for managers to develop their own approaches. The pandemic was creating a number of challenges for Dave's organisation. In particular, there was a move towards remote work and then back to hybrid and on-site work, which created a number of challenges for managers. As a result, Dave felt that the GELL training was very timely. We can see that a range of individual, organisational and wider contextual factors came together to make the training relevant in the moment.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass. Dave reported that he found the masterclass useful in gaining information and ideas. He said, "I would have a lightbulb moment and write it down" **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**. The session prompted him to reflect on his practice and learning needs **[Reflect]**. Overall, he felt that he emerged from the masterclass with, "a clearer understanding of agile and secure work, and ideas to better support new starters" **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Make sense]**.

Peer Learning - Dave found these sessions very enriching and enjoyed learning together with people from different backgrounds and sectors. He reported a sense of togetherness in the sessions, with everyone wanting to gain something positive from them **[Learning together]**. He commented, "I took a lot from the sessions, it was the first time I'd really had the opportunity to network.", suggesting that they reduced isolation. In practical terms, the peer learning session provided Dave with an opportunity to talk through issues **[Make sense]**. The commonality of issues among participants provided reassurance for Dave that his management challenges are normal **[Reflect]**, and also an opportunity to find solutions collectively **[Gain knowledge]**. This gave Dave confidence that solutions could often be found to difficult problems. He explained that the fact that the discussions were very solution-focused (i.e. based on "live" problems that participants had brought) was important to him **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Make sense]**. After the peer learning sessions, Dave reported that he wanted to "experiment with different ways of leading my team through delegating, sharing and admitting more vulnerability" **[Intention to experiment]**.

Outcomes

In this section, we record outcomes with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to outcomes in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass. Dave used his 'lightbulb' moments from the masterclasses to experiment with and consolidate changes to his management practice **[Experiment]**, **[Improved manager practice]**. For example, he changed his approach to one-to-one meetings with staff, and team meetings, and to the way he set objectives for this team members. He also experimented with regular coffee breaks across regions, and fortnightly catch-ups with other new managers **[Experiment]**. Despite these developments, Dave reported that his own increased workload, and limited "mental capacity" resulting from that, affected his ability to implement what he learned.

Peer learning. Discussions in the peer learning sessions enabled Dave to tackle an issue with his own manager who had started to 'micro-manage' him in ways that he didn't find helpful or productive during the pandemic. The peer learning enabled him to see this from his manager's point of view and to become less emotionally involved in the situation. Between them they worked out new

ways of managing their working relationship, and he felt that a difficult situation had been navigated well and in a manner that wouldn't have happened if had not attended the training **[Improvement to organisational practice**, **[Improvement to good and productive work]**. Dave has also, as a result of the training, set out a plan to build and develop his team over the next 6-12 months, promising some wider team and organisational benefits **[Improved manager practice]**, **[Improved organisational practice]**. Dave reports a change to his overall approach to being a manager **[Improved manager practice]** since attending the GELL training. He feels that he is much more confident and 'authentic' as a manager, and able to admit his own vulnerability. This in turn enables him to find solutions with his staff **[Improved organisational practice]**. He no longer tries to 'do everything and be everything' as a manager. He reports feeling less "emotionally invested" in his management work, but more professional and diligent in his approach **[Improvement to good and productive work]**.

6.4 Case Study 2: DAVE
(Greater Manchester Learning Lab)
(Participant 28)

Dave: How Context + Learning = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge *** Learning together *

Reflect* Experiment*

Make sense*

Outcome

Improved manager practice **

Positive impact on staff

Improved organisational practice*

Improvement in good and/or productive work

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Lack of previous training and relative isolation made Dave keen to learn, particularly to learn from others.

+ Change in his role (promotion) made training timely and is likely to give him more chance to effect change.

+ The pandemic meant that there were agile work challenges to meet and, experiment with.

+ Flexibility in organisation policies (in some policy areas) meant that he could effect change.

+ More of a reflective approach following training and experiments led to increased confidence to develop and experiment further.

Lack of manager autonomy (in some policy areas) meant that effecting change was difficult.

Lack of HR infrastructure may have been a barrier to change spreading more widely.

Increased workload, and resulting lack of 'headspace', limited his ability to implement change after the masterclass. Peer learning was required to create this space.

6.4 Case Study 3: GARY
(Greater Manchester Learning Lab)
(Participant 103)

Developing Capability to Manage Agile and Secure Work

Context (Private sector)

Gary is a manager for a service provider. He directly manages one member of staff, who in turn manages a team of nine. He has around 15 years management experience, including some in the commercial sector and has been in his current role for about a year. Gary says that people management "doesn't sit naturally with him' and describes himself as 'not a natural leader". He says that he has done lots of management training over the years, in the form of ad hoc training days. Gary reflects that, in his experience, people get promoted to management positions and then have to, "kind of get on with it". We might think of Gary as an accidental people manager. Gary reflects that his organisation offers training for more junior managers, but nothing structured for middle and senior managers. Gary did complete an MBA, which he regards as the most valuable management training he has had as it provided him with foundational knowledge and techniques.

Gary attended a masterclass. He explained that his was motivated to attend this as he likes to keep up to date with new knowledge and thinking, but also because the topic was interesting. He was curious to see whether the latest thinking on agile working chimed with his own experience, and secure working was a new idea that he wanted to explore.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference [in bold/brackets] to the relevant learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass. Gary didn't feel he learnt a great deal new about agile working, as he found that his knowledge was already good as a result of his MBA. His organisation was already "doing" agile working, as Gary understands it, though its approach to response times to customers and so on. Flexible working, which Gary understands as being distinct from agile working, is covered by existing organisational policies, so he was also familiar with these aspects of the topic. Although Gary was familiar with aspects of (in-)secure working - such as zero hours contracts, temporary contracts - he'd not previously thought of them as linked concepts under the banner of 'secure working' [Reflect]. He felt that the insight was useful and that, while it didn't impact on his thinking about his management practice because his organisation was already offering the various aspects of secure working and there was nothing that he felt he could do to alter/improve that, it did have a profound impact on how he thought about his customers, many of whom were in insecure work. He explained that he had people on the phone to him in tears saying, "I've got no money, and I can't pay", and these were people "who had paid religiously week in and week out". Gary elaborated, "when we talked about it in the masterclass, it really brought it home to me, and a penny dropped... oh my god, I deal with people like this all the time" [Make sense].

Gary didn't go on to join a peer learning set or engage in coaching. He explained that an earlier experience of coaching hadn't been valuable to him. His reluctance to engage with peer learning arose from a concern about working with managers in other industries with different management philosophies – something that he had come across in his MBA. He felt that people's experiences were so different that he couldn't learn from them, and in some cases didn't wish to. Gary said he would have considered peer learning with other managers in his own industry.

Outcomes

In this section, we record outcomes with reference [in bold/brackets] to outcomes in our Theory of Change.

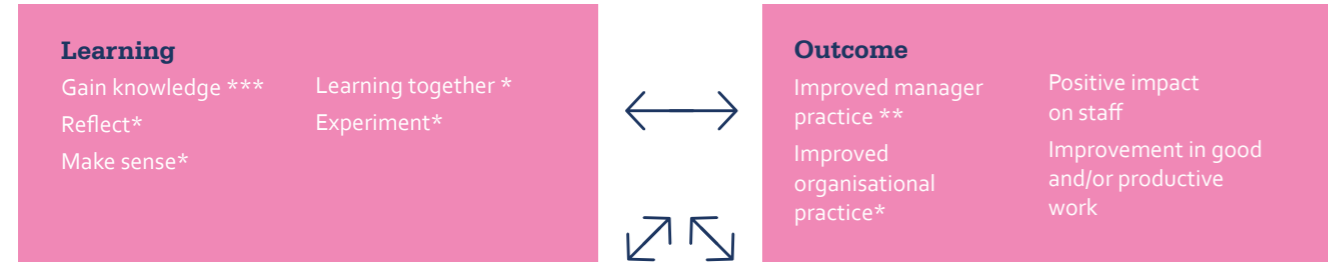Gary said that he had not made any specific changes as a result of attending the masterclass. He felt that with agile working he was already doing the kinds of things suggested in the session, and that secure working wasn't an issue in his organisation as it was very strong on offering security to staff. In this sense the masterclass didn't address the particular management challenges that he was facing at the time. He did have other challenges, mostly around an underperforming member of staff, which he referred to regularly in his interview, but it is clear that the masterclass didn't address that issue. Other learners brought such issues to peer learning or coaching, sometimes even if it meant drifting from the topic advertised, but Gary did not foresee this opportunity and the facilitators were loathed to mention it in case there was too much subject creep (raising the question of how flexible training should be to make it timely even if this sacrifices focus). In a number of respects the training (at least on the surface) wasn't particularly timely for Gary – at an individual level it addressed his perennially curious outlook, but there was nothing in his immediate circumstances, those of the organisation or wider context that made the training particularly appropriate at the time.

Gary: How Context + Learning = Outcome

Learning		Outcome
Gain knowledge *	Learning together *	None in relation to people management practice but possible improvement in customer management.
Reflect*	Experiment*	
Make sense*		

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Gary's general curiosity about management ideas stimulated him to attend the masterclass.

+/- Lack of training offered in his organisation for managers at his level appeared to be a factor in his looking for ad hoc training to attend (though not necessarily relevant training).

+ Gary's experience of work insecurity in his relations with clients enabled him to see the impact of insecurity on employees and the importance of secure work. It made the training resonate.

- Gary's previous management experience and knowledge (from an MBA) meant that the material on agile working wasn't new to him.

- His organisation's policies and practices on both secure and agile working were well developed, so there wasn't scope for change.

- Gary's previous negative experience of coaching was a barrier to him engaging.

- Gary's experience of working with peers in other organisations (from his MBA) deterred him from engaging in the peer learning sets.

- There was nothing particularly timely about the training, either in terms of his own immediate needs, or development needs, or from the context of the organisation. Gary did not feel able or motivated to 'push the envelope' of the topic to bring his current people management challenge (under-performance) to peer learning or coaching.

6.4 Case Study 4: MAGGIE
(Greater Manchester Learning Lab)
(Participant 52)

Developing Capability to Manage Agile and Secure Work

Context (Private sector)

Maggie works as a Business Development Manager in a commercial organisation. She has five years' experience as a manager , more recently in a more senior role, but admits to having had "very little" management training and just learning ash she went along. The training was well-timed as she was new to her role and in the process of setting up a new team. It was welcomed as it was offered in a "moment of change". The effects of the pandemic meant that the topic of training was also timely. Maggie was facing challenges such as returning staff to the office and she hoped the training would help her find solutions and enable her to implement change. Maggie's organisation was supportive and encouraged her to attend, allowing time in her diary. She told us this is in keeping with the culture of the organisation, which is committed to investing in people's development. We can see that various aspects of the context in which Maggie undertook the training (individual, organisational and social) made the training timely and helped shaped the outcomes from the training.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in brackets]** to the relevant learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass. Maggie reported that the masterclass was useful in that she was able to talk to and listen to other managers **[Learning together]** She hadn't anticipated that this would be a feature of the masterclass. She wasn't able to recall any specific new knowledge or awareness that had proved particularly useful to her (although this may be a matter of recall as she attributed a lot of change to coaching which may have built upon learning in the masterclass in a way that Maggie was not fully aware).

Coaching. Maggie commented that the coaching sessions had been particularly beneficial to her learning. She brought a specific challenge to the first session: how better to integrate a new member of staff who was working mostly remotely **[Make sense]**. She then went on to discuss with the coach how she could make recruitment more effective **[Gain knowledge]** and make staff feel more secure in their work **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**. Maggie said that the coaching helped her develop better ways to manage her time and to prioritise her teams' work **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**. She developed confidence in her decision making and was able to take a more strategic view of her activities, linking individual and team objectives to wider goals. Knowledge gave her confidence to address this particular issue, and the confidence arising from doing so enabled her to tackle other challenges and think more broadly about her role. She felt that she was developing the tools to be more of a "leader" rather than a "day to day" manager **[Make sense]**.

Outcomes

In this section, we record outcomes with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to outcomes in our Theory of Change.

Maggie spoke about the changes she made as a result of coaching but (as above) these may have built on the masterclass.

Maggie reported making a number of changes in her management **[Improved manager practice]**. For example, she became more proactive in integrating a new team member, including him in weekly team catch-ups, and encouraged him to ask questions of colleagues, thus distributing and enriching the induction process **[Positive impact on staff]**. She worked with the HR manager to re-design roles before recruitment, and made changes to individual and team communications, sharing company progress and challenges with the team. She reported that these and other changes led to some examples of improved organisational practice. Her personal changes included better organisation and prioritization of her team's time and activities, and better integration of new staff into the team. She reported that, in turn, this led to a greater autonomy and independence for staff, and improved feelings of security and retention. There was also evidence of improvements to productive work, as

employee activity was reported as being more closely aligned with organisational objectives **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvement to good and productive work]**. Maggie was not able to create wider organisational change from her learning because teams tend to operate in silos. She felt that she could have made more change from her learning with more coaching sessions, suggesting that the participant needed the support and strategic space created by the sessions to sustain development of her management practice.

We were able to corroborate at least some of these observations with evidence from a member of Maggie's staff (John), whom we were able to interview independently. John mentioned experiencing more regular one-to-one catch ups and receiving more frequent information about company performance, which made him feel more secure in his role, and "took a bit of the pressure off" **[Improved organisational practice]**, **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvements to good and productive work]**. He spoke of Maggie's support over return to work issues, and her flexible approach taking other pressures away from him and enabling him to focus on the job **[Improvement to good and productive work]**. Overall, John felt he was more likely to stay with the organisation - flexibility and secure work were key drivers for him in that decision - and Maggie's approach was helping to deliver that for him **[Improvements to good and productive work]**.

6.4 Case Study 4: MAGGIE
(Greater Manchester Learning Lab)
(Participant 52)

Maggie: How Context + Learning = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge ***   Learning together *
Reflect*   Experiment*
Make sense*

⟷

⤢ ⬂

Outcome

Improved manager   Positive impact
practice **   on staff

Improved   Improvement in good
organisational   and/or productive
practice*   work
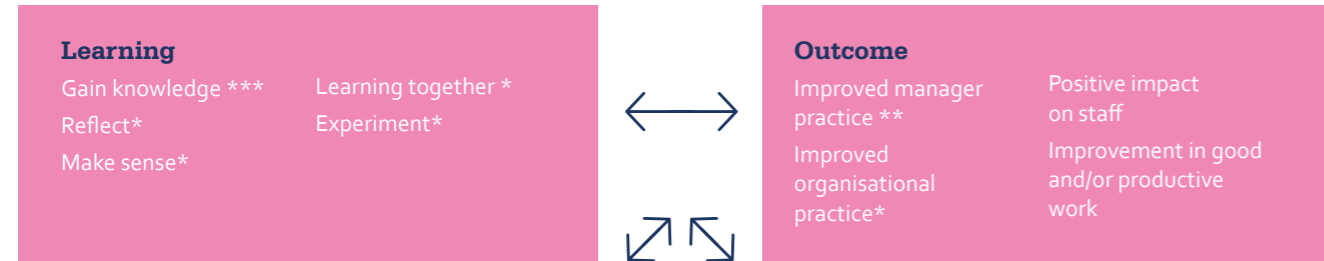
How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Training addressed a recognized training need in the participant.

+ Training was timely as Maggie was setting up a new team, so she had relevant challenges to work on and opportunities to experiment.

+ The organisational conditions were conducive to learning and developing: time allowed for participation and culture of encouraging development.

+ The organisation had a positive attitude to agile working which meant it was easier to implement change.

+ Challenges created by the pandemic meant that there was a focus on agile working and an impetus in the organisation to deal with them, and opportunities for experimentation.

- Learning unlikely to spread through the organisation as it operates in silos.

- The limited number of coaching sessions offered was perceived as leaving potential for learning untapped.

6.4 Case Study 5: GRAHAM
(Greater Manchester Learning Lab)
(Participant 256)

Developing Capability to Manage Agile and Secure Work

Context (Private sector)

Graham is a manager in an Consultancy. At the time of the training, he had been a manager for three years, but he has since been promoted to a more senior management role. Around that time the company, which had been a small UK business, was bought by a larger firm, with a specialist HR function and "real HR policies". Prior to the training, Graham had been on a one-day 'people management' course as he had recognised that this was "where he felt he struggled", but that was the extent of his management training. The training was timely for him in a number of respects: individually in relation to his development needs, and organisationally in relation to specific challenges that he was facing, and because his workload had 'doubled' due to more global reasons connected with the company takeover, his changing role and the pressures of the pandemic. These caused an immediate need to find ways of working more efficiently.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the relevant learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Peer Learning. Graham reported that he benefited from learning alongside other managers in other industries, through joint problem-solving with others **[Learning together]**. Partly, this learning resulted from practical suggestions made by other managers, and partly from drawing on theirs experience and adopting their approaches to tricky issues. Interestingly, the issues Graham brought to the peer learning weren't specifically about secure and agile working and this may result, at least in part, from not attending the masterclass and so not having his attention drawn to the knowledge imparted in those sessions.

Graham discussed with peers a range of issues around his relationships with other managers. He got advice on the need to "let go" of emotions and focus on solution. He also learned to approach issues in a staged and flexible way, "not to micro-manage" and to 'pick his battles' **[Gain knowledge]**. The peer learning enabled him to recognize his own capabilities as a manager and gave him confidence to aspire to more senior management roles **[Reflect]**. He felt the peer learning had most immediate practical benefits for him, but also reported that the combination of different types of session was beneficial to his learning. Discussing issues with peers and his coach (below), and experimenting with solutions, gave Graham confidence in his management capabilities. In turn this has stimulated him to take further management training in-house and to accelerate his plans to look for a more senior management role.

Coaching. While Graham found coaching less immediately beneficial, he felt it enabled him to approach problems in a different way and think outside the box, prompting him to question his assumptions and find solutions himself **[Reflect]**, **[Making sense]**. He found this to be a useful approach and is encouraging colleagues to learn the same approach.

Outcomes

In this section, we record outcomes with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to outcomes in our Theory of Change.

Graham reported using his learning to make changes to his practice **[Improved manager practice]**. For example, he adopted new techniques in managing remote workers, exploring their individual circumstances and adapting his approach to them. He was able to disengage emotionally when dealing with issues and become more selective in the issues he tackled. There were some good outcomes from this change in approach. Graham was able to repair his relationship with a particular senior manager **[Improvement to good and productive work]**, created an effective plan for returning to the office **[Improved organisational practice]**, and felt that he handled issues with staff who were struggling with changing roles much better **[Improved manager practice]**, **[Positive impact on staff]**. Graham felt that staff benefited from his greater understanding of their individual circumstances and challenges. He was also enabling them to think about their own challenges in new ways, drawing from his experience of coaching **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improved organisational practice]**, **[Improvements to good and productive work]**. He suggested that there had been "big improvements in productivity that I would relate to these methods of management" **[Improvements to good and productive work]**.

Graham: How Context + Learning = Outcome

Learning		Outcome	
Gain knowledge ***	Learning together *	Improved manager practice **	Positive impact on staff
Reflect*	Experiment*	Improved organisational practice*	Improvement in good and/or productive work
Make sense*			
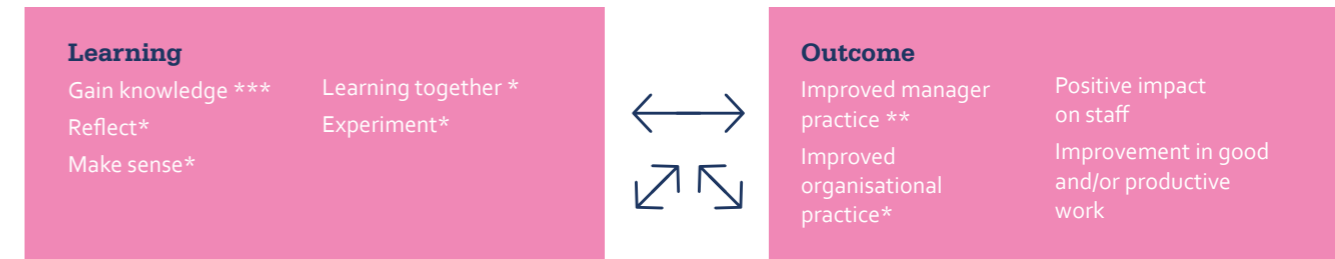
How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Training met a recognized need (relative lack of previous training).

+ Graham's change of role meant that the training was timely.

+ Training addressed pressing and immediate challenges at work, and this meant that solutions had to be found and implemented, "you had to be agile".

+ Pandemic created new challenges which, combined with company takeover, increased workload and this required greater management skill and efficiency.

+ Takeover of the company by a larger firm (with better HR support and policies) created additional issues to be addressed, but also provided better structure for change-making and opportunity for them to be given institutional backing.

- Combination of training interventions reported as complementary and mutually reinforcing.

- Company takeover created additional work which limited space to make change.

- The range of challenges faced by Graham meant that it was difficult to concentrate solely on the topic of the training (agile and secure working), however this meant that the learning spilled over into other areas of his practice.

- Not attending the masterclass may have reduced focus on the agile and secure working topic as Graham was not exposed to the knowledge imparted in the masterclass and so could not work on this.

6.4 Case Study 6:
HELEN
(Adult Social Care Learning Lab)
(Participant 212)

Developing Capability in Values Based Recruitment (VBR)

Context (Public sector)

Helen has a leadership role in a local authority (LA) social services department. She has worked for the LA for many years as a social worker and has been in a more senior role for a year; this was made permanent after joining GELL. She described it as a 'steep learning curve' and got involved in GELL to both learn and to develop confidence in her current practice:

"The timing was perfect really…. because I've been in this role now for a year. So, it was relatively new and I'm thinking, well am I doing it right?" Helen wanted both personal development and to improve the quality of the people she appointed. She described herself as "jam" in the organisational sandwich between her team and senior management and that her role involved being "squeezed" between these layers. Helen felt that she was part of the '[LA] family', and was proud to work there. She felt that values were, to a certain extent, embedded across the LA and that senior managers, hers in particular, were committed to development and operating in a values-based way.

Despite the supportive internal context, Helen noted the external pressures of Covid and that, while her team had been resilient, they were now very "jaded". She felt that these pressures meant that a focus on values could be diluted or lost, not just for those in receipt of care, but also for the team itself. She also noted the pressures created by health and social care integration policies; for example, as a LA manager, she was working to integrate social care services with NHS mental health services. As we outline below, this required revision to practices and Helen described this as like trying to bring "juggernauts" together into a cohesive service with "lots of different values and ethics and relationships". Aspects of the context in which Helen undertook the intervention (individual, organisational and social) helped shaped outcomes.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the relevant learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass. Helen attended a masterclass for values-based recruitment (VBR). She was very positive about it, having enjoyed it and noted the benefits of its short, structured inputs **[Gain knowledge]** and opportunities to discuss ideas with peers **[Learning together]**. She also later used the Resource Bank, drawing on videos and blogs [Gain knowledge]. She suggested that it was "thought provoking" [Reflect] and helped her to start to make sense of her own practice and how it could change:

"It started that conversation about how we as managers, what's our value base and how we use our values in our practice, particularly in recruitment."

For Helen, the break-out rooms, provided a great opportunity to discuss management practices and other challenges **[Learning together]**, **[Make sense]**. Working with a varied group of managers from a range of organisations and places was important to this:

"It wasn't just **[her LA]**. I liked the way it was across Greater Manchester. I thought it was an opportunity that you could build bridges with other managers really."

The small group sessions felt personal and she got a lot from these, even though they were online. Observations from the masterclass facilitators confirmed that rich discussions had taken place in the break-out rooms and supported participant learning **[Learning together]**. Helen felt that, following the masterclass, her understanding of VBR had changed and using it would enable her to set clear expectations that would support high quality appointments. She has put learning more about VBR and getting experience on her performance development plan. Helen formed an intention to experiment with VBR and it is noteworthy that an opportunity to do so did not present immediately after the masterclass but when she did recruit she returned to the learning to start experimenting.

Outcomes

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the relevant learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Helen reported making improvements to her management practice. A few months after the masterclass, she sat on one interview panel and had more planned, all of which focused on recruitment to integrated health and social care teams. While she had not been able to change the whole process, she had revised the interview questions to incorporate a values-based approach and found that having a "shared language" around common values had helped the interview process. She said:

"It's given me the confidence… I really want to be an active participant in the recruitment right from the beginning."

It is interesting to note that practice changes are not supported (at least not yet) by policy change [Improved organisational practice]. Rather, local practice change precedes policy change, as a result of learning from the masterclass intervention. Helen noted that VBR was actively line manager driven, whereas previous approaches had been HR-led.

Using VBR had improved recruitment outcomes, with Helen describing how an interviewee had been able to articulate how they would work with clients and give examples of how they would, for example, handle vulnerability and work in partnership with clients and their families. She felt that she had recruited employees who had a better fit with the organisation and were able to deliver the high quality care required **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvement to good and productive work]**:

"I think when I went on that **[VBR]** course, it… wasn't always that we were getting good candidates…. The fact that they **[applicants in VBR interviews]** were able to underpin their values and ethics with experiences and examples was really refreshing. And it gave me hope that actually if we ask the right questions, we'll get the answers that we're looking for."

A focus on values had also improved team working, particularly in a pandemic context where the team had been working largely remotely and rarely came together physically as a team. Values of self-care and care for team members had emerged strongly and enabled the team to be "very resilient, but it's been very, very challenging". Helen also reported that her own confidence was growing **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvement to good and productive work]**.

Nevertheless, Helen suggested that VBR was at an early stage: integration of health and social care teams was a work in progress and associated barriers created recruitment challenges. VBR was, however, helping to forge relationships and promote integration **[Improved organisational practice]**, **[Improvement to good and productive work]**. Some organisational effects were emerging but, as noted above, that changes were at manager practice level and had not yet flowed through to organisational policy.

6.4 Case Study 6:
HELEN
(Adult Social Care Learning Lab)
(Participant 212)

Helen: How Learning + Context = Outcomes

Learning

Gain knowledge ***   Learning together *

Reflect*   Experiment*

Make sense*

Outcome

Improved manager   Positive impact
practice **   on staff

Improved   Improvement in good
organisational   and/or productive
practice*   work

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Change

+ Training addressed a recognized training need in participant.

+ Training was timely as participant was new in role, so potential opportunities to experiment.

+ Manager was motivated to use and extend learning when the opportunity to practice occurred a few months after the masterclass.

+ Organisation had a positive attitude to development and operated in a values-based way.

Manager did not attend peer learning or coaching and this probably reduced the extent of her intention to experiment with VBR.

Organisation conditions: pandemic had created substantial pressures both generally and to recruitment.

Organisation conditions: ongoing process of health and social care integration makes it difficult to have a unified policy level approach or for the manager to influence change.

6.4 Case Study 7: JOANNA
(Adult Social Care Learning Lab)
(Participant 136)

Developing Capability in Values Based Recruitment (VBR)

Context (Public sector)

Joanna is a senior support officer in a local authority. She has been in role for five years and has 10 years of management experience. She undertook a level 4 qualification some years ago and would like to gain a management qualification but places on the course used by her organisation are full and there is no further training budget.

Joanna enjoys managing people and is relatively confident in it: she likes to see her team develop and reach its potential and believes she is good at this. She feels that Covid placed a huge strain on her team as they adapted their working practices and many team members were juggling home schooling.

Recruitment is a significant challenge for Joanna's team. She has several short-term posts to fill but finds that the shorter-term the role, the fewer qualified applicants apply. She also notes that candidates often lack recruitment skills: completing an application and presenting well at interview. There is currently no formal VBR policy in her organisation but she is familiar with VBR. Joanna recognises the importance of values and cites a people management problem in a local care home when asking the wrong questions at interview led to appointment of staff whose values did not lead them to do what is needed to keep residents safe and happy, causing complaints.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the relevant learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Joanna's enthusiasm to learn and think about values led her to join a masterclass, although she was not familiar with the term 'masterclass'. She was discouraged from signing up for peer learning and coaching as she didn't know what they would involve, lacked time and noted this was not accredited training so would not contribute to her aim of gaining a management qualification. She did, however, sign up to masterclasses in our next phases (on Conflict and Creativity and Getting the Most Out of Your Team) although she did not attend the latter.

Masterclass. Joanna did not report gaining knowledge about the concept of VBR from the masterclass but she noted that she enjoys a lecture style of presentation and would have liked a longer masterclass; it may be that gaining knowledge required further information giving to provide novel information for this manager. She learnt the most in the "useful discussions" in breakout sessions, in particular how to develop questions where values are embedded. She picked up a specific question wording to take away **[Learning together]**, **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Intend to experiment]**.

Outcomes

In this section, we record outcomes with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to outcomes in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass. Joanna discussed the Masterclass to a team member to help her reflect more deeply on the implications of new knowledge for their own practice **[Learning together]**, **[Make sense]**. They used the knowledge to plan a new interview question based on a wording she picked up at the masterclass, and a means of scoring for values at interview **[Experiment]**, **[Improved manager practice]**, **[Improved organisational practice]**. This conversation was prompted because they were planning for a round of interviews: "I think it was because it was coming up to interviews, and I'd done the masterclass, that I thought actually, that would make a good question for an interview."

The masterclass also led Joanna to reflect on recruitment more broadly **[Reflect]**. She realised that reflection that she needs to give recruitment practice much more attention and shift the constraint that lack of time tended to place on this to think about how to gain efficiency by recruiting well: "why have I not thought about this before, because recruitment is an absolute pain, it takes loads of time and it's a pain to get through" **[Make sense]**, **[Improve management practice]**, **[Improvement to good or productive work]**.

She would like to see organisational change in recruitment processes but foresees that organisational barriers make this a long process.

Joanna: How Learning + Context = Outcomes

Learning
Gain knowledge ***   Learning together *
Reflect*   Experiment*
Make sense*

Outcome
Improved manager practice **   Positive impact on staff
Improved organisational practice*   Improvement in good and/or productive work

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Relatively experienced manager confident enough to use learning to make changes.
+ Manager is committed to learning.
+ Recruitment challenges made learning useful and upcoming interviews provide an opportunity to experiment.
+ Shared learning provided highly practical new knowledge about how to use VBR and prompted broader realization of the importance of investing attention and development in recruitment practice.

+ Discussing learning with a colleague enabled sensemaking and change to individual and organisational practice.
- Lack of time restricted involvement to a masterclass, reducing the space for reflection and practice change via peer learning or coaching; the masterclasses was shorter than the manager desired (although it is unknown if she would have committed to a longer session).
- Lack of control of organisational recruitment processes limits ability to make improvements to organisational practice.

6.4 Case Study 8: LOUISE
(Adult Social Care Learning Lab)
(Participant 200)

Developing Capability in Values Based Recruitment (VBR)

Context (Public sector)

Louise has worked as a team manager for just over a year in community mental health. She managers two teams and a total of 15 staff. Prior to being a manager, Louise worked a senior social worker without management responsibilities. Louise has had no management training, except for legal training that is a statutory duty within her role, and has had to learn to manage people as she has gone along. She manages a well-established team that are capable and work together well. She knows them well, despite remote working, and has made an effort to meet face-to-face when possible during Covid19 to sustain the quality of her relationship with her team.

Louise talked at length about some of the recruitment challenges she currently faced such as where to advertise and how to garner more interest in the roles available (she has observed that potential applicants only apply for roles in the geographical area that they want to work in). She has tried different things such as rewording adverts. The organisation often relies on agency staff but they need to recruit longer term staff to save money and to retain experience. HR previously managed recruitment and Louise was surprised to find that this responsibility was shifted to her. She finds managing online recruitment systems time consuming and overwhelming and this contributes to a negative feeling about recruitment: it is "tricky" and "not very streamlined". When asked about VBR in her organisation, Louise acknowledged that the organisation do have values but VBR is not currently in place in recruitment and the process "needs looking at".

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the relevant learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

In this section, we record learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to learning pillars in our Theory of Change. Louise did not attend a masterclass. Her first learning intervention was peer learning and she then took up coaching.

Louise joined peer learning because she was put forward for it by her senior service manager, most probably because she was a new manager. Louise's development was more focused on general recruitment practices rather than VBR. This may reflect the scaffolding she needed in basic recruitment to work towards VBR, as an inexperienced manager with no recruitment training and poor organisational support. However, it may also be that missing the opportunity to gain new knowledge and start to reflect on VBR in the masterclass lowered Louise's awareness of VBR and so she did not spontaneously focus on it in peer learning or coaching or see fully how it could support her wider recruitment, retention and skill challenges. While the facilitators raised VBR, they also aligned with the philosophy of allowing the learner to bring their own problem to peer learning or coaching. Without the masterclass, this was less likely to be a VBR challenge.

Peer Learning. Louise enjoyed the peer learning experience and felt that the dynamics of the peer learning worked well, with the group members sharing their personal dilemmas and then peer questioning and ideas for addressing these. She added that all the members were "at the same level'"and were very open with each other. The confidential nature of the sessions also helped the process to flow **[Learning together]**.

When working with others during the peer learning, there was lots of discussion about the challenges brought by others **[Reflect]** and advice giving by her and others to peers, including about performance management problems **[Gain knowledge]**. Louise felt she gained good support through the peer learning **[Learning together]**.

Coaching. Before the coaching, Louise felt that she lacked confidence with VBR as it wasn't something she had previously been involved with. She reported that gaining knowledge from the coach, including some tips on crafting a job advertisement and on interview technique, and reflecting about recruitment more broadly, helped her feel more confident as a recruiting manager. The coach appreciated that Louise is a new manager and shared some recruitment models as a means of scaffolding learning towards VBR and this was appreciated. Between sessions, Louise undertook her own exploration and reading and shared this with the coach after the session **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Learning together]**. Louise and the coach also related knowledge to her own practice to make sense about changes that could be made.

It is not always possible to discern in detail when Louise's intention to experiment emerged across the joined-up processes of peer learning and coaching. However, by the time Louise was in coaching, she was certainly forming an intention to experiment across a range of topics. Firstly, when short-listing candidates, she wanted to begin looking at their qualities and skills in a more in-depth way. She also committed to putting a short video link on the advert to provide more rich detail and insight into the job role. She planned to speak to HR professionals in her organisation about this. Louise also committed to add new information to the job advertisement, such as the fact that staff can claim mileage for work visits in order to make the job appealing. More generally, Louise committed to continue to develop and enhance her learning in relation to the topic and to feel more competent over time **[Gain knowledge]**.

Outcomes

In this section, we record outcomes with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to outcomes in our Theory of Change.

Peer Learning. During peer learning, Louise identified that one of the questions in the current interview schedule did not work well and people struggled to answer it. Since the peer learning, she has had conversations with other managers and plans to change it **[Intend to experiment]**. She has also reflected on whether interviews can be standardised; for example, she recognised that some people refer to notes when interviewed and some do not and she was unsure if that was acceptable or how it could be managed when interviewing online **[Reflect]**. There is no evidence of any further changes to practice from the peer learning alone.

Coaching. Following the coaching, Louise's interview approach has changed, although not all changes were specifically related to VBR. Louise used coaching to develop basic recruitment skills. For example, one of her concerns was how to ask questions with two parts as she always had to repeat the second part of the question, which affected the scoring. Following the coaching, she now encourages the candidate to answer the first part then repeats the second part. She has also made a number of changes to the wording on her job advertisements to make it more appealing and to provide potential candidates with a contact for an informal chat **[Improvement manager practice]**. Louise has not had time to act on some intentions to experiment, such as creating a video for job advertisements, but still hopes to do these in the future **[Intend to experiment]**.

Louise believes that sharing challenges in the coaching and improving her manager practice helped her to recruit two new people about whom she has received good feedback from other managers, indicating the value of basic recruitment training **[Improvement to good or productive work]**. This may include staff with the right values as one manager noted that she has recruited "a good egg here." Louise reports that the new team members are competent and able to get on with the job. She feels she moved from not being about to appoint staff at all to appointing staff with potential. One interview candidate made contact with her

6.4 Case Study 8: LOUISE
(Adult Social Care Learning Lab)
(Participant 200)

after the interview to say she liked the interview process, it felt "welcoming and calm" and 'she had felt listened to'. This built Louise's confidence as recruiting manager

[Positive impact on staff], [Improvement to good or productive work].

However, Louise has also had instances of being unable to appoint, reflecting the broader challenges of a tight labour market that she cannot fully resolve alone. She reflects that her recruitment practice could improve and be more manageable through organisational change to online processes but she does not have the power to influence these.

Louise: How Learning + Context = Outcomes

Learning
Gain knowledge ***   Learning together *
Reflect*   Experiment*
Make sense*

Outcome
Improved manager   Positive impact
practice **   on staff
Improved   Improvement in good
organisational   and/or productive
practice*   work

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ New people manager with little recruitment experience or training who is keen to learn.
+ Recruitment is a regular and difficult management challenge.
+ Manager had the power to make changes to the job advertisement, interview wording etc.

- Non-attendance at a masterclass meant that new knowledge and attention on VBR was not brought into peer learning or coaching.
- The manager needed support with general recruitment practice as a scaffold to developing VBR.
- Manager did not have the power to change wider organisational practices or to overcome the barrier to improving her practice created by time consuming IT recruitment systems.

6.4 Case Study 9: MILLIE
(Adult Social Care Learning Lab)
(Participant 133)

Developing Capability in Values Based Recruitment (VBR)

Context (Public sector)

Millie manages a team of 40 social workers and is a direct line manager of 10 supervisors. She has been managing her team for three years and has previous management experience. Millie enjoys high pressure work. She describes her team as close knit and supportive. However, they have faced multiple pressures in addition to Covid in recent times (e.g. having to move location several times and by being 'bullied by health and by systems' due to a disparity of status between health and social care). They are fatigued and progression is hampered by a moratorium on secondments. Millie also reports that there has been bulling in the team. Her staff tend to leave within 1-2 years.

Retention problems create a constant need to recruit but there is often a poor choice of applicants for hospital work. Millie recognises the limits of her own influence and the impact of wider institutional policies and decisions on retention and recruitment. However, it is evident that this manager cares for her staff and is motivated to support them in the best possible way she can.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass - Millie joined the Masterclass as a taster to find out about VBR. Learning about the 5A's Skills for Care model (Articulate, Attract, Apply, Assess, Assimilate) and different ways of asking interview questions, during both taught elements and breakout sessions, enabled Millie to think in a different way about recruitment **[Gain knowledge], [Reflect], [Learning together]**. She also reflected on her own experience of being subject to poor interviewing practice and this led to a deeper appreciation of the interviewee's experience **[Reflect]**. During and after the masterclass, she thought about what works well in the current interview process and, in particular, the importance of genuinely getting to know a person in order to understand their values **[Make sense]**. During the postcard activity, she committed to experiment with reviewing the questions asked in interviews and replacing some of the knowledge and skills questions with more values-based questions. She also noted that she wanted to review her standard job advertisement **[Intend to experiment]**.

From Masterclass to Peer Learning. Millie described the masterclass as a "taster" but she recognised that she needed more time to gain knowledge from facilitators and peers, to reflect and make sense of her learning and to have a supportive space to start experimenting with changing the standard recruitment process. She hoped peer learning would help her feel "armed" to experiment. Although Millie is a confident and experienced manager, she needed support to practise VBR confidently. Millie chose peer learning because she already practises this in her team, believes in the approach and wanted to learn more about how to facilitate peer learning.

Peer Learning. Peer learning enabled Millie to learn about different challenges and approaches to VBR from facilitators and peers as well as to consolidate learning from the masterclass **[Gain knowledge]**. She was motivated to explore at a practical level how to balance VBR questions with other questions in an interview and how to use VBR to address specific challenges in her team (e.g. getting the right skills mix) **[Make sense]**.

Millie enjoyed learning in a small, well facilitated group where trust was established. Her peer learning set consisted of both strangers and one person she knew. She valued hearing about and reflecting on other managers' experiences **[Gain knowledge], [Reflect]**. For example, she learnt that, in some interviews, she will have to re-frame questions and think on her feet in order to get more out of the candidate because they are unfamiliar with being asked about values. She also valued having space to make sense of her own options and addressing peer questions beyond those she self-generated **[Reflecting], [Make sense]**. This empowered her to become "unstuck", forming new ideas and experiments **[Make sense], [Experiment]**.

Millie also observed broader learning about her management practice from the peer learning sessions. Most directly, she identified that she could use GELL's approach to facilitation to run peer learning more effectively in her team (nurturing staff reflection and managing team dynamics). She also realised that she could use these ideas to listen and question sensitively when addressing a sensitive problem such as under-performance in her team **[Make sense], [Experiment]**.

Outcomes

In this section, we record outcomes with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to outcomes in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass. Millie formed an intention to changing the interview process to include values-based questions and began to think about how to set candidates at ease to learn more from them **[Intention to experiment]**. She also conducted her own research into how other organisations phrase questions **[Gain knowledge]** and used this to modify her planned approach **[Make sense]**. Millie planned to reflect with her team on how to tweak the job advertisement to be more appealing to experienced people; it is not clear if this innovation is valued-based but it does demonstrate the value of giving space to thinking about recruitment and building motivation to reflect with others **[Intend to experiment]**. She reported beginning to use a values-based approach to managing her staff (e.g. recognising what they are doing well) and role modelling behaviour **[Experiment], [Improved manager practice]**.

Peer Learning. Millie developed a new set of recruitment questions, experimented with using these in one interview and intended to continue developing this approach by drawing more colleagues into recruitment and trying scenario setting or role playing **[Experimenting], [Improvement to manager practice], [Intend to experiment]**. She has learnt more about candidates and believes she has recruited some "fabulous" new starters, although she recognises it is early days **[Improvement in good or productive work]**. Millie has embedded the process of developing values based recruitment in her team, reporting that some colleagues have been pro-active in developing the induction process as a result, and she has plans to work with a colleague to develop a new recruitment toolkit **[Improvement to organisational practice]**.

Millie has developed a values contract and a strength based approach with her team and is now using this to address issues within the team (e.g. to hold people to account) **[Improvement to manager practice]**. She has found this empowering **[Improvement in good work for Millie herself]** and reports improvements in team identity, engagement and resilience **[Positive impact on staff], [Improvements in good or productive work]**.

Millie also used the programme's approach to peer learning to develop the peer learning in her team **[Improvement to organisational practice]** and to improve her listening and questioning skills when management of sensitive people challenges **[Improvement to manager practice]**. Consequently, she has managed an under-performance issue without pursuing a performance management route and has retained a member of staff **[Improvement to good or productive work]**.

6.4 Case Study 9:
MILLIE
(Adult Social Care Learning Lab)
(Participant 133)

Millie: How Context + Learning = Outcomes

Learning

Gain knowledge ***   Learning together *

Reflect*   Experiment*

Make sense*

Outcome

Improved manager practice **   Positive impact on staff

Improved organisational practice*   Improvement in good and/or productive work*

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Relatively experienced manager confident enough to use learning to make changes.

+ Manager is committed to learning.

+ Recruitment challenges made learning useful and upcoming interviews provide an opportunity to experiment.

+ Shared learning provided highly practical new knowledge about how to use VBR and prompted broader realization of the importance of investing attention and development in recruitment practice.

+ Discussing learning with a colleague enabled sensemaking and change to individual and organisational practice.

- Lack of time restricted involvement to a masterclass, reducing the space for reflection and practice change via peer learning or coaching; the masterclasses was shorter than the manager desired (although it is unknown if she would have committed to a longer session).

- Lack of control of organisational recruitment processes limits ability to make improvements to organisational practice.

6.4 Case Study 10: SANDRA
(Adult Social Care Learning Lab)
(Participant 299)

Developing Capability in Values Based Recruitment (VBR)

Context (Private sector)

Sandra works for a care provision company and is a recruitment and retention manager responsible for ensuring a talent pipeline of care assistants, support workers, training managers and office staff. She manages recruitment from job advertisement to induction and also has a remit for retention. She has been in post for four years and was a manager elsewhere before taking on this role. She has never undertaken any specific management training and experiences her job as a "silo"; her chances for informal learning and reflection are scarce.

Sandra spoke candidly about the challenge of finding social care staff who are geographically mobile (can drive) and willing to work unsociable hours. She explained that many staff had moved out of these roles during Covid to jobs that better suit their lifestyles. She recognised a need to make staff feel like part of a team who do meaningful work together to help overcome this talent drain.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the relevant learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Sandra attended the masterclass, peer learning and coaching on VBR. Prior to this, she was familiar with the concept of VBR and aware of the Skills for Care model. She "really wanted to look at things from a values point of view" but needed time to reflect, gain knowledge about practical ways forward, make sense of how VBR could work in her business and develop confidence in her ideas so she could lead this project and persuade others. Influencing organisational practice depended on Sandra becoming confident in her knowledge, practical experience and vision for VBR.

Masterclass. Sandra found the masterclass helpful in supporting her to step back from her day-to-day tasks and think about VBR **[Reflect]**. She became more confident in her understanding of VBR (how to "frame" and to be confident in stating "this is what it is"). And she learnt practical ideas about how to implement VBR **[Gain knowledge]**; this led her to believe that practising VBR was achievable. The masterclass gave her a sense of purpose and she took on the task of pursuing VBR as a 'project' in her organisation **[Intend to experiment]**. She explained that, "I suppose it gave me the confidence to say, 'Well, actually I do think I know what I'm doing now, so I'll run with it".

Peer Learning. Sandra joined a peer learning set as a means of further supporting the VBR 'project' she had now committed to. Peer learning gave her a chance to discuss a range of challenges in recruiting and using VBR and she valued this opportunity to reflect with others, acquire new ideas and to re-frame the actions available to her **[Reflect]**, **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Make sense]**. Given she usually lacked peer learning opportunities in the workplace, Sandra particularly welcomed this chance to hear the perspectives and challenges of group members. For example, she talked about how she has no shortage of applicants with the right values but how they were often unwilling to work unsocial hours. The group gave her ideas to tackle this. The process of "consolidating her thoughts" led to commitment to experiment and clarity on what to do next. It also built sufficient confidence to share her ideas with the colleagues whom she would need to influence to embed VBR in their practice and that of the organisation **[Make sense]**, **[Intend to experiment]**, **[Learning together]**.

Coaching. Sandra also participated in coaching and she described this as the "most effective" as it was 'bespoke to her own needs'. It seems that the sensemaking about which practices to change that it enabled built on the confidence and knowledge already generated in the masterclass and peer learning. Sandra discussed her current predicament in terms of recruitment problems but was not overwhelmed by them **[Reflect]**. Instead, she worked with the coach on implementing aspects of VBR (e.g. how to improve the culture to attract candidates, format a VBR interview,

develop a new interview style and improve the on-boarding process) **[Make sense]**, **[Intend to experiment and Experiment]**.

Outcomes

In this section, we record outcomes with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to outcomes in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass. After the masterclass, Sandra was able to go back into her organisation and confidently state her plan to adopt certain aspects of VBR. She described the masterclass as a turning point where she said to herself "right I'm going to start this project now." She committed to experiment initially with changing the interview format and went on to make this change in her practice **[Intend to experiment]**, **[Experiment]**, **[Improvement to management practice]**, **[Improvement to organisational practice]**.

Peer Learning. Sandra experimented with more actions during peer learning. It gave her clarity of purpose, practical steps to try and confidence to lead on VBR. She moved from "Well actually, I do think we should try this kind of thing now " to "Actually, we're going to make this change now or we're going to try this." Practical changes included changing the hours and availability of roles so that the candidates applying with the right values would find the posts more attractive **[Improvement to management practice]**, **[Improvement to organisational practice]**.

Coaching. Sandra started to experiment with various aspects of VBR **[Improved management practice]**, **[Improved organisational practice]**. These innovations led her company Head Office to ask her to do some consulting on how they should change the standard interview format. The coaching sessions helped her to decide on some clear concepts that she wanted to raise in the consultancy project. This led to improved organisational practice that has now been rolled out across the whole business.

Sandra reported that her VBR innovations had the knock-on effect of improving organisational culture, staff morale and team working **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvement to good or productive work]**. Once values were identified, they became more tangible for staff and this led to a more "cohesive and positive culture" in her team, with people feeling that they belonged. Given her recruitment challenges, these innovations are likely to be productive as they will enable retention **[Improvements to organisational practice]**, **[Improvement to good or productive work]**. Sandra acknowledged that any impact of the training on her actual interview practice would take longer to assess because the new interview structure had just been completed and there had been limited opportunity to implement it so far.

6.4 Case Study 10: SANDRA
(Adult Social Care Learning Lab)
(Participant 299)

How Context + Learning = Outcomes
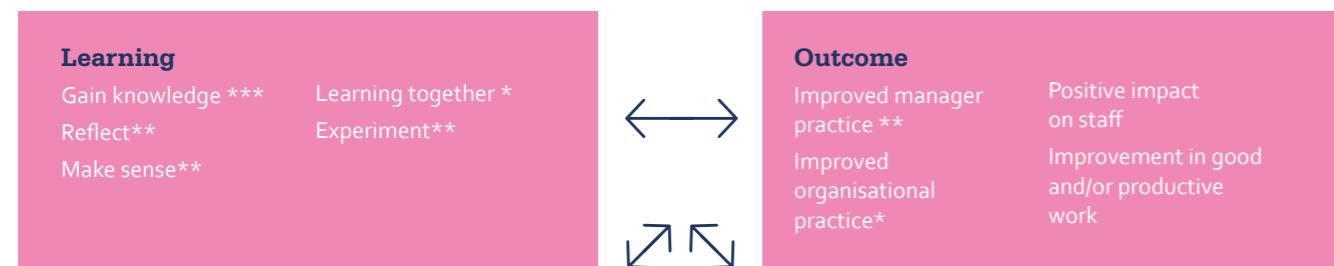
Learning

Gain knowledge *** Learning together *

Reflect** Experiment**

Make sense**

Outcome

Improved manager practice **

Improved organisational practice*

Positive impact on staff

Improvement in good and/or productive work

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Relatively experienced manager with some background knowledge in VBR and appetite to learn more.

+ Recruitment and retention manager with power to make local changes and to influence organisational practice.

+ Serious recruitment and retention challenges make the learning timely for the manager and organisation.

+ Engagement with three different learning approaches, enabling sustained support for change and a combination of new knowledge, reflection, making sense, experimenting and learning together, supported a raft of changes to individual and organisational practice.

+ Appetite from organisational leaders to learn from the manager and embed changes she suggests enabled organisational change.

- Non-attendance by other managers from peer learning reduced the chance to learn from others' experiences (although it created more space to reflect on her own practice with peers).

- Insufficient time or length of programme to be supported with all intentions to experiment or to fully evaluate the impact of organisational change.

6.4 Case Study 11: CAROLINE
(Adult Social Care Learning Lab)
(Participant 211)

Developing Capability in Values Based Recruitment (VBR)

Context (Public sector)

Caroline works as an assistant team manager in social work a local authority and has been in role for five years. She line manages six staff who have varying roles (including more junior and senior staff and support roles). Some of her team need guidance whereas others just need space to reflect. Due to staff shortages, Caroline sometimes has to provide duty cover herself.

Caroline talks about recruitment challenges in the sector generally. She feels that part of the problem is that people can go to work for an agency and get more money for easier work. Caroline reflects back to a time when there would be ninety applicants for a social work job- now they are lucky to get three. Caroline explains that she wants to recruit people that are experienced but she wonders why people would come to her team when there are easier jobs available. She goes on to add that her current team are "frazzled" (feel overwhelmed and desperate) due to constant work pressures. She tries hard to protect her existing staff but worries that they sometimes feel she is not listening to them. Caroline is concerned that other teams are competing for her staff. She feels that her team deal with more challenging and complex cases than others but this is not always appreciated. It seems her staffing issues relate to an internal labour market and resource decisions as well as external competition.

Caroline finds recruitment time consuming, in part due to the layers of process involved in having a post approved. Once a job is accepted, DBS checks have to be undertaken and this creates a significant delay.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record learning with reference **[in bold/ brackets]** to learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass. Caroline wasn't sure what the masterclass would entail but thought it sounded interesting. Before the masterclass, Caroline rated herself as having medium to good knowledge about recruitment, having undertaken quite a bit of recruitment. She attended the masterclass to become more knowledgeable. She was also curious to find out "am I doing it right?" And so was looking to build her confidence. She was interested to learn how other people in her sector recruit.

The masterclass made Caroline "question things a lot more" **[Reflect]**. She picked up further knowledge about the types of questions to ask at interviews and how to get the best out of interviews, reflecting on the possibility of having pre-questions to identify the best candidates **[Gain knowledge], [Make sense]**.

Caroline enjoyed hearing about others' experiences and reflections and joining in discussion about interview questions and scenarios **[Reflect], [Learning together]**. She picked up new ideas and realised that some of her existing interview questions were effective in eliciting values, thereby building confidence in her existing practice **[Gain knowledge], [Make sense]**. During the masterclass, Caroline formed an intention to experiment with altering some interview questions and adding VBR questions. She decided to discuss these in an upcoming team meeting **[Intention to experiment], [Learning together]**. She also identified a need to change the job advertisement and share this with managers for feedback **[Make sense]**, **[Intention to experiment]**. Finally, she planned on emailing a principle social worker to work together on setting up a "meet the team activity" to reach potential applicants.

It is noteworthy that Caroline was involved in peer learning and coaching simultaneously.

Peer Learning. Caroline 'loved' the peer learning process **[Learning together]**. She liked that the group focussed on a specific issue i.e., induction or retention, as it helped to explore the topic in-depth **[Gain knowledge], [Reflect]**. She also found it helpful to know that others struggled as much with recruitment as she did. Caroline took a range of issues to the peer learning group, including how to add VBR questions into an interview, how to 'pull out' the right values from an applicant and improve the induction process. She committed to looking up some values based questions and trying them in upcoming interviews. **[Intention to experiment]**. Peer questioning helped her realise, for example, that her induction process was overwhelming and that other managers used a range of approaches; she committed to streamlining the information giving process and to use the idea of spending more time welcoming staff to the team **[Make sense], [Intention to experiment]**. She planned to discuss this further with a colleague **[Learning together], [Reflect], [Make sense]**.

Coaching. Caroline very much enjoyed the coaching and used the sessions to progress her thinking in peer learning; she found it helpful to talk about "what was going on in

my head" **[Learning together]**. One specific challenge she took to the coaching was how to ask questions outside the main body of questions in an interview whilst ensuring the interview process felt fair. From the conversations with the coach, she realised she did not have to ask identical questions of every candidate and it is acceptable to ask probing questions. She realised she could use the Resource Bank and internet more broadly to find new question wording and other information about recruitment **[Gain knowledge], [Make sense]**. Caroline used the coaching to also discuss the induction process further.

It seems likely that doing peer learning and coaching simultaneously meant that the same issues were brought to both learning interventions and the range of issues experimented upon was narrowed. However, Caroline still enjoyed the space this gave her to consolidate making sense and to plan and track experiments.

Outcomes

In this section, we record outcomes with reference **[in bold/ brackets]** to outcomes in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass. Following the masterclass, Caroline was prompted to explore possible reasons why people are not applying for jobs by looking at a website called 'Glass door' where staff post comments about the organisation. She pursued her intentions to experiment by progressing into peer learning and coaching.

Peer Learning and Coaching. As Caroline was involved in peer learning and coaching simultaneously, she could not report on what practice changes arose from which intervention. She changed a number of questions in the interviews including probing about why a candidate has applied for a role and using two scenario questions in interviews **[Improved manager practice]**. Caroline reflects that she has had some 'really good interviews' that provide a richer understanding of candidates, a point verified by a fellow interviewer **[Improved organisational practice]**. However, they have still been unable to appoint someone with adequate experience to other roles and lost candidates quickly to full-time roles. Nevertheless, Caroline will use the new questions again in forthcoming interviews as they are still valid improvements.

Caroline changed the job advertisement to make the job more attractive (e.g. adding key benefits) and has also made the job application form and person specification "neater" and "clearer." She has begun making changes to the induction process, emailing new staff to find out what they would have liked to have seen in the induction process **[Improved manager practice], [Improved organisational practice]**. Caroline would liked to have made additional changes to induction but time challenge mean she has been distracted by other priorities.

More broadly, Caroline reports that coaching "honed her" as a manager. She feels more able to cope with change by thinking around an issue and making changes. This suggests she has become a more reflexive and resilient practitioner **[Improved manager practice], [Improvement to good and productive work]**.

6.4 Case Study 11: CAROLINE
(Adult Social Care Learning Lab)
(Participant 211)

How Context + Learning = Outcomes

Learning

Gain knowledge *** | Learning together *
Reflect* | Experiment*
Make sense*

Outcome

Improved manager practice ** | Positive impact on staff
Improved organisational practice* | Improvement in good and/or productive work
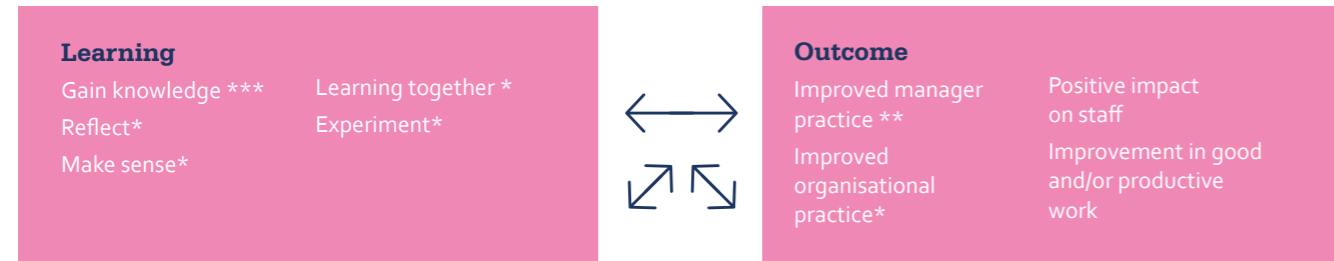
How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Serious recruitment problems prompt interest in training.

+ Caroline is an experienced manager who is willing to reflect and learn.

+ Training built confidence in current practice and reassurance about the commonality of the recruitment problem, as well as enabling development.

+ Caroline was able to select ideas from the Masterclass, as well as peer learning and coaching, to experiment with.

+ Peer questioning enabled new realization of how factors such as induction that are within her control are influencing her staffing shortage.

+ Participating in the full suite of learning interventions enabled Caroline to develop as a more reflexive practitioner.

- Participating in peer learning and coaching simultaneously narrowed the range of issues on which Caroline made sense and experimented (although this intensity may have made her a more reflexive practitioner).

- Caroline did not pursue change as energetically as some other experienced managers, possibly due to a lack of time and perception (or reality) that she could not influence wider forces.

- Recruitment problems arise from systemic issues in the sector and competition from an internal labour market, factors Caroline feels unable to control.

6.5 Management Challenge 1: Cross-Case Analysis - What Case Studies Tell Us About What Works For Whom and Why?

We selected case studies where managers had made significant improvements to practice as a means of exploring the mechanisms through short learning interventions can be effective. We have supplemented this with some case studies of managers reporting little or no practice changes to help observe the contexts that hamper learning and change.

Almost all of our case study managers had very limited training in people management. This is despite most of them having three or more years of people management experience. They commonly reported a desire for more support to learn how to manage people effectively. And, they all had role pressures that demanded good people management skills (e.g. increasing performance demands, organisational mergers and integrations and severe recruitment and retention challenges). This was in addition to the ubiquitous experience of managing through a global pandemic, and associated wholesale change to working conditions and to service provision. Teams were commonly reported to be under great strain and yet also 'jaded' or 'frazzled' and under-staffed. Line managers often felt like the 'jam in the sandwich' between conflicting organisational priorities (e.g. productivity and work-life balance) and staff themselves. Finding ways to make teams efficient, resilient, motivated and loyal in fast moving and complex situations was a widely held challenge for line managers.

Appetite to engage with GELL arose from a frustrated desire for training and from interest in the specific management challenges being addressed in our learning interventions; in short, there was both a broad and a specific curiosity. Even very experienced people managers were drawn to topics they saw as timely or innovative. Role changes such as being in a new job, building a new team or thinking about promotion added even greater timeliness to manager development. Organisation support relating to a culture of development or practical help to free up time to engage was important to accessing learning. But many managers reported less supportive environments, and still wanted to find ways of meeting their own development needs.

6.5.1 Masterclasses

Our management challenge 1 case studies tell us that masterclasses provided both a good self-contained learning experience and, for many, a vital foundation and gateway for peer learning and coaching.

Masterclass As A Self-Contained Learning Experience.

Gain new knowledge – All case study managers welcome the transmission of 'expert' or 'latest thinking' delivered by the facilitators in short, structured inputs. They commonly recalled information about the definition of terms and knowledge bundled into models. Some managers were familiar with some of the content but almost all reported learning something new and some enjoyed refreshing their knowledge. The only exception was a manager attending the masterclass on managing agile and secure working who held an MBA, had received some other management training and worked in an organisation with a well established approach to agile production and flexible working. This manager (with exceptional training) felt our masterclasses were pitched at a level that meant he had little new to learn.

A minority of managers said they would have liked a longer masterclass with more knowledge transmission. This seemed a particular concern for managers who resisted engagement in peer learning or coaching; they particularly liked learning from 'experts' in a lecture style although, interestingly, they also benefited from break-out sessions, even though they did not see learning together as their learning style.

It is noteworthy that case study managers recalled learning much more about agile work than secure work in the managing secure and agile working masterclass. This reflects the relative weight given to agile work in the session and the timeliness of agile work at a national, organisational and practical management level as managers coped with the transition back to the office and

the mass emergence of hybrid working after the great homeworking experiment during Covid19 measures. This compared with the relative lack of dialogue surrounding secure work. It seems that interest in agile work crowded out manager attention. However, secure work did land for Gary who realised it was relevant to understanding customers, rather than staff. Gary was the manager who did not find new things to learn about agile work. It seems that managers will absorb what is relevant to them but, also, that if a commissioner wants to grab manager attention then adding a topic as a secondary concern to a session focused on an attention-grabbing issue may not be successful for most.

Learning (online) together – Managers were often surprised that masterclasses provided good opportunity to learn from other managers. Working online and in short interventions did not prove to be a significant challenge to establishing rapport and sufficient trust to support shared learning in breakout groups. Most managers worked in contexts where peer learning opportunities were rare and so they welcomed the opportunity to exchange knowledge with other managers. Some said it was particularly helpful to hear from managers from different sectors, types of organisation or areas. Shared learning was critical to building line manager confidence: it reassured managers that people management challenges were common and could be addressed in new ways as well as providing them with a chance to learn from others' practices and challenges and to take away some tips. As we shall see, this led many to want to engage further in shared learning via peer learning and/or coaching. It seems that masterclasses could be used explicitly to model peer learning and coaching approaches and to encourage take-up of these learning interventions which are more likely to create broader change.

Reflect – Case study managers commonly noted that learning new information in the masterclasses caused them to reflect on their workplace contexts. This reflection arose partly from the stepping back from everyday work and reflecting that is enabled by a learning event; this is an important observation because it may not occur from e-learning that can be accessed anytime. Reflection also arose from gaining knowledge from other managers and observing other manager's experiences, both of which enabled participants to question their situation more deeply and to think differently about it. Again, this suggests that an e-learning course taken alone is less likely to engage or be effective for line managers. Some managers continued to reflect after the masterclass. For example, thinking about their own experience of being recruited or managed to explore the employee perspective on the problem.

Make sense – Most managers progressed from learning new knowledge and reflecting to begin to consolidate a new understanding of their workplace dilemmas and what might be done about them. They tended to do this during or soon after the masterclass. Some sustained this momentum by scheduling a meeting with another manager, a team member or their team to share their learning and reflections and to think about what they might do in light of this with them. It could be helpful for

programmes to make masterclass attendees accountable to pursuing this next step by prompting them digitally to report on a conversation they have after the masterclass. Some managers took notes of key points or insights and referred back to these for weeks to come. Here we can see that new knowledge and manager reflections are enabling them to make better sense of their workplace over time. Some also shared the knowledge they had noted with others and encouraged them to use it to reflect. Several managers reported having a 'lightbulb moment' in relation to specific pieces of knowledge. Here we can see that managers are starting to make sense of their management challenges in a new way. In some cases, these realisations were at a higher level: for example, realising for the first time the importance of recruitment and the value of the manager paying more attention to it. Or, realising that the topic at hand (e.g. VBR) demanded multiple actions and is worthy of becoming a 'project' with ongoing attention and effort. This idea of developing a 'project' could be an action encouraged in masterclasses.

Experimenting – Most managers formed an intention to experiment in the masterclass. Many acted on this, often during peer learning and/or coaching. Some acted from a masterclass alone, although the breadth and depth of the changes made tended to be limited.

In short, masterclasses were most powerful in enabling managers to gain knowledge and reflect. Most also started to make sense of their management dilemmas in new ways and formed some sort of intention to experiment. Experimentation itself tended to be limited or to be wrapped up with pursuing coaching or peer learning.

Masterclass As A Gateway And Foundation For Peer Learning And Coaching.

Gateway – Some managers were enticed to join a peer learning set or to sign up for coaching as a result of enjoying the masterclass. The masterclass acted as a taster session for gaining knowledge and shared learning in breakout sessions or via facilitator questioning in the masterclass. A minority of managers resisted such progression, however, as they thought of shared learning as beyond their natural learning style. On occasion, peer learning and coaching was dismissed when managers knew little of what it involves. Modelling it in masterclasses explicitly may help to overcome misunderstandings and encourage people to move out of their more comfortable learning styles to recognise the value of learning together in peer learning and coaching. Articulating it well in marketing materials and during programme onboarding is also vital. As will be shown below, the masterclass proved to be an important foundation for peer learning and coaching. In particular, the introduction of knowledge about the topic provided resources for reflection and making sense of the management challenge. Without these, peer learning and coaching tended to be less focused on the management challenge and less impactful.

6.5.2 Peer Learning

Gain knowledge – Managers enjoyed gaining further knowledge from facilitators and peers in peer learning. One said that sticking to a topic in each session helped to focus shared exploration. However, the facilitators were conscious that managers were asked to bring a live issue to sessions and this sometimes demanded flexibility around topic area. As noted above, there was more 'subject creep' when a manager had not attended a masterclass and so didn't draw on specialist knowledge about the focus topic in the problems they brought. This raises the strong possibility that the masterclass should be treated as a pre-condition and scaffold for peer learning.

Shared (online) learning – Facilitators did not struggle to establish trust online and peer learning participants reported a strong sense of togetherness. Seeking understanding and solutions collectively was a process they enjoyed. Managers learned by being questioned, which uncovered blind spots, and by observing others and helping them to explore. As noted above, shared learning was powerful in reducing isolation and building confidence. The way in to being a better manager of agile working sometimes involved exploring their own working practice and challenges they had in negotiating with their own manager. The group could help the manager think about the problem from their manager's perspective and to see ways forward to manage their own manager.

Make sense – All case study peer learners used their reflections to make new sense of their situations and to form ideas about how they could change their own or organisational practice. The pace and depth of this varied. In part, this related to the 'headspace' available to the manager, given their workload, but it also depended on how much managers chose to make addressing the problem a priority 'project'. In turn, the likelihood of this related to the power that the manager had (or perceived they had) to influence others in their organisational setting and, so, to be able to pursue a project.

Experiment and Change Practices – Almost all case study managers experimented with new practices and most went on to repeat these actions or showed they intended to. We therefore consider that they changed their manager practice. Some also influenced organisational practices, had a positive impact on employees and improved good and/or productive work. Changes in managing agile work focused on improved communication. Changes in managing VBR centred on improving shared understanding of values, job design and advertisements, interview processes and induction and team engagement. Stand out changes were made both by managers with specialist role or senior positions that meant they were more able to influence processes. The deepest changes were also undertaken by the most talented and energetic managers who clearly supported a wide agenda of engagement and innovation in their teams as everyday practice. However, there was also a more 'slow burn' manager for whom the potential for deeper and wider change became apparent over time and was facilitated by organisational interest in the 'project' they had undertaken. This shows how organisations do not

need to rely purely on manager initiative. By recognising and nurturing learning and its spill over potential, they can build manager confidence and enthusiasm to make wider change.

6.5.3a Outcomes

Managers commonly made changes to their management practice in relation to managing agile work and VBR. Changes relating to secure work were much less in evidence, reflecting how this topic lacked timeliness for the manager, their organisation and society, especially compared with agile working which was extremely timely and crowded out attention to reflect on secure work. Changes in management practice relating to agile working often meant re-engaging basic people management practices of which managers were already aware. For example, checking in with staff and creating good communication in teams and fostering routines. This shows that support to help managers cope with acute change or crises may rely on reminding them about practices they already know and giving them space to reflect and make sense of how these can be used to address the current challenge. Most line managers lacked the time and networks to reflect and make sense of agile working, demonstrating how good management practice depends on having management contexts that recognise their pivotal role in managing change and need for support to harness their skills to this challenge.

Gaining knowledge about how agile working can enable organisational productivity or efficiency was powerful. It gave managers confidence and space to think about how to manage conflicting demands within teams and between staff and service demands. Organisations were commonly rapidly working out their approach to agile working and managers may have felt that they did not have a strong voice in this. Instead, they were somewhat squeezed between messages about staff wellbeing and pressure to create efficient systems. Understanding agile working 'in the round' as aiming at benefits for staff and the organisation was powerful in enabling new management options to emerge.

Outcomes to VBR training were commonly to develop management practice by making practical adjustments such as developing new job advertisements, interview questions and approaches. Deeper outcomes emerged from an appreciation of the complexity of VBR, its relation to values based management, and the taking on of VBR as a 'project'. This meant making wider changes to personal management practice but also using this to innovate team approaches and even change much wider organisational practices. Development of organisational practice, impact on staff and improved productivity or good work were most likely when the manager had a role that afforded them positional power to lead this change or where their own manager or a powerful stakeholder paid attention to their

interest and learning and lent them power by asking to develop VBR as an organisational project. As line managers cannot change all of the organisational factors that create a valued-based organisation and management context and, most notably, they lack power to effect pay increases or progression routes, some responded by creating a 'micro-climate' where they could lead in a values-based way as far as possible. Broader change could occur if their innovations are noticed and given power to challenge and shape wider organisational processes.

A powerful outcome for some managers was the developing of more enduring learning mechanisms and allied management approaches. Some noticed and modelled the facilitation and coaching approaches employed by the GELL staff during programme delivery. Others made notes on the knowledge they gained and referred to these later, or even sharing them with others, while also looking for further resources. The budding idea of learning together with other managers or team members, and particularly reflecting and making sense together, arose in situations where manager experimentation involved setting up a reflective meeting with a manager, colleague or follower. We are not able to report on how long these emerging learning mechanisms lasted but these findings do point to the potential power of developing organisational cultures that actively foreground and nurture line manager learning communities.

6.5.3b Coaching

Gain knowledge – Some managers who undertook both peer learning and coaching preferred coaching to peer learning as it enabled them to gain knowledge from the facilitator in a tailored way. However, others felt it provided less opportunity to gain knowledge by being questioned by fellow managers and learning from their experiences. We used coaches with HR qualifications and experience who were able to 'drop in' knowledge as it was needed by coaches, in a bespoke fashion. We note that a more general business or leadership coach without HR expertise would not be able to offer the same skills coaching process as in our programme as they would lack the broad array of knowledge about formal and informal approaches to people management held by experienced and reflexive HR professionals.

Reflect – Reflection in coaching seemed particularly powerful in helping managers to see a problem from a number of sides. This helped them to come 'unstuck' with chronic problems. It also proved to be a useful modelling experience that some took on into their wider people management practice.

Make sense – Coaching enabled case study managers to draw on facilitator knowledge to make new sense of their situation and to identify possible actions. This seemed particularly effective for manages who had explored the problem well in a masterclass and/or peer learning and who were ready to make decisions about next steps. Enabling facilitators were also skilled in helping managers identify

the practices that are already working well, thus building manager confidence.

Experiment – Coaching enabled case study managers to experiment and held them accountable to this by expecting intention to experiment to be recorded in learning portfolios and for actions to be taken and recorded between sessions. For some managers, this was highly effective and they needed sustained engagement with a facilitator to keep experimenting. However, some managers were not yet focused enough on actions to use coaching to its full potential. In the instance where a manager (Sandra) was invited to share their experience with their organisation and to lead a process of change, coaching proved valuable in framing how they would approach this action. This raises a potential to extend the programme to create spill over effects for organisations, with organisational buy-in.

Should Managers Undertake Peer Learning And Coaching? We found that managers pursuing a strong agenda for change may benefit from consolidating their thinking and actions by following a masterclass with both peer learning and coaching. However, when these are undertaken concurrently or in a timeframe that is too compressed, relative to the manager's capacity or opportunity to experiment, the range of challenges addressed and reflection undertaken seems to be reduced and repetition between peer learning and coaching seems to reduce returns on manager and facilitator time. However, we do note that managers report broader outcomes from an intensive learning experience, relating to their broader management approach (see below), and so there may be more hidden benefits to undertaking peer learning and coaching concurrently than are immediately obvious.

6.5.4 The Broader Impact Of Learning Interventions On Reflexive Management Practice And Organisational Development

Several case study managers pointed to higher level outcomes from learning interventions, most notably in relation to peer learning and coaching. These include: role modelling good agile working practice; sharing vulnerability, developing team problem solving and delegating; letting go of emotion to tackle a problem and so being more resilient; managing the manager's own time better and prioritising staff work; linking individual and team actions to strategic goals and so becoming more of a leader than a manager; developing a pipeline of leadership by encouraging a team member to progress; becoming more able to cope with change and; believing they can think through the problem and plan actions.

Some managers also said they had observed the facilitators' approach to peer learning or coaching and were using this in their own practice. They are also developing their staff to practise these skills and developing team-based approaches to peer learning, active listening and reflecting on a problem from multiple sides. One adult social care manager said that these skills have helped to build relationships with partners from other services within the tricky challenge of integrating health and social care.

6.5.5 Confidence: Arising From Learning And Enabling Learning

Case study managers at all levels of experience commonly related their learning with GELL to growing in confidence. Most of the managers had not been developed as people managers but faced considerable people management challenges. They often worked in isolation so that informal peer learning from other line managers was scarce. This had been particularly acute during homeworking in the Covid19 pandemic. Some were also only loosely supported by HR functions or, indeed, experienced HR primarily as offsetting work to them or burdening them with time consuming and frustrating online systems. In smaller firms, managers had more discretion but this also meant they had more decisions to make, with less guidance. Managers commonly lacked confidence and appreciated an opportunity to identify what they are doing that works well, to talk over problems and to gain knowledge about potential ways forward. We can, therefore, see that confidence grew from gaining knowledge, reflecting and making sense (often through shared learning) and being supported to identify what they are doing well and how they can experiment with better practice. Learning together was also valuable in reducing isolation and reassuring managers that they all struggle with people management challenges.

Just as confidence is an outcome of learning, we can also see that it is a valuable input. A confident manager can feel more keen and able to learn about a new approach – like VBR – due to their general confidence in people management. They can then grow further in confidence as they add the string of this new people management technique to their bow. In this way, we can see that access to continuous professional development could help foster more curious and developmental managers by fostering confidence and reducing isolation, over time. Our case study managers commonly mentioned that they were seeking further learning following their learning intervention (via GELL, looking for other programmes or adding development into their annual review). It seems that GELL helped them realise that people management can be learned and built their interest and confidence in pursuing learning.

Similarly, the broader outcome of becoming a more reflexive manager by using the skills of peer learning and coaching has the power to make managers feel more confident to tackle a range of problems with resilience. When managers also develop these skills in the team, capability and resilience are built at a more organisational level. Equally, one manager said that she felt more able to resist a discourse of 'management failure' in her team because she felt more comfortable about being able to see a range of perspectives – including that of the leaders and the tricky challenges they are often confronting.

6.5.6 Timeliness: An Essential Condition For Practice Development

We have observed that context factors often come together to create a critical success factor for management learning: timeliness.

Take, for example, the timeliness of learning about agile working as office workers returned to work during the Covid19 pandemic. It was obvious that when a manager had limited experience of managing agile work but they faced a wholesale in social and organisational approaches to agile working, and practical dilemmas in team management, that their attention would be drawn to a learning intervention about managing agile work. Here, we can see that timeliness relates to attributes of the individual, their team, organisation, sector and wider socio-cultural forces. It may also be offset by an overwhelming workload at a time of change: we certainly observed this through withdrawal from an initial plan to engage in training. This, too, is an issue of timeliness that constituted by social and organisational factors and by the line manager's own discretion in deciding how to allocate their time. We think that timeliness is crucial to developing line manager's people management skills. And, so, we will use our evaluation to identify configurations of contexts that create or mitigate timeliness. This will enable us to go deeper in advising the facilitators and commissioners of management learning programmes about 'what is likely to work' to develop people management practices. This point about timeliness can also be demonstrated by thinking about a particular case study manager: Millie, who made far reaching changes as a result of attending a masterclass, peer learning and coaching on managing VBR. We can see that the enabling and constraining contextual conditions that produce a set of contextual conditions in her approach are as follows:

Participant factors: Millie is experienced and confident but lacks knowledge and confidence in VBR, so she is motivated to learn. This motivation increases when she enjoys the masterclass and perceives great potential in pursuing further learning to support VBR and broader team development. Millie is a reflective manager and engages at a deep level with the new learning. She also observes the facilitators and coach and further develops her own reflective and listening skills and cascades this to her team as she models their approach. Millie is optimistic

and confident in using her GELL experience to develop a new vision for her team, despite her constrained ability to control wider organisational factors.

Role/Organisation factors: Millie's team is under strain, under-staffed, retention is poor and recruitment is difficult. This makes innovation in recruitment, retention and team working a pressing concern. (As Millie has the confidence and optimism to believe she can make some changes if she learns a new approach she is not discouraged by these circumstances – this is an intersection of personal and role factors). Millie addresses low team morale through creative use of her role. She models peer learning and coaching and the values based approach to encourage her team and to develop their own skills so that they can relate together differently and value one another, despite wider organisational issues. As the values-based approach started to ease team pressures, team engagement improved offsetting the retention crisis and her team buy-in further to their leader and their team.

Wider socio-cultural and environmental factors: Millie manages in a context under great strain due to the Covid19 pandemic and wider organisational tensions, including in the integration of health and social care. The incentives she can offer to her team are very limited. However, her relatively senior role means she has a degree of control of her environment and she uses this confidently and creatively to create her own micro-climate, using values-based management (not just recruitment) and the skills she models and cascades from peer learning and coaching to make her team function well and attract good colleagues. Our learning intervention was timely in the case of Millie because it landed with a manager who had the personal attributes needed to make the most of it, a role that demanded the learning and gave the learner the power to make multiple changes and an organisational context which created pressures addressed by the learning intervention. Timeliness also arose from interactions between these factors. Millie deployed her learning creatively and her team responded well while her organisation did not block the changes she made. It's possible that Millie's role also permitted her time to engage and develop. Her organisation did not enable her to offer different incentives to her staff but this might even have driven Millie's inventiveness. Although it should be noted that Millie's commitment to the organisation, despite the challenges she faced was exceptional, and relying on line managers to innovate to create micro-climates to protect staff and services may not be a sustainable organisational strategy.

6.6 Management Challenge 1 Conclusion: 'What Works, For Whom And Why' - Key Points For Policy And Practice

The Good Employment Learning Lab is seeking to learn 'what works for whom, and why' to develop the people management skills of line managers and, so, to improve good work and productivity. In management challenge 1, we have analysed a rich dataset about the learning experiences of managers undertaking training in managing agile and secure work and managing values based recruitment. In this section, we provide a 'take away' of our findings for commissioners of line management training, policy for good and productive work and management development practice. As our Learning Lab is about making sense of tricky problems with policy and practice, we look forward to using our learning to think with stakeholders about the implications of our findings for different settings and challenges.

6.6.1 Key Points

We were asked to run an experiment in designing short interventions to develop the people management practice of line managers in a place (Greater Manchester) and a sector (Adult Social Care). The initial aim was to see if we could gain manager attention to participate and find out how effective the training is. We deployed a realist evaluation methodology to develop context-sensitive understanding, asking: what works for whom, and why? Many line managers want to learn to manage people better. Most have had little training and have poor access to peer learning or support. Yet, they face significant people management challenges and pressure to develop high performing teams. Many feel isolated and lack confidence in tackling this challenge, negatively influencing the quality of their own working lives and their ability to manage for good work and productivity.

Many managers have one or more years of experience on which to build, but little training. They are ready to learn at the level we 'pitched' our offer.

Even experienced, confident and relatively senior line managers want to learn specific or new people management approaches. They may have better underlying people management skills, but they can also go further with developing good and productive work – including organisational spill over effects – if they really engage with a new approach.

It is essential that the management challenges addressed are timely. Identifying today's key management challenges with stakeholders working with line managers on the ground is effective in spotting timely challenges.

Timeliness varies according to the manager's context. It arises from the combination of elements within the three different layers of context: the participant themselves; their role, organisation and sector, and; their broader socio-cultural and environmental context. Identifying and harnessing timeliness is essential to gaining and sustaining manager attention and enabling them to create changes from their learning. Organisations, sectors and policy makers should understand and develop the package of factors that make learning about a particular management challenge timely.

Building line manager confidence in people management is a key mechanism and outcome of our learning programme. All of our learning interventions were powerful in reducing the line manager's isolation and fear that their people management challenges are their fault. They normalised people management as a line manager challenge, created safe spaces to be vulnerable, provided precious opportunities to gain knowledge, reflect, make sense and experiment. Some managers have a breakthrough realisation that better people management can be learnt.

Learning events re-activate and build on prior learning to generate action. Changes to management and organisational practice did not always emerge from novel information gained in our learning interventions. Quite often, managers were reminded of what they had learnt in previous courses or through experience and the learning intervention gave them space to reflect on this anew and to make sense of management options differently, sometimes prompting action.

Managers quite commonly expressed a commitment to keep learning and experimenting and a more thoughtful and reflexive approach to people management, as a result of their learning interventions. There is a hope that our programme will nurture more committed, developmental and reflexive line managers (although further interventions may be necessary to sustain such development).

6.6.2 What We Learnt About Effective Programme Design

Attracting (and sustaining) line manager attention is challenging but achievable. Significant effort is required to develop marketing channels and relationships to attract managers to learning opportunities within a place or sector. A flexible opt in programme with multiple dates is necessary to synch with line manager schedules and cancelling/re-booking effort is necessary to respond when managers drop out due to operational pressures. Line managers may 'dispose' of learning opportunities when they are busy and this particularly challenges the integrity of peer learning.

Line managers need learning events and relationships to learn and develop their people management practice (and so are unlikely to develop practice as effectively from asynchronous e-learning). Learners made relatively little reference to our Resource Bank. Instead, their learning seemed contingent on us gaining their attention to attend a learning event, facilitation of this by a skilled trainer or coach and sharing knowledge with peers. Accountability created by developing a learning portfolio that was shared with a facilitator or coach also prompted managers to prioritise action to experiment. We doubt that the busy line managers who attended our session would have gained knowledge, reflected, made sense of their management options, experimented and changed their practice if they had been invited to click on a stand-alone e-learning resource. They need both a prompt to attend and facilitation and peer support to engage.

Hosting sessions in very specific places and face-to-face may be inflexible and unnecessary. While this may be helpful to develop face-to-face peer learning relationships in a particular geographical area, it create significant rigidity to scheduling and ignores the real potential to learn from peers virtually. However, experimenting with provision via place-based organisations with established communities and routines, such as Chambers of Commerce, may be useful. Providing in-house training for organisations in a place might also be viable. A blended approach of offline and online learning may also be valuable so that managers can consolidate online relationships and start to learn more from peers through the development of professional friendships with other line managers. Some managers prefer to learn away from their organisation or even their sector.

Line managers really value learning with peers. This reduces their isolation, provides them with probing questions about their context and practice and opportunity to learn from each other's practice and challenges. Participants are commonly able to act with new insight into their management options after peer learning. Some managers prefer to learn away from their organisation or even their sector. They cherish the privacy enabled by talking about vulnerabilities with 'stranger' peers, away from their employing organisation. And, in particular, away from the people they work with day-to-day.

Some managers are also keen to learn from other sectors or businesses of different sizes. However, adult social care managers also appreciated working with peers with similar contexts and challenges. Their shared 'common sense' reduced the time needed to explain their challenges (although it might also reduce the ability to think outside the box about management options). Commissioners working in organisations or communities where people have pre-existing relationships need to pay particular attention to the membership of peer learning sets and to contracting so confidentiality is as assured as possible. If programmes work within teams of line managers, facilitators will need to actively manage team dynamics and set realistic limitations on confidentiality.

Line managers enjoy learning within a university programme. They entered our programme with high levels of trust and interest. Some need a careful onboarding programme to build confidence and for terms like masterclass, peer learning and coaching to be explained. Some would like accredited learning although any system would need to be agile and still provide learning in absorbable packages that are timely.

Using a theory of change to design interventions is a practical approach to designing effective learning that prompts change. This should draw on management learning theory (e.g. using our five learning pillars of gain knowledge, reflect, make sense, experiment and learning together) to ensure that learning leads to experiments and improvements. It should also deploy both research and practice evidence about better practice (e.g. knowledge commodified in models that line managers can easily relate to and remember) to provide the 'latest thinking' that line managers crave.

Line managers benefit from learning from skilled HR professionals. Our programme depended on the HR management experience of our facilitators who designed useful content (with the research team) and were able to 'drop in' learning on a bespoke basis in sessions. A more general leadership or small business trainer or coach is unlikely to offer the same knowledge about people management. On occasion, facilitators also raised awareness of how practices may defy employment law.

Online learning is accessible and effective for line managers, when facilitated well. We were surprised that skilled facilitators can rapidly develop trust online. But online learning can be treated as rather disposable, making over-recruitment to sessions essential.

The least experienced managers require scaffolding in basic approaches to be ready for specialist learning. For example, basic management techniques like recruitment and conducting regular check-in meetings with staff.
A Resource Bank can be useful as an adjunct to learning, particularly for peer learning and coaching. Facilitators have an opportunity to point to additional resources when managers are exploring problems and peers sometimes point out resources to one another. Facilitator prompts to help managers understand how resources can help them gain knowledge, reflect or make sense seems important to engagement. A minority of keen independent learners use resources more autonomously.

Too much concentrated learning may crowd out (or possibly delay) experimentation for some managers. The pace of learning should mirror the time available to pursue practice change in a particular manager's situation.

Lack of time is the primary barrier to using learning to improve manager or organisational practice.
Organisations need to consider the time line managers need to innovate in order to tackle the problems causing busyness, including innovations in recruitment and retention and in managing issues arising from constant organisational change. Giving line managers strategic space they can absorb learning and use it to change their own practice and organisations is a vital contextual condition for change.

6.6.3 What We Found About Masterclasses, Peer Learning And Coaching

Masterclasses are welcomed by line managers. Managers were interested to hear about latest knowledge and concepts. A sprinkling of academic knowledge, alongside better practice ideas, gave credibility to the learning interventions that helped engage line manager attention. Managers also gained more than expected from rich conversations and shared learning in breakout rooms. This experience can build confidence and motivation to invest in further shared learning and, so, act as a gateway to coaching and peer learning. A minority of line managers less attuned to shared learning would prefer longer masterclasses or a series of masterclasses to peer learning or coaching. Some of these benefited from breakout sessions and, so, short periods of peer learning.

Flash peer learning is practical and intensively useful for line managers. It enables them to gain knowledge from peers and facilitators and to use the group questioning and experiences to go further in making sense of their context and management options. It also creates accountability to

act on problems. Most peer learners experiment with and start to change their practice. However, sustaining peer learning sets is challenging and over-recruiting is essential.

Coaching provides a chance to draw on facilitator knowledge in a bespoke way and to make sense of context and management options. It also promotes accountability by expecting managers to experiment between sessions. Note that we provided skills coaching in people management facilitated by an HR professional, not general leadership coaching which may have lacked HR-specific content.

It seems that masterclasses provide an important scaffold for coaching and peer learning for some managers. If managers do not gain knowledge in masterclasses, some create less value out of peer learning or coaching as they do not fully engage with the topic and the new knowledge available. While they use peer learning and coaching to discuss people management more generally, the depth of learning and practice development may not be as deep.

Some managers consciously adopted the peer learning and coaching skills of our facilitators. By observing these approaches, while also discussing their own people management practice, some managers actively took on active listening and questioning and peer learning approaches to develop their team and communicate better with staff and their own managers. This helped to tackle tricky people management meetings differently. Occasionally, this resulted in improvement in organisational practice, good work and productivity. For one manager, it helped in developing relationships with partners in the sometimes fraught process of integrating health and social care. There may be more potential to this approach of role modelling interpersonal and team development approaches.

6.6.4 What We Found About Learning To Manage Agile And Secure Working And Values Based Recruitment

Managing agile work was a learning intervention that attracted line manager attention due the array of contextual factors that made it timely. Managers benefited from understanding that agility works for organisations, and not just staff. Reminders about the value of basic people management techniques such as checking-in on staff and communicating better were powerful in enabling managers to deal with an intense and rapid challenge.

Managing secure work is a challenge most managers did not recognise as timely. It did not seem timely due to the lack of a national or local conversation and because line managers didn't feel in control of employment terms. Only some understood the topic after the masterclass but a few had a lightbulb moment of realising the importance of

security and acted on this. Attention to learn about secure working was crowded out by the timeliness of thinking about agile working within the same learning interventions.

Managing VBR was timely because of widespread recruitment and retention challenges and basic awareness of this approach. Managers needed support to learn more about VBR, reflect on how it relates to their own challenges, make sense of how to start using it in practice and to start experimenting and consolidating change. Many managers realised there was more to learn about a value-based approach to management and were curious to pursue this further although, in most cases, time pressures meant this needed to be well paced. A recruiting manager was able to pursue a more intense 'VBR project' and to create organisational change, reflecting the potential of targeting training for wider innovation with managers well-placed to drive innovation.

VBR raises deeper questions about values-based approaches to management. A barrier to VBR is staff feeling that the values attributed to care are not mirrored in their employment relationship. Establishing values and driving a values-based approach in an integrated way in organisations - or in the adult social care sector - is a necessary contextual condition to more deeply enabling VBR.

7.1.

Evaluation of Management Challenge 2: Developing Management Skills In Handling Conflict And Fostering Creativity

7.1 Management Challenge 2: Developing Management Skills In Handling Conflict And Fostering Creativity

In the following sections, we present, analyse and make sense of the empirical findings from our research on the impact of the learning interventions to address management challenge 2. This series of interventions covered two topics, 'Handling Conflict' (Conflict) and 'Voice, Creativity and Innovation' (Creativity), which were delivered across our two learning labs, Greater Manchester, and Adult Social Care. As with all our learning interventions, we offered masterclasses, peer learning sets and one-to-one coaching sessions, as detailed earlier in this report.

Conflict at work can be individual or collective – our focus was on individual conflict as we felt that managers would be more able to change and influence practice in this area. While conflict can potentially have positive outcomes in some circumstances, our focus was more on unhealthy forms of conflict arising from, for example, personality clashes, difficult relationships and unfair treatment. These can be overt (e.g. abuse) or less tangible (e.g. tension or exclusion) (CIPD, 2020).

Workplace conflict is known to have deleterious impact not only on the individuals involved but on a range of other workplace outcomes, for example; working relationships, group functioning, organization culture, performance and productivity, and the diversion of management time (ACAS 2016). Conversely, better conflict resolution has been linked to better productivity, lower absence rates, and better ability to handle change (Teague and Roche, 2012).

Conflict at work is commonplace (CIPD, 2020). The nature and prevalence of conflict has been affected by changing workplace contexts, for example; changing employee relations climate, less representation for staff, greater work intensity, and the historic trend towards formalisation of conflict management. There is a recognition that, for a variety of reasons, organisations do not always devote enough resource or attention to conflict resolution (ACAS, 2019). Best practice in formal conflict resolution is well documented (ACAS, 2019), but there is a greater focus on the importance of informal conflict resolution, which together with the trend towards devolution of conflict handling to line managers has placed greater emphasis on

their need to develop the skills to do this effectively (CIPD, 2020).

The Theory of Change we are proposing to develop management skills in managing conflict is illustrated in Figure 5.

In line with our focus on good employment, our managing conflict intervention focused on voice, creativity and innovation. It was designed to support line managers to forge workplace communication mechanisms that facilitate employee voice, that is, to enable them to have a say in and influence over workplace matters. We covered definitions and models of voice, focusing mainly on involvement (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2005) as line managers are likely to be able to design and implement relevant techniques such as team briefings, suggestion schemes and so on. Voice is important as it enables those closest to the work at hand to offer new perspectives and ideas (Soomro et al., 2021). We built on this, also covering techniques that facilitated ways of driving workplace creativity and innovation (Carnevale et al. 2017; Carvalho et al., 2021).

For **creativity**, we covered techniques that helped to develop ideas to solve problems and create opportunities **(Kremer et al., 2019)** and, for innovation, we focused on the application of creativity to produce new ways of working as a wider collective endeavour **(Chen et al., 2020; Shipton et al, 2017)**. We also worked on innovation climates, considering the need for psychological safety and to create safe spaces if creativity and innovation are to flourish **(Newman et al., 2020)**.

The Theory of Change we are proposing to develop management skills in managing and creativity conflict is illustrated in Figure 5.

The following tables indicate the number of sessions we ran on each topic in each location/sector (Tables 7.1 and 7.2), and we give a breakdown of manager 'journeys' through the programme (Table 7.3).

Figure 5. The GELL Theory of Change for Managing Conflict and Creativity: How We Propose That Learning Interventions Will Improve Line Management Practice, to Manage Conflict and Creativity

Table 7.1. Greater Manchester & Adult Social Care Good Employment Labs – Learning Interventions for Conflict

Intervention	Quantity of groups	Sessions per group	Managers Reached			
			Manchester	Tameside	Ch/S*	Total
Masterclass	6	1	32	20	19	71
Peer Learning	3	3	4	5	4	13
Coaching	14	3	6	3	5	14

*Chester and West Cheshire and Salford

Intervention	Quantity of groups	Sessions per group	Managers Reached			
			Manchester	Tameside	Ch/S*	Total
Masterclass	6	1	18	30	16	64
Peer Learning	3	3	5	3	15	23
Coaching	12	3	4	5	3	12

*Chester and West Cheshire and Salford

Learning Journeys of Participants	Conflict Greater Manchester and Adult Social Care Labs	Creativity Greater Manchester and Adult Social Care Labs	Participants who attended sessions on both Creativity and Conflict topics
	Number of Participants		
Total	44	34	37
Masterclass only	27	26	18
Learning Masterclass + peer	6	2	6**
Masterclass + coaching	5	2	9**
M'class + peer learning + coaching	2	2	4**
Peer learning only*	4	0	0
Peer learning + coaching only*	0	0	0
Coaching only*	0	2	0

*Chester and West Cheshire and Salford
** Attended more than one type of intervention across topics, e.g. a conflict masterclass and a creativity peer learning group

The interventions supported managers in harnessing the talents of their workforce, drawing on research that evidences the benefits of representation and voice (Holland et al., 2017, Wood and Wall, 2007, Gilman et al., 2015). Indeed, voice processes feature in models of good work, for example, GM's Good Employment Charter, one of our key delivery partners locally. It is also a constituent element of CIPD's Good Work Index, ILO measures of decent work and the QuinnE good work index. There is also extensive research evidence linking sophisticated practice with better employee engagement, well-being and productivity (Helzer and Kim, 2019; (Zeytinoglu et al., 2015), which are key elements of our Theory of Change.

We start this discussion of findings by presenting a thematic analysis of the data on the learning that was acquired during the interventions, before moving onto to an equivalent analysis of data on its application in the workplace, including its impact on employees, teams, and organisational outcomes. We then present 12 detailed case studies of participants, detailing the learning and practice outcomes, and analysing those through the context + mechanism = outcome framework (outlined earlier in this report). We then conclude with a summary of our learning from management challenge 2.

7.2 Management Challenge 2: Thematic Analysis Of Learning

In this section, we explore the 'manager learning aspects' of the Theory of Change. Specifically, we explore what new knowledge and learning about both conflict and creativity the managers acquired. We also explain how this knowledge was acquired by making reference to the various management pillars.

Overall, the training in management challenge two was received positively by most of the participants that attended. Managers gained new learning on a range of topics and issues, with managers commenting that it was 'useful', and 'packed full of stuff'. Many managers noted that they had learnt new techniques for managing conflict or encouraging creativity. Managers also learnt about the causes and source of conflict as well as a range of different resolution strategies, as well as the conditions and practices that foster creativity and innovation. Managers commented that, whilst some of the techniques were not completely new to them (e.g. having an open-door policy or catch-ups to check performance issues), they were re-enforcing of 'good practice'. That said, new techniques were acquired across all training interventions, masterclasses, peer learning and coaching. In the peer learning, through reflecting with others, for example, managers reported learning new strategies for dealing with both group and individual conflict, as well as learning not to shy away from challenging conflict situations; and different ways of giving employees a voice and enabling creativity. Managers also reflected on how the coaching intervention provided them with a 'safe and non-judgemental platform' to work through challenges and learn better ways of handling them in practice. We now turn to look at the detail of manager learning in relation to 'Conflict' and 'Creativity'.

7.2.1 Learning To Manage Conflict

Managers noted that the training had reminded them of the importance of dealing with issues early, pre-empting conflict before it escalates and not letting things fester. Others explained that the training had reminded that it was acceptable and in fact sometimes necessary to seek advice from others and not feel that they had to manage the conflict on their own.

A key learning point for many of the participants related to learning different styles, tools and approaches for managing conflict and the importance of adapting one's conflict style to the person they are dealing with. In this regard, managers talked about learning to think more deeply about what people are saying and why they are saying it. One manager noted, for example, that the training had made them think about why an employee might be acting in a certain way and what might be going on for them outside of work that might be affecting them, as they put it learning to see the 'bigger picture' when relating to their employees. In this way, they could begin to understand what one manager referred to as a person's "personal need that might be driving their behaviours" (Participant 611).

In relation to these learning points, the 'windows of the world' activity that was presented in the masterclass - as an activity to get participants to think about how others view the world - proved popular and helpful. A number of the participants interviewed made reference to this model, explaining that it reminded them to think about where others in the team might be coming from in certain situations.

Participant 355: (Public Sector) "I just really remember the slide and the activity on 'your windows of the world'. It's easier to forget. I was kind of assuming that we're all this and we're all that. So I don't think I was always... and I'm not very empathetic at times and I think people have the same strengths as me. I'm really trying to be more in tune with that, I guess. In terms of being more empathetic and thinking about what actually is their perspective on it, and how did they see that as coming across. That's something that really stood out for me on the conflict side."

Relatedly, other managers noted that the reflection opportunities embedded in the training interventions (i.e. break-out rooms in masterclasses) made them consider whether they as managers were really listening to their employees in certain situations and keeping an open mind. One manager reflected, for example, on his conflict mindset and the importance of going into a conflict without having pre-disposed assumptions about what others think or want. Many of the participants explained that the training had encouraged them to reflect on themselves and their own conflict handling style. The conflict style questionnaire

was mentioned several times by these participants as a helpful tool in encouraging reflection on one's own conflict approach. Participants here explained that the information on conflict handling styles really opened up their minds and helped them to recognise different ways of managing conflict open to them in addition to their preferred style. One of the coaching participants explained how, following the intervention, she was learning to adapt her conflict style to improve relations in the team:

Participant 373: *(Third Sector) "I have really enjoyed the coaching sessions with [coach], she has been really empathetic and I felt she understands my dilemma. [Coach] has encouraged me to consider different approaches and think about the words I use. My initial approach was quite confrontational. [Coach] suggested that I talk more about how it made me feel and approach it in a gentler way. I can tend to be like a bull in a china shop. So the softer approach is the better way to go. I feel that I have been far more reflective after these sessions. I have time to think about my own management style and the boundaries I have established with others."*

In addition to acquiring new knowledge and learning in relation to conflict, many of the participants explained that, following the training, their confidence in handling conflict had improved:

Participant 373: (Third Sector) "I feel far more confident in firstly assessing the situation and then working through the way to resolve it. I don't feel like I am going to be such a doormat anymore. I will voice my opinion and be heard."

"I feel so much more confident. I genuinely do. I have dealt with... there were two issues that I raised with [coach]. And I had both of those very difficult conversations. And I have resolved both of them."

A number of the managers explained that the training had reminded them to reflect before reacting when managing conflict and the importance of not rushing in when a conflict arises. Many of the participants said they liked to be 'fixers', having a pre-disposition to rush in and problem solve. Through the training they had learnt that sometimes they needed to wait and step back rather than telling people what to do. Relatedly, others commented on the fact that as managers they don't have to get caught up in everything and that it's ok to leave staff to deal with things themselves, without conflicts becoming a formal issue:

Participant 220: (Public Sector) "Like I say, that 'wait' thing was the thing that I've held onto and that's definitely something that's mentioned in the masterclass, that really like, okay, rather than just diving in there, what's going on here. So why do I feel the need to have to jump in and give the solutions [a solution] and things. Yeah, out of everything, I think that's one of the things that I've definitely taken away. And I practise that, in that I'm very aware of that whenever I'm speaking with my team, that's very much... I kind of catch myself (laughs)."

Participant 53: (Third Sector) "For me, the wait one. If I took anything from it, it was that wait one. It was almost like a light bulb moment for me."

Some of the managers said that they had a tendency to avoid conflict and that the training had given them the confidence to step into the situation and handle it:

Participant 491: (Public Sector) "I think, also, previously what I felt is that I do try to kind of avoid conflict. So, that was one of the reasons why I wanted to do the masterclass and it was to kind of give me that extra confidence in that if there is a situation where there is potential for conflict, that I wouldn't just kind of hide from it, that I would try to, hopefully, like openly discuss it."

One manager interviewed talked about how, in order to feel more prepared dealing with conflict she now blocked out time in her diary to consider some of the different ways the conflict situation might pan out. This helped her to feel more confident in dealing with whatever arose. A key learning point for many of the participants related to learning different styles, tools and approaches for managing conflict and the importance of really understanding the people they are working with as individuals. In this regard, managers talked about learning to really listen to what people are saying in order to understand their point of view and what might be going on for them. One manager gave an example of how the training encouraged her to look outside her own viewpoint and frame of reference and think about where the other person might be coming from. This, she felt, opened her mind and shifted her perspective:

Participant 402: (Third Sector) "Another useful thing was, when I was talking about a certain issue and I was telling her [the coach] how it made me feel and how I was looking from my point of view. And she asked a question, almost flipped the coin. She said, 'What do you think the other person would be thinking at that time?' So I said, 'Oh yeah'." And it almost changes your perspective. Things like these were very useful; it opens up your mind. So things like these, I do recall."

Managers also talked about learning the importance creating an open environment, where people feel that they can have their say. In relation to these learning points, the 'windows of the world' activity that was presented in the masterclass as an activity to get participants to think about how others' view the world proved popular. A number of the participants interviewed made reference to this model, explaining that it was a helpful model for reminding them to think about where others in their team might be coming from in certain situations and how people's life experiences might be informing their way of doing things:

Participant 414: (Third Sector) "I think just that kind of thinking about it from like other people's perspectives, like that kind of, what was it called, like window on the world."

Participant 566: (Public Sector) "I think it just added a theoretical level, but it also added an element of understanding individuals. So I think the importance of understanding individuals, understanding the influences on individuals, what may be motivating them, consideration of what other things they've going on in their life. I know there was one exercise we did where we looked at just different aspects of my window on the world, I think it was called. Where we looked at what forms your window on the world, and then looked at how that relates to other people. So yeah, I think having a few tools to use, understand a bit of the theory and understanding the focus on the individual."

Many of the managers talked about how the opportunities to work with others and hear other people's perspectives and experiences on conflict was extremely valuable. They found talking to other managers validating in that they came to recognise that other managers were experiencing similar challenges and issues to themselves in relation to conflict. Others felt that it was reassuring to speak to other managers and get confirmation that they were 'doing ok' as a manager. In addition to acquiring new knowledge and learning in relation to conflict, many of the participants explained that their confidence in handling conflict had improved:

Participant: 414: (Third Sector) "I think I would definitely feel more confident, kind of having more of like the kind of, yeah, just kind of quite formalised kind of information about it, and kind of theories behind it. I think it just kind of like helps you feel more confident, I think."

Participant 463: (Third Sector) "Yeah, it's good, yeah, I'm able to hopefully recognise conflict a little bit earlier. And then offer those informal chats a little bit earlier and making sure you give staff time to talk more rather than just butting in and offering a solution before even considering every angle, really. So yeah, that's been helpful. Just standing that step back and just reflecting before offering a solution."

7.2.2 Learning To Foster Creativity

When analysing the data from participants who attended creativity training, it is clear that new learning took place in several areas. For some managers, the training helped to provide them with a different perspective on what organisational creativity actually is:

Participant 16: (Private Sector) "I guess I really like that creativity isn't about being an entrepreneur or inventing something. It's just maybe about thinking differently and about changing your thought processes and how that can then have an impact on your actions. So, not just about being crazy and different and inventive, but just about thinking in a different way."

In terms of new learning about how to enhance creativity in their teams, managers learnt that it was ok to take a step back and allow the team to get on with things without their constant interference as a manager. Here, some of the managers came to realise that that allowing their team to have space would lead to more creative expression. Manager mentioned however that an on-going challenge was how to strike a balance between letting a team get on with things and ensuring that they felt supported and not deserted:

Participant 508: (Public Sector) "Well, I've got one of my team members here who will probably vouch for me actually. I'm very much, I will say, this is how we want things to be done. And what I'm trying to do is allow people to get on with how they want to do it. I do probably still stick my fingers in more than I should."

Other managers felt that the training had helpfully reminded them of the importance of allowing people in their team to speak freely without questioning what they were saying or questioning the legitimacy of their ideas. In terms of employee voice, managers commented that they had learnt the importance of allowing everyone time to speak and share their ideas, as well as the importance of listening fully to their team's ideas:

Participant 483: (Private Sector) "Rather than me providing the creativity, I was allowing them to do it. If anything, I was trying to minimise my own input into it ... Okay. What can you bring to this? Have you got any ideas of what we could do ourselves, as a company?"

Participant 449: (Third Sector) " I give the team more time to come up with their own solutions and don't present the solution to them, present the problem more. So that was a really useful thing that came out of it. Separating out the time for thinking creatively and thinking creatively but innovatively, that was the word. So creativity versus innovation, that split of how to... what we could do, now what could we really do with it, practically."

Other managers talked about acquiring new learning in relation to the culture of the team and how, in their role as a manager, they could better support the team to feel comfortable expressing ideas and voicing concerns. This linked closely with the need to attend to the emotional needs of the team where possible. The importance of making the team feel psychologically 'safe' was a key learning point mentioned by a number of participants. Managers also talked about new knowledge in relation to a number of models, theories and tools that had proved helpful to them. For example, the 'ladder of innovation', 'the escalator of voice' and 'William Bridge's transition model'. In addition to these theories and models, they talked about various different techniques they picked up in the training for supporting their team's creative processes. Several managers, for example, made reference to the 'tooth- brush' activity that was introduced in the creativity masterclass to help people to access their creative problem-solving mindset.

Some managers went on to say that the training had alerted them to the importance of being specific with their staff about what area of work creative ideas are needed for:

Participant 550: (Private Sector) **"So, for me, I could go to the team and say, 'Do you have any ideas around how we can make changes?' but if it was, 'Right, these are the areas that we want to make changes on' and guide them within those specific topics of what we wanted to discuss, rather than it just being a bit of a free-for-all and then you end up going down a path that you don't really want to go down."**

Managers also explained that they learnt that giving their team more structure in meetings would be helpful for encouraging creativity. One manager explained, for example, that the training encouraged her to plan activities for her team in order to encourage the team to be more creative. The outcome of this for this manager was that she began planning things that the team did not expect, which led to her team expressing more creative ideas. Managers valued being able to work with others and learn from other managers from different sectors about creativity in both the group breakout sessions (masterclass) as well as the peer learning groups:

Participant 306: (Third Sector) **"I think just hearing my colleagues, because they were from public and private sector, so it's the methods that we used, or that they used. I hadn't thought about or hadn't used in this particular setting, if you like. Things like the graffiti wall and video. I'd worked with young people previously so you come up with new methods because you don't do traditional stuff with young people. But I hadn't transferred that kind of method here probably because it's more traditional, I suppose. I went back to what the norm is, if you like, so it was good to hear people doing graffiti walls and text messaging and so on."**

When working with others in the peer learning, managers acquired new knowledge about how to run meetings more effectively to encourage creativity and voice as well as how to make meetings more conducive to people feeling like they have a voice and are being listened to. Managers felt that discussing creativity and voice in the peer learning sessions was particularly helpful, providing them with a range of different perspectives on creativity from people and organisations that they would not normally work with. In terms of new learning about how to enhance creativity in their teams, some managers acquired new knowledge that it was ok to take a step back and allow the team to get on with things without their constant interference as a manager. Some of the managers reached a realisation that that allowing their team to have space would lead to more creative expression:

Participant 268: *(Public Sector)* **"No. I think it's about looking at the skills of listening and waiting for someone to finish talking and all the bits around that. For me it was just about giving people time and space to come up with their ideas and finding that quiet place to do it. Obviously if people aren't comfortable in a certain setting, to look at other settings, and we**

talked about [how] some people are better in larger groups, some people are better in smaller groups. It was looking at that side of stuff. It just makes you think a little bit."

One manager, for example, explained that through the training she had gained confidence to let her staff get on with things and not constantly check what they are doing. She was now able to encourage her team to go off and come back with some creative ideas to talk through. This was quite a shift as she was used to being the one to come up with all the creative ideas. Other managers talked about learning the importance of ensuring their team feel involved in creative decisions, asking them questions such as: What do you think? What should we do about this? What do you want to achieve from this? Other managers felt that the training had helpfully reminded them of the importance of allowing people in their team to speak freely without questioning what they were saying or questioning the legitimacy of their ideas. In terms of employee voice, managers commented that they had learnt the importance of enabling free creativity, allowing everyone the opportunity to share their ideas as well as the importance of listening fully to their team's ideas and making sure everyone felt fully 'heard':

Participant 472: (Third Sector) **" I think it brought home again just the importance of it because it's so easy to forget that employee voice and making sure that your team are heard. So, probably stuff that potentially we knew was important, but thinking about, "How well are we actually doing that?"**

Participant 496: (Third Sector) **"For me the biggest thing was about just enabling the voice, that you don't have to have an outcome from the creativity. It's about enabling the creativity and that you're not always looking for something that you can then adopt in your practice or that will enhance things, but it gets people thinking, and don't knock people's ideas. I totally get that because I am somebody who likes to talk things through and you might start off with something that you think is great and then you get to the practicalities in that and it's a no-go. That resonated with me, but I haven't thought about it in any detail before."**

Some managers talked about learning the importance of attending to the emotional needs to the team, where possible. The importance of making the team feel psychologically 'safe' was a key learning point mentioned by some participants. One manager, for example, explained that the notion of psychological safety had alerted her to the fact that some managers might feel quite nervous in a meeting and might not feel comfortable enough to express their thoughts and ideas. Managers also talked about various different techniques they picked up in the training for supporting their team's creative processes. Several managers, for example, made reference to the 'tooth-brush' activity that was introduced in the creativity masterclass as an activity to help people to access their creative problem-solving mindset:

Participant 268: (Public Sector) **"I think for me, we did the exercise on developing a toothbrush and I just think it was a really valuable one because everyone had their input and different ways of thinking. People were really open and spoke up and I think that's something that sometimes in small teams you struggle with because you're small teams so people don't want to speak up."**

Participant 439: (Public Sector) **"There was one area that really stuck in my mind. We used a tool to get people thinking creatively and it was examining a toothbrush. What a toothbrush does, what it's like, what it's made of, and then moving onto how come it's better. It's such a simple thing, but it's a really good tool because it can break down barriers. It does get the juices flowing, and I don't think people feel pressured by it because it's such an ordinary, everyday object and people weren't feeling threatened by it or anything."**

In addition to learning how to foster the creativity of the team, some managers gained valuable knowledge about how to be creative in their own thinking, manage problems differently as well as find innovative solutions to challenges. For one manager, the coaching was particularly helpful in this regard:

Participant 377: (Public Sector) **"Yeah. So that was what we looked at. So she said, 'Have you thought about going about it a different way? What other ways do you think you could go about it?' And it got me thinking on what could we do? Could we get away with saying, 'Actually no experience.' She said, 'Would they go for that?' I was like, 'Well, I'm going to put it forward, I've got nothing to lose."**

Managers valued being able to work with others and learn from other managers from different sectors about creativity in both the group breakout sessions as well as the peer learning groups. When working with others in the peer learning, managers acquired new knowledge about how to run meetings more effectively, how to foster more effective team working. Managers felt that discussing creativity and voice in the peer learning sessions was particularly helpful, providing them with a range of different perspectives on creativity from people that they would not normally work with but who had similar issues. They welcomed the reassurance that their management challenges were pretty normal and picked up ideas and resources from one another, sometimes sharing them with colleagues in their organisations too.

7.2.3 Summary Of Learning From Different Interventions

In this section we summarise the kind of learning that emerged from each of the different interventions, with reference to the 'learning pillars' that underpinned their design.

Masterclasses

It was clear that masterclasses were primarily a vehicle for participants to **gain** new **knowledge** and that they were effective in doing so. A number of respondents referred to frameworks and models they had picked up from the masterclasses, and, particularly to exercises and techniques (for example the 'WAIT' technique, and 'windows on the world' exercise in the conflict sessions, and the 'toothbrush' exercise in the creativity sessions) that informed their thinking and offered possibilities for application in the workplace. However, it was also clear that masterclasses generated other forms of learning. The breakout rooms offered opportunities to **learn together** with other managers. Masterclasses also provided participants, through the exercises and breakout discussions, with the opportunity to **reflect** on their practice, and to **make sense** of their context and experience, appreciate new management options and plan for change.

Peer Learning

The peer learning sessions had their greatest impact through offering participants the opportunity to **learn together**. In particular, they offered intensive opportunities to learn from the experiences of other managers in other organisations and sectors. Sharing challenges and hearing other managers' observations on their situation also offered opportunities to **reflect** on problems, context and practices. However, it is also true that the peer learning, like the masterclasses, offered opportunities to **gain knowledge**. Participants learned from their peers (and the facilitator) about effective ways to tackling problems (for example, running meetings effectively, promoting teamworking, strategies for handling conflict).

Coaching

The coaching sessions offered in-depth opportunities for participants to work through problems and develop solutions. They were primarily effective in helping participants to **reflect** and **make sense**. Participants commented on the way in which the challenges and prompts of the coach encouraged them to examine and re-evaluate their practice, and also to develop and explore new solutions and approaches. However, coaching was also helpful to participants in **gaining new knowledge** – though this wasn't their primary purpose, coaching offered an opportunity for participants to absorb and contextualise the expertise of the coach. As we'll see when we examine evidence of impact (below), some participants themselves adopted coaching styles, modelling their approach on what they had experienced in the coaching sessions.

7.3 Challenge 2: Learning And Outcome Journeys And Thematic Analysis Of Outcomes

7.3.1 Rapid Estimation Of Learning And Outcome Journeys

Although our research is primarily qualitative and our key aim is to identify context, learning and outcome relations (rather than quantitative patterns), we know that commissioners of line management training are interested in the incidence of outcomes for our learners. Consequently, we present an estimation of line manager learning and outcome journeys that we produced via some rapid analysis (see Table 7.3 below). As mentioned in relation to Management Challenge 1, two factors mean we report this as an estimation. First, our dataset is extensive and, as this task was undertaken after our thematic data coding was complete, it was not possible to re-visit every item of data to make a judgement about the journey of each respondent. We also did not have capacity to cross-validate judgements about whether outcomes have been achieved. Second, we can only report on outcomes that we observed and it is likely that there are more unobserved outcomes, perhaps particularly related to longer-term goals such as organisational change and good and productive work.

For these two reasons, the figures that follow are likely to be an under-estimation of outcomes.

Table 7.3. Rapid Estimation of Learning and Outcome Journeys

Observed Outcomes	Learning Interventions Undertaken by Managers*					Total
	Monly C	MC+PL (no C)	MC+C (no PL)	MC+PL+C	PL or C (no MC)	
Number of managers on which we have data	40	14	16	8	6	84
Gained knowledge	35 88%	13 93	16 100	8 100	5 83	77 92%
Commit to experiment	36 90%	14 100%	16 100%	8 100%	5 83%	79 94%
Experiment	21 53%	8 57%	14 88%	8 100%	5 83%	56 67%
Improved manager practice	15 38%	6 43%	11 69%	8 100%	3 30%	43 51%
Improved organisational practice	13 33%	5 36%	10 63%	6 75%	2 33%	36 43%
Positive impact on staff	14 35%	5 36%	12 63%	7 88%	1 17%	39 46%
Improvement to good and productive work	15 38%	5 36%	12 75%	7 88%	3 50%	42 50%

*MC = masterclass, PL = Peer Learning, C= Coaching

Gaining Knowledge and Committing to Experiment - The overwhelming majority of participants who attended a learning intervention, or more than one, within management challenge 2 had gained knowledge and committed to experiment with applying it. The figures were slightly higher for those managers who attended a masterclass with at least one other intervention, and lower for those who attended a masterclass only, or other interventions without first attending a masterclass – those differences are small and need careful interpretation.

Outcomes - Two-thirds of managers reported that they had experimented with a change in practice, and half of managers made improvements to their practice. Around half, or just under in some cases, of managers indicated improvements to organisation practice, positive impacts on staff and improvements to good and productive work.

Masterclass only - Participants who attended a masterclass only were less likely to indicate positive outcomes than in other learning interventions. Nonetheless, over half of managers reported that they had experimented, and over a third indicated outcomes in other categories (e.g. improvements to practice, positive impacts on staff). It appears that attending a masterclass has a significant impact but not as much as when it is combined with another intervention (particularly coaching, see below)

Masterclass and peer learning (no coaching) - Participants who supplemented a masterclass with peer learning (but went no further) had very similar results to those who had attended only a masterclass.

Masterclass and coaching (no peer learning) - Outcomes for this group of participants were strong: nearly all of them experimented with changes to practice, and over two thirds reported improvements in the other outcome categories.

Masterclass, peer learning and coaching - Participants who attended all three interventions had the best outcomes, with over three quarters (at least) reporting outcomes in all categories (e.g. improvements to practice, improvements to good and productive work). It appears from this observation, and the one in the paragraph above, that it is coaching (in combination with other interventions) that is responsible for the additional positive affect, at least in relation to the management challenge 2 topics.

Peer learning and coaching (no masterclass) - This group of participants had a similar profile to those who attended only a masterclass, and generally fewer positive outcomes than other groups of participants (except in relation to experimenting with changes to practice).

Summary - All interventions and combinations of interventions led to positive outcomes, in all cases for at least a third of participants, and in very many cases for a significant majority. Masterclasses (on their own) are effective for very many participants, but appear to be the least effective intervention overall. However, masterclasses appear to be foundational for other interventions – participants who move straight to peer learning or coaching tend to have fewer outcomes recorded. Combinations of interventions, where they involve a masterclass, give the best outcomes, and the small group of participants who did all three had the best outcomes of all. There is some indication that coaching seems to lead to stronger outcomes than peer learning, all other things being equal, when thinking about managing conflict and creativity (although we do not have large enough groups to indicate differences between these challenges). Numbers in some of the sub-categories are small, and caution - and cross-referencing with the wealth of qualitative evidence (in the next section, below) - is required in interpreting these conclusions.

7.3.2 Outcomes From Managing Conflict And Fostering Creativity Interventions

In this section of the evaluation, we use our Theory of Change to explore the outcomes from the training reported by managers in both Greater Manchester and in Adult Social Care, in relation to the 'conflict' and 'creativity' interventions. We examine the experiments they made, changes to their practice, changes to organisational practice, impact on staff, and improvements to good and productive work.

7.3.2.1 Experimenting With Management Practices

In the training sessions, managers were asked to commit to 'trying out' a new of managing in relation to 'conflict' and 'creativity'. Not all managers reported doing this but there was plenty of evidence of experimentation taking place, as we illustrate below.

Conflict
For some managers, the experimenting involved implementation of particular techniques that were introduced it the training sessions. The Why Am I Talking (WAIT) technique was frequently referred to, as was the '5 W's' exercise:

Participant 220: (Public Sector) "I am still in the process of adapting. I am conscious of giving the worker space (WAIT) which has been effective."

Participant 302: (Public Sector) "I really like the WhyAm I Talking acronym.. will tell a few people here about that. But I think I will also flag with people the impact of their behaviour has on me, hoping that will help them to reflect on their behaviour."

Participant 611: (Public Sector) " From 5 W's exercise, I will work upon (1) Personal biases (2) My view of the world- it's happening to me, not what is this teaching me (3) How I'm perceived by others (active listening,

nonverbal signals). [I will] use the Thomas Kilmann Conflict Styles model to assess situations."

Others reported that they were experimenting with a change in management 'style':

Participant 1: (Public Sector) "I think actively listening to colleagues more and spending more time reflecting rather than jumping straight to 'doing' and the solution immediately.… I think it's made me appear to be more caring than perhaps I was perceived before. I do get told I can be intimidating sometimes, so actively listening and reflecting has altered the way I am a) perceived and b) manage a situation. I also am more open with others about my circle of control and push back to others more to help resolve a conflict situation, rather than feeling like it's all down to me to resolve."

Participant 479: (Third Sector) "As a new manager, I hit the ground learning. Everything is new and so I committed to try out strategies throughout the process. It was good and I know from feedback from my manager that I am developing strong leadership styles and am managing to manage in a calm, regulated and empathic manner."

One manager reported plans to experiment with more far-reaching changes to foster better work relationships and to avoid future conflict:

Participant 323: (Third Sector) "I intend to create – with my team – a staff charter, which all staff members collectively draft and subsequently adhere to. I hope this practice will encourage accountability, innovation and collegiality amongst team members, with an onus on stronger and more effective communications...... I will also introduce the idea of a team away day – depending on how the project progresses re funding. During this away day I will express emphasis on team building and making stronger connections. I feel this will help avoid any workplace conflict in the future, or at least encourage people to address issues immediately in a respectful and trusting way, as opposed to allowing them to fester."

Creativity
As with the 'conflict' sessions there was evidence of a mixture of experimenting with different management approaches and commitments to specific changes. The following quotes are illustrative of the former:

Participant 306: (Third Sector) "In terms of creativity, tell a story rather than being data driven or the next bulletin that came through. Just think of a story and let everyone imagine how that story can end and be better."

Participant 483: (Private Sector) "....providing as many opportunities as possible for open conversations with my team. The more chances they get to voice their opinions and thoughts, the more involved and valued they will feel. With my team being part-time

and based across various sites, it is challenged to create a structured line of communication, so these conversations have been informal, and spontaneous, which I feel has worked. These initial conversations then give way to more formal meetings to take any ideas and thoughts to a more purposeful level."

Participant 508: (Public Sector) "What it [the training] did do was open me up to thinking like that more often, trying to take a step back almost, and it certainly did that for me, definitely.....Well, I've got one of my team members here who will probably vouch for me actually. I'm very much, I will say, this is how we want things to be done. And what I'm trying to do is allow people to get on with how they want to do it. I do probably still stick my fingers in more than I should but....."

As mentioned above, delegates reported experimenting with more specific changes related to particular elements of the training. For example, this respondent reports experimenting with two of the techniques introduced in the training:

Participant 16: (Private Sector) "[I] committed to hold a face-to-face team meeting and trial listening first with the toothbrush example and then with a real live issue. I plan to speak with my Contract Director to establish a forum for listening to the employee voice and collating all of the methods we have now."

Participant 16: (Private Sector) "So it's hard to say, but like I was saying at the start, maybe that escalator of voice thing is maybe the thing that's stuck in my mind. About tweaking the way I approach issues, rather than just going straight for information and communication, to be more consultative and get people's input into decisions."

Interestingly, there was also experimentation based on the approaches used to deliver the interventions, so using the exercise to demonstrate how to initiate a creative process, alongside the creativity techniques being used to actually 'attribute list' in relation to an organisational challenge that required creativity. So, for example, a shift to using a coaching approach in team meetings to generate creativity and innovation:

Participant 339: (Third Sector) "Use more coaching style questions in my 1-1 and team meetings. To try and encourage a more collaborative team approach with more confident and innovative staff, who are happy to suggest ideas, no matter how daft they may be."

Some of these experiments went beyond specific techniques to more far reaching changes. Unfortunately, in this first case, the experiment was cut short due to an office move:

Participant 306: (Third Sector) "We talked about having one-to-one regular meetings for this issue that I explained to the coach. I started to map out what

that meeting would look like because, again, it was what outcomes I expected from that meeting. I could influence change, so that's what I started to do. I had, a kind of, one test meeting to see. You have to set it out first to see if the other person is agreeable to it, but then again this move has stopped us meeting because, operationally and the run up to Christmas as well. It's just stalled because of that but at least we started to look at how we structure our relationship."

In the case of other experiments around creativity, our data collection point doesn't allow us to track the impact of what look like potentially quite significant changes:

Participant 16: (Private Sector) "I committed to a two-day meeting with my team and the North regional HR team which is planned and booked for January 2022."

Participant 318: (Third Sector) "[I committed] to look at whether our company culture allows for creative voices - do our actions match our words? I plan to explore this further in our senior management meetings."

7.3.2.2 Improved Manager Practice

There were numerous examples of managers making concrete changes to their practice following the training interventions. We report a selection of examples here.

Conflict
Participants commonly expressed an initial lack of confidence in dealing with conflict, and how their confidence had grown following the interventions and experimentation:

Participant 320: (Third Sector) "I'm not overly confident with [conflict]. And figuring out the reason why I didn't do that is that I didn't even like to think about it. Actually, taking the time to think about it, even if that's uncomfortable or not a fun job to do, in the long run is better."

Participant 402: (Third Sector) "It did help me to reflect on my approach in terms of when I am dealing with a conflict or supporting somebody, because my default style is, obviously I don't like conflict, confrontation. I want to sort things out quickly but sometimes things do need to be confronted as well.... it's kind of helped me manage, not my anxiety, but my fear of the conflicting conversations."

Participant 460 described herself as more assertive and less likely to 'pussyfoot' around conflict and Participant 220 noted their improved ability to have honest conversations around required improvements. More generally, another participant noted that the interventions had "demystified the line manager role" and given her the confidence to put herself forward for promotion. Participant 566 said they were less threatened by needing to manage conflict. A

further participant argued that the learning intervention was a 'lightbulb moment' for them that enabled them to be more courageous around conflict situations.

This growth of confidence was associated both with having techniques to address conflict and having success when experimenting with these:

Participant 472: (Third Sector) "Asking open questions around how people were feeling, exploring what was at the root of the conflict from their perspective. Using key coaching framework/questions to guide conversations and allow the person to articulate where they are at and what they need. Working on psychological safety of the team by inviting honesty and allowing all voices to be heard, with all suggestions/ feedback welcome."

Managers also repeatedly mentioned the need to support their teams during conflict and to be more open in their communications. Other techniques from the interventions that were adopted in practice were: the need to be proactive and take swift action to 'nip things in the bud'; WAIT (as noted above); and, active listening:

Participant 213: (Public Sector) "It helps me to not presume something about a situation and give the staff the opportunity to share their perspective first so that I can understand and try and appreciate where they are coming from."

Participant 320 and Participant 53 also now turned electronic devices off during interactions with staff to avoid interruptions, with Participant 53 also deferring discussions, where appropriate, so that better quality conversations could be had. Some suggested that working with these techniques had been successful in getting to the root of conflict and working collaboratively to resolve it (e.g. Participant 472). This change in practice could create disquiet, with staff occasionally resistant to techniques such as WAIT and the shifting of responsibility onto them (Participant 53), again noting the need for wider support around new practices.

That participants could not, and should not, aspire to fix everything again emerged as a prominent theme. Intervention techniques helped them to stand back from, and be more resilient around, conflict:

Participant 320: (Third Sector) "Being more compassionate towards myself has been easier to try out. There is a difference between knowing it's ok to not have all the answers and believing that is ok. I have been really trying to move from the knowing to believing aspect which (I think) has been progressing. This has helped me feel more relaxed about potential conflict situations."

Participant 472: (Third Sector) "It came back to having that safe space, and sitting with the silence, and not trying to problem-solve it, but actually getting [staff] to give their take on it. Then asking them: 'What do they need?' Rather than trying to fix it or being like,

'Well, this needs to happen', actually taking a second and really saying, 'Okay, so what do you need in this situation to move forward?' or, 'What has not gone right?'. Asking really open questions and getting other people to voice what they're feeling, rather than trying to guess or trying to move it on because it's uncomfortable…. Actually taking the time to really get that person's story and hear where they're coming from."

This builds on the point made earlier that coaching techniques used to deliver the interventions also influenced management practice, supporting a shift to a more coaching and facilitative style. Participant 220, for example, when using WAIT had developed some coaching questions to support the conversations and Participant 402 had introduced scenario-based coaching sessions supported by coaching. Another used action learning techniques (akin to peer learning) to resolve conflict and noted that the interventions had prompted her to think about things in a different way, which she generally had not done due to the work pressures upon her. There was a general theme of the interventions having created a much needed space for reflection that enabled experimentation and change in practice.

Some changes in practice recorded related to changes to 'style' or 'approach' to management. In some cases, this related to confidence or assertiveness to tackle conflict:

Participant 338: (Private Sector) "Being assertive and confident has really helped me, as people have shown more respect to me even if I am saying 'no', or not doing exactly as they wish. In terms of managing my team, I now deliver clear and open feedback as soon as possible. This helps motivate the team and also resolve conflict quicker rather than letting things drag on."

Participant 402: (Third Sector) "Yeah. I am obviously going back, referring to the conflict style. It did help me to reflect on my approach in terms of when I am dealing with a conflict or supporting somebody, because my default style is, obviously I don't like conflict, confrontation. I want to sort things out quickly but sometimes things do need to be confronted as well."

In other cases, this related to adopting a more reflective and measured approach:

Participant 328: (Third Sector) "After the masterclass, when I was reviewing certain work put forward by our delivery partners, I think I take a little longer to reflect about where they're coming from. I think that's one of the things that I do more, if it's a narrative that someone has presented. It could be a little bit interpretable and what have you, I really think about, 'Oh where were they coming from with that?' And really think a bit more about it, I think."

Participant 402: (Third Sector) "It helped me reflect and be more mindful of I'm not going back to my default state, I need to see what's the bigger picture

and what's in the best interest of the organisation and also how best to approach. I think that was the most useful part for me."

…or creating space for conflict resolution:

Participant 77: (Third Sector) "It's been very much about creating the safe environment for people to have honest conversations. And trying to take the emotion out of things, that was really important. So trying to get them away from their position of this very much an animosity, both trying to look at things objectively, both acknowledging that there were external factors for both parties that were contributing to the situation."

Other respondents referred to particular interventions that they had made following the training which were implemented in order to deal with, or prevent, conflict. For a number of managers this involved the practice of asking more questions and gathering more information before moving to a solution:

Participant 402: (Third Sector) "Generally in terms of, if a manager is telling me about an issue they're having with a staff member, I would have the tendency to advise with that sort of information. But now like I said, about what I have taken away is asking more questions and getting the manager to really elaborate or getting from all perspectives. I think the impact of this approach is, I can think of some mistakes that I've made in the beginning with taking action with the limited amount of information and the impact of that.

"I think in comparison to that, asking more questions, getting more information puts you in a better position to deal with it. I can see that has an impact in terms of my approach of dealing with those issues and how I advise in terms of on the back of detailed information. I can see an impact on that."

For other managers, the main change was to identify and address potential underlying causes of conflict:

Participant 409: (Third Sector) "..because his conflict was he'd come from part-time and gone to full-time, so he'd found that really challenging and wanted to revert back to part-time. So we looked at his support plan and then it was like, because his day-to-day had become too much for him, because he was doing too much, that's when we sat down and talked through the timeline and how he was going to manage his day."

Participant 323: (Third Sector) "[I'm] scheduling more time *for* 1:1 conversations with my counterpart to ensure channels of communication are effectively maintained. Working remotely in a job share has been somewhat difficult, therefore I am now optimising the opportunities we have when working together by booking in routine briefings e.g. 30 minute catch ups / handovers. These have served to mitigate any potential misunderstandings or communication breakdowns. For the times when we are not in the

office together, I have requested daily catch ups via Zoom, which have also served to strengthen our working relationship."

Creativity
As with the 'conflict' interventions, there was a mix of changes to practice reported as arising from the creativity training, both in terms of general management style and specific changes resulting directly from the training. The following examples illustrate the former:

Participant 355: *(Public Sector)* *"I tried to stand back in team meetings and not come in too soon. Much better. I wasn't shutting down or presenting unpopular decisions. Morale felt better."*

Participant 306: (Third Sector) ".....can't think of a particular thing, but I just know I am just more bolder in saying I'll just wait that through. I will just think about it and any emails, I'm not responding to an email straight away. I will say, 'Thanks for that, just different things to think about, I'll get back to you'. I am just conscious that I'm slowing some things down in order to either think it through myself or go to somebody else. I think that's what I've taken from the peer group."

In relation to the latter, the same delegate had a particular concrete example of a change that they had made to encourage creativity and voice:

Participant 306: (Third Sector) "On a TV monitor, I can put information, whether it be about compliance issues, because we are a food charity so there is always health and safety and compliance issues about food safety and so on. We can put standard news but then I can also put on news about welcoming new volunteers or the shifts changing or anything that they'd like to raise about this new building and give them the opportunity to feedback."

And another respondent reported another specific intervention around communication:

Participant 373: (Third Sector) "One idea [covered in the training] was to give out flash info via our staff Whatsapp group and email if a staff member was not on the group whatsapp. This worked well and is one of the ways I will continue to do as emails can become drowned out or buried under other work emails."

In some instances, experimentation had led to changes in management practice. Team meetings were the most prominent example of this, with managers either instigating team meetings or running existing meetings in a more open way that enabled employee voice. Other mechanisms were also implemented including suggestion schemes (Participant 53) and seeking feedback by email:

Participant 460: (Third Sector) "I just put, what makes you happy at work? What makes you unhappy at work? What can we change? Can we help with anything in your home life? And, anything else for discussion?"

One-to-ones and appraisals were either introduced (Participant 460) or changed so that they provided a mechanism for feedback and staff voice:

Participant 414: (Third Sector) "That's definitely a.. take away for me… getting people's… feedback in different forms. So, how we would do it at a team meeting or how we would do it within appraisals, or just on an actual feedback form. So, I guess that's kind of something that we've kind of started doing a little differently."

Participants noted that these changes could create anxiety and that support was needed around changed practice to reassure teams that it was being done for positive reasons. Participants also wanted to ensure that staff felt involved rather than 'done to' (Participant 495) and recognised the need to manage meetings so that everyone is heard, rather than some dominating, irrespective of their engagement style:

Participant 495: (Third Sector) "We talked a lot about giving time for preparation. Because when we talked through it, it became quite evident that actually one member of staff in the team, when she's put on the spot, doesn't respond well to that situation. Because she likes to have had time to think about it beforehand and plan and bring ideas with her. And can be quite overwhelmed by the other member of staff who's very outspoken."

Some participants had also embedded the creativity and innovation techniques from the interventions into their team meetings:

Participant 460: (Third Sector) "We formalised the 'employee voice' making it clearer that we want to hear the staff ideas. We have set up more team meetings…. with ideas generation first, then a gap in between, and then another meeting for the evaluation process. [Staff] are all keen to do this."

Participant 472: (Third Sector) "[The intervention] just gave us the knowledge and the backing to just be like, 'No, we're going to push this', even if people might think, 'Oh, God, I don't want to do a breakout room again'. Actually sitting with that discomfort, making people do it. The outcome has always been really positive, and I think people have really benefited from having that space and that input… generating a lot of different ideas, that we did get people to just brainstorm as much as possible around different things. Then it doesn't matter how stupid. I think that was coming back to the toothbrush [technique], wasn't it, just being as open as possible."

Returning to the idea of supporting change, Participant 414 noted the need to be open to ideas not working and indeed to re-try ideas that had been previously unsuccessful. A frequent theme in change in practice was the need to stand back and not try to 'fix' everything. Participants reflected on how they had learned to delegate to the team and the benefits that resulted:

Participant 399: (Private Sector) "The hardest bit is listening and not thinking I can solve this problem… One of the true benefits of staff thinking of the solution themselves is they are more likely to take ownership of the solution."

Participant 20 told her team that she had been on training and that she was now standing back to allow the team to find solutions rather than "always jumping in to give you and answer". Standing back also supported participants who were concerned about their own lack of creativity and saw the techniques as a means to build on the strengths of others in their areas of weakness:

Participant 495: (Third Sector) "Being able to deliver [creative solutions], knowing that it really didn't need to be me that was actually doing the creativity side of things."

7.3.2.3 Improved Organisational Practice

We now look at examples of where the impact of the training went beyond changes to an individual manager's practice to changes to practice in the wider team or organisation. The incidence of evidence of this varied markedly between the two management challenges, as the examples below illustrate.

Conflict

We have very limited evidence of changes to wider team or organizational practice in relation to handling conflict. By way of an exception, this respondent reported recognition from senior colleagues of positive changes in their team, which were attributed to changes in approach to handling conflict:

Participant 417: (Private Sector) "So, it's more of a sort of cultural type thing, but definitely recognised sort of above my head. You know, I've had some feedback from more senior people in the organisation saying that things seem to be going really well, these people are pressing on nicely. So, it's like a ripple around the department and the wider business, as well, and that's, obviously, a plus."

It seems likely that the changes to manager practice in relation to handling conflict were quite individual, amounting to changes of personal approach, and did not lend themselves to spillover to other managers or wider practice. We speculate that this may be because, due to long-term changes in UK industrial relations, conflict at work is more individualised and less collective in nature. Also, formal procedures for conflict resolution are likely to be organisation-wide, so that managers only have scope to change their approach to informal conflict resolution. Whilst this is enormously important, it may be that there is a limit to how much this can spread and become embedded, at least without institutional support and encouragement.

Creativity

By contrast, in relation to creativity, there was extensive evidence of broader changes to approach that went beyond an individual manager's practice. We start with some examples of reported changes to practice within teams:

Participant 474: (Third Sector) "I used Padlet, which is an app I saw used in one of the masterclasses, and I received great feedback from my team about this. It's an online collaboration app that enables employee voice and innovation without any social hindrances getting in the way, because it's all anonymous. I've used this with my team a few times now during meetings and outside of meetings, and the response rate has shown new ideas from my team that they never presented before."

Participant 449: (Third Sector) "Yeah, so around a session where we used the dot learning so that people could basically add ideas onto this template we were using, which was really good…it's been really positive, I think, for other team members, particularly I've got a couple in my team who are quite introverted, really, really strong, really, really strong and talented, and perhaps needed that little bit more confidence that they were okay to come up with their own ideas and solve those problems. I think that's been quite positive, off the back of this."

Participant 490: (Third Sector) "Allowing the voice of the employee to be heard is the key, most of time they are not seeking a solution but just an opportunity to be heard. The shared learning is progressing well and the team appear to be accepting this, it hasn't occurred that this is a way to introduce creativity for them, it's an opportunity to share experiences of challenging situations in the role they work in and so are able to see the benefits. By using the W.A.I.T technique I am able to step back allow them to have a voice and hear the change talk from them with their own creativity within the role."

Another respondent reported benefits arising from enabling staff to initiate conversations around service improvements:

Participant 468: (Third Sector) "So now they do come to me and say, 'We think in our areas what would work better for us is to do this, this, this and this'. And then I let them do that, and what we have found is things are working better because they understand the area better than myself because they're there day to day working with the families. So the change I've seen is that they're now able to come to me with some creative ideas or ways of how to do things."

The same respondent reported that the move to empower staff had resulted in savings in management time:

Participant 468: (Third Sector) "[They are able…] to handle things on their own, and then obviously, in terms of the senior managers, they can just concentrate on doing what they need to do; they

don't always have to be chasing them and seeing what they're doing."

The following participant describes the benefits from changing the format of team meetings to enable knowledge sharing:

Participant 490: (Third Sector) "So what came out of the peer-to-peer creativity one for me was that I would implement into my team meeting a positive shared learning, each team meeting. We meet every Tuesday as a team. So each Tuesday one staff member talks about a case or a situation…….and then that kind of, it opens up the team meeting to other examples or people expressing how that's benefitted them because they can now go on to utilise that with their clients and things….we end the team meeting on a positive reflective practice learning that we do, and it ends the meeting on a high. It brings about the collaborative conversation around different clients and what they're going to take away from that session, sort of thing."

We finish this section by focusing on the experience of a participant who explores the immediate impact of some specific changes to the way her department managed for creativity, and then reflects on the wider impact for her team. First, she talks about the change to a more participatory approach:

Participant 449: (Third Sector) "I just don't think we had that two-way dialogue really. I certainly had people being… people would be creative, but it would be on a more individual basis. When it comes to teams, the nature of our job is that we have to be creative, but I think we've put tools in place now to enable that creativity. And like I say, be more involved in the strategy, the planning, the brainstorming type activity before we get to, 'here's the plan'. So I think that's the main difference ."

She then reports how this had taken holder in the wider organisation:

Participant 449: (Third Sector) ".. some of the ways that we've been running the session, we've rolled out across the wider marketing team that I work with, and then also influencing up as well. This probably applies more to the coaching, the peer learning, but some of the managing up things that I've been doing to try and suggest we can… we know what we're talking about. We can be innovative, we can be creative and we can come to you with solutions to the problems and so pre-empting some of those things. That's been a big change, I think."

Leading to some strategic changes:

Participant 449: (Third Sector) "Off the back of that, we've developed a bit of a comms… well, I've developed a comms strategy which is sort of our, with our leadership team at the moment, we're running through and a document which sort of suggests what

our identity is and how we talk about that. So that's been really quite big stuff."

Leading in turn to considerable impact on the reputation of her department and the effectiveness of its relationships with other levels and functions in the organisation:

Participant 449: (Third Sector) "Outside of my team? Yeah, definitely. So certainly my SLT have enjoyed the fruits of my labour (laughs). We've definitely got better connections with our business development teams since doing this work. I think we're doing a better job of telling people how good we are at our job. And off the back of that, that's sort of improved some of our… that trust in us, to be brought into the thinking a bit earlier."

7.3.2.4 Positive Impact On Staff

We now turn to participants' reports of benefits to their staff arising from changes that they made since participating in the programme.

Conflict

There were reports of changes to practice around conflict engendering positive responses from staff:

Participant 339: (Third Sector) "I took away little questions on talking to the staff and having informal chats. 'How are you' and 'what have we done' – people are responding well to those questions. I'm getting more out of the staff than just yes and no. It's helping with staff relations."

Participant 463 noted that conflict resolution mechanisms improved communications and Participant 418 reported that staff now felt happier as a result. Staff were also being more proactive in resolving their own conflict (Participant 320) and responding positively to address it, so that:

Participant 181: (Public Sector) "The morale of the team has massively been boosted because they feel that they could still say what the issue was, but felt confident and comfortable to be able to say it in a way that was professional rather than offloading, rather than just being negative."

Participants noted that teamwork was improved and that teams had become more 'close knit' which helped to deal with a stressful context (Participant 463). Participant 460 also linked improved group dynamics to better motivation, conflict resolution and no longer being able to "cut the air with a knife."

In some cases, positive changes related to specific 'conflict' situations that were the topic of the changes. This respondent talks about a change in approach to dealing with staff who were struggling to focus or repeatedly asking for solutions to problems:

Participant 373: (Third Sector) "It's about putting it back on them and say, 'What do you think you should do?" So that's my mantra now. "What do you think you should do? What do you think the answer is?" It has massively... it's triggered me to have the conversation about that and then it's putting it back on the person that's asking me, what I deem as an insignificant question or I know that they already know the answer, they're just wanting confirmation. And it's also about building their confidence, in having enough confidence in themselves to believe that they know the answer already without asking a second or third or fourth opinion."

The respondent reported that this approach reduced the number of queries and complaints they were receiving from staff, which were time consuming and in some cases themselves a source of conflict.

The following respondent explains how changes they had made to communication methods, and related changes, had led to improvements in employee wellbeing, which in turn is recognised is a factor in reducing future conflict.

Participant 335: (Public Sector) "I think wellbeing, factoring in more space in meetings, diving straight into the agenda. We've now got the hangouts and that's a place where you can say, 'I'm ready for home time'. So a bit more of a personal space when we're in this remote environment and being very clear about the communication, especially around the restructure. I'd like to think the wellbeing is better and I know that wellbeing can add to stress and then stress adds to conflict, so I think addressing it at that root cause is good."

By contrast, the following participant explains how conflict resolution conversation had led to positive career development outcomes for an employee:

Participant 417: (Private Sector) "And that person really appreciated having that open conversation and I think it actually made them sort of re-evaluate how they've sort of climbed up that development ladder, so to speak. I think they were probably missing a couple of rungs, to be fair. So, that made them understand that and, hopefully, again, you know, they're a graduate trainee, he's obviously staying with us for six months at a time but, hopefully, that person goes on with a clear understanding of what I want and, hopefully, can use some of that in their sort of future placements and career, as well."

Finally, we should recognize that improvements to practice can have a positive impact on the wellbeing of the manager making the change. This is illustrated in the following example, where the benefit was in part attributed to the opportunity afforded by the training to connect with other managers and share their experiences:

Participant 373: (Third Sector) "I think I'm a lot calmer now and I don't feel as pressured as I was. Because

hearing other people are going through the same things, really made me feel less pressured. I just think, it's not just me because I was really bothered and thinking, oh my god, like I said before, everybody seems to get on with it and manage perfectly well, but they're not. It's all a front isn't it?"

Not all respondents who had made changes were able to point to benefits for staff. There was again a sense that contextual pressures meant that for many the benefits had yet to feed through:

Participant 53: (Third Sector) "I don't think we've probably noticed [the benefits] yet, just because we're still 50% staff down. I'm very conscious that we're all stretched very, very thinly and working sometimes longer hours than we should be."

Creativity
The reported impacts on staff arising from changes made as a result of the training largely revolved around issues of staff confidence and feelings of empowerment. The following respondent reported an increase in staff confidence resulting from changes that they attributed directly to the peer learning elements of the training:

Participant 468: (Third Sector) "Now what I do, because I do have allocation meetings with staff every week, to allocate the cases. So what I do now is I stopped being the main person to read out all the cases and say who should do this. I've given them that opportunity; whatever cases we've got, I would ask them who wants to pick up on this case and redo it, and then we can all have that discussion. So each and every staff member has the opportunity to read through the case, and then it's basically, like, that person is chairing that bit of the meeting and they would look at the issues and then they would do most of the things that I would normally do. And what I found is giving it to them has really given some of the people confidence that never had confidence to do it before, because I constantly used to do it for them...... I think they feel so confident; even when I'm not there, maybe I've got a meeting, I'm running late, I will find they've started it and they've started doing what needs to be done. So that's something that I'm very happy about, that they can actually continue to do this, even though I'm not there. [Before] I wasn't giving them a lot of opportunity to actually be creative themselves and do some of these things themselves."

Another respondent reported impacts on the psychological safety of staff in terms of their willingness to raise ideas:

Participant 476: (Third Sector) "I think staff have felt more heard. I think that's kind of going back to that, like I said, I think inadvertently before when I was putting the practical and creativity things and doing it both in one, and I don't know. Say a staff member came up with an idea and I quickly not dismissed it, but I kiboshed it and I said, 'That's not financially possible.'"

"I think what I was not aware of is the psychological impact of the staff getting that message. And where they've expressed an idea and they've been shot down, I think I wasn't appreciating that. So I think because that's changed, I think staff are feeling safer to express things and knowing it's not going to be dismissed..... I do think there's probably been some improvement to staff morale."

Changes also made staff feel more 'listened to' and involved with decision-making, and empowered:

Participant 16: (Private Sector) "I would say if we take the example of the escalator voice one, the impact on others would be that they feel more listened to. That their voice is heard in a stronger way. That they feel like they have some input into the process, rather than just being told it from a communication point of view. They've got more input into the decision-making process."

Participant 449: (Third Sector) "For today for instance, a thing came up where (a colleague) said that she was feeling quite anxious about this piece of work that she's been doing which has been dragging on for ages, it's not finished and the various different problems with it. And she sort of came to me and said, 'This is the problem. This is what I think we should do and I just wanted to run this past you'. I was like, that's exactly what you should do, so great. She kind of is thinking of the solutions herself ."

Participant 396: (Private Sector) "So I am having better and more positive conversations... I think that it also does leave us more time to look at the other things that we need to look at and sort out other things and come up with different ways of working."

Participants also noted that staff responded positively to having their voices heard:

Participant 414: (Third Sector) "I think it just makes people feel way more valued and way more like motivated, as well, that actually, they'll keep coming in with new ideas... It just it gives that kind of sense of... people being a bit invigorated, really. Yeah, when people feel more motivated, you know, and they kind of feel more heard, they are just going to be way more kind of proactive. So, it's really positive and better relationships and then, you know, it's better for the service."

Participant 418: (Third Sector) "I've seen people come out of their shell a bit more and the confidence levels have increased. Going back to the end of week updates that we've been doing…. we've been sharing that around with different teams, they've been getting good feedback from us, but also from the higher up management. Yeah, that's been very good for motivation."

Improved motivation was mentioned by several participants who noted the positive effect of not just being heard, which helped address various stressors and challenges, but being able to share ideas and make a difference to operations. Changes around creativity, voice and innovation, could also reduce the pressure that staff felt. The following respondent explains how changes to the way meetings were run, resulting directly from the training, enabled more time for discussion:

Participant 475: (Third Sector) "..they've got more time, they don't feel as pressured, they don't feel as pressured to get through everything, and more people are putting things on any other business because they feel that they will have the opportunity to actually discuss them rather than just having to rush through everything."

These processes were also suggested to improve teamwork and help staff to be more proactive:

Participant 468: (Third Sector) "In the past, I'd need to ask them to go and cover at other places... But now what they do is every week when we have the meeting, they, amongst themselves, they'll say, 'Right, who is off on this day? Who is not in? Who needs to cover where?' So, they're doing those things by themselves instead of waiting for me."

There were some instances of staff being initially resistant to voice and creativity processes due to time pressures, but these generally waned as the benefits became apparent. Participant 468 also noted the positive spill-over effect on two deputy managers approaching retirement who had started to take a back seat but were now participating more fully. This capacity for VCI to change attitudes and behaviours was noted by several participants:

Participant 435: (Public Sector) "I've known her for the five years that I've worked [here]. I could see that she was just going through the motions, it was just another job. Whereas this has really given her that space to be creative and put all her knowledge into practice. Having that faith in her, as well, it's absolutely done the world of good for her.. I can see a fire has been lit again. That's been really nice to see."

Voice processes had positive effects, even where the ideas created had not been taken up, as they provided a communication mechanism around this:

Participant 472: (Third Sector) "I think getting the staff more involved has been so positive … even if someone has got negative feedback about what we're discussing, they like to feel involved. The feedback has been – 'We felt a lot better having a voice in that'. Even if we say then, 'Okay, that's great, but we can't do that, because of X, Y, and Z', as long as there has been a reason behind it."

Voice was also an important in motivation, both for staff but also of manager participants themselves. Voice was seen as an important mechanism to build teams, share burdens and alleviate stress in an extremely pressured environment.

One manager noted that she had been in a 'bad place' when attending the coaching and that it had helped her reflect, see things differently and continue in a role that she might otherwise have left.

7.3.2.5 Improvements To Good And Productive Work

We now turn to evidence for the impact of changes arising from the training on the experience of good and productive work in the teams and organisations that the managers we trained worked for. This is the 'end point' of the theory of change. We recognise that inevitable limitations in access to participants, plus collecting data relatively quickly post-interventions, mean our findings are somewhat sparse. We do, nevertheless, outline what is possible based on the experience of a relatively small number of participants

Conflict

A number of participants noted that performance had improved as a result of changed practice around conflict resolution:

Participant 418: (Third Sector) "[It] seemed to work really well actually…. Again, rather than focusing on the negatives, I've been focusing more on the positives and that seems to bring out better practice and things."

Participant 472: (Third Sector) "Actually, look, you're great at this side. Let's do more of that and less of this', which in turn has improved their wellbeing, their productivity, their sense of self in the team."

Participant 373: (Third Sector) "And I've seen that she's being more productive………. from a business side of things where I need her to be productive, that's happening now. So, for me that has made a definite impact and for the better."

Another respondent felt that the combative approach displayed in other teams was not reflected in their own as a result of confidence built from the conflict handling skills developed:

Participant 220: *(Public Sector) "Just the little things that actually is not our job to sort all that out and they're supporting each other to do things like that with those kinds of things."*

There was again a sense of change being a work in progress, but that, for example, stress reduction had had some positive effects:

Participant 329: (Public Sector) "I think [interventions] helped me deal with the conflict a little bit better, in the sense that it shows [staff member] that he's a valued member of the team, but then I was sort of also raising the fact that things need to be done a bit more snappier. If you know what I mean (laughs), and then

it helps me in how I can support that, with workload management kind of thing."

This respondent explains how changes from the training had a wider impact on people's prospects for progression:

Participant 373: (Third Sector) "Yeah, exactly, exactly, a knock-on effect. I mean, I want the people in my team to be doing the best they can be and if that means then, you know, depending how good they are, I guess, and how much they care about this particular role, which most people are, to be fair, most people are pretty motivated. But if that's putting them up on a pedestal and proving that they can do a job more senior, then, obviously, that's giving them opportunities to go on and secure those promotions, I guess, in the future."

The following respondent identified a variety of benefits arising from a change in approach resulting from the conflict coaching sessions. As was often the case, the scope of change and impact went much broader that 'handling conflict' specifically, and as noted earlier in the report, participants sometimes modelled their practice on approaches that they themselves had experienced during the training. For example, coaching techniques:

Participant 474: (Third Sector) "I think the main lesson I took away from it was to ask more questions and facilitate structured conversations with staff about things that are important to them, rather than just team meetings. For example, upping my game with coaching staff and values-based discussions. Since doing the skills coaching and applying the discussion points, my team have been more open, better performing and more engaged in idea-sharing. This is something I will continue to do, because the benefits are huge!"

Finally, this respondent explains how conflict resolution freed up idea generation, which had a material effect on the wider business.

Participant 330: (Private Sector) "So yeah, in the beginning we struggled at getting people on programme, so it was well, 'What do you guys think? How can we generate more leads? How can we get people on programme quicker?'.

And we're on target now, so it is well received, and they do take it on board. But they've come up themselves with some amazing ideas of webinars that we can do and how we can generate more leads from stakeholders and things like that."

Creativity

As with 'conflict', there are number of reports of changes arising from the creativity sessions leading to improvements in good work and productivity. The following respondent described the impact of moving away from trying to generate staff ideas in group settings to doing it on an individual basis:

Participant 77: (Third Sector) "And all of a sudden, the floodgates opened, and they were coming up individually with all these brilliant ideas that were clearly sat in the background waiting to happen, but as a group when they're in a group they're too afraid to say. So I think one of the things for their next meeting is [will be] be talking to them about a safe space. And non-judgemental and being able to ask those questions that, perhaps if it's not deemed to be that safe space, that they wouldn't do otherwise for fear."

Others explained how changes resulting from the training had had wider impacts on the team productivity and the experience of work, through greater levels of motivation and commitment:

Participant 483: (Private Sector) "The one thing I've noticed, is there is almost a bit of an uplift in commitment levels, in a sense. We've had a couple of [team members] who've started to step up and take a little bit more responsibility. I do think that's almost a direct impact of having these one-to-one conversations. Listening to what they've got to tell us.

"I think that big shift that we're seeing, we'll begin to see a lot more of them understand that we want them to grow with us. And that their ideas will be listened to and implemented. It gets that extra level of buy-in from the [staff]."

"We're beginning to see that unfold in different ways. Not just coming to us with new ideas, they're coming to us with solutions, they're coming to us with, having proactively solved a problem, or something like that. Beginning to see that knock-on effect on other things. A better level of buy-in really."

Participant 357: (Public Sector) "It's early days yet but, you know, the signs are there. The people not having to be told quite as often what to do, they're more, like you say, autonomous, you know, feeling more involved. I can't give you any particular examples, yet. It's just in the way that the work coming into the department, you know, people are able to just motivate themselves to go off and get done what needs to be done, rather than being spoon fed."

We have a number of times referred to suggestions that contextual pressures mean that certain benefits from the interventions were yet to flow through. Another theme that emerged, however, was that 'standing still' in the face to the Covid pandemic contextual pressures was actually only enabled by enhanced performance and that the improvements around voice and creativity had been important within this:

Participant 463: (Third Sector) "We do a weekly check on productivity, we base that on the hours they do and the work and the timesheets. So we get an idea… and that's probably not changed a huge amount, but it's kept steady. And maybe that's a good thing… because obviously with the added pressure of Covid and visiting families and struggling, potentially going

into another lockdown. It's having a massive impact on the people we support and we could have seen a drop in productivity. So I think that would be positive, not seeing that dip."

Significantly, there were also examples of changes resulting from the training and how they impact on the nature and effectiveness of the work of the managers making the changes. This was reported by Participant 472, who noted a more productive atmosphere to the management team, and also by Participant 475:

Participant 475: (Third Sector) "I would definitely say *that from my management team, we have. We have* gone from quite a stressed management team (laughs) to like this week and last week, because I was actually off the week prior to that. So when I came back in was getting an update from my deputy service manager and I was like, 'How have things been?'. She said, 'Actually, people seem to be doing okay'. (Laughs)

"I think by sometimes having more conversations around this kind of creativity, but not feeling like you have to problem solve it for everybody, it's not you, you don't need to be the creative person. Actually, as a tool we are more creative when we utilise everybody, so that in itself, that essence of not holding it for everybody and holding that level of responsibility, that has had a major change in that motivation because people feel a bit more relaxed, I guess."

Changes to practice around creativity and voice perceived to have created better, more positive conversations (Participant 396) which had in turn helped to improve retention, again in a very challenging context:

Participant 495: (Third Sector) "We've had a lot of people handing in their notice, which I don't think is unusual this year. And I was really conscious… unless they felt as if their work was fulfilling and exciting and innovative moving forward, that there was the potential there for them to perhaps look elsewhere for a job."

This participant felt that turnover was lower than it might otherwise have been. Improvements to performance and productivity were also noted, in part due to increased initiative taking by team members:

Participant 468: (Third Sector) "[Participant's manager] said, 'Oh, you were off on this day…, but none of the staff came to me for anything'. I said, 'Yes, because I think I've changed the way I work, and they know that unless they need to come to you… if they don't need to, they can actually work on their own and do things on their own."

Participant 472 suggested that the interventions had come at a good time when, again because of contextual pressures, the staff were 'flat'. They were now getting more involved in innovations such as buddying of new starters and offering more suggestions on how to improve things, so

that they now felt part of a cohesive team and "I definitely… I feel performance has improved" (Participant 472). This was reflected by other participants in relation to, for example, sickness absence being lower in their team than in other teams where voice and creativity techniques had not been adopted (Participant 566). This same participant also suggested that levels of resistance to change experienced elsewhere in the organisation were not experienced in their team.

7.3.2.6 Impact Of Context

The interventions were designed to encourage managers to experiment with conflict and creativity practices and we then explored any changes to practice, together with associated outcomes for employees and good and productive work. As we have demonstrated earlier, there was good attendance at the masterclass, peer learning and coaching sessions and participants were positive about what they had learnt. We note, however, that the interventions were delivered during the period of the Covid 19 pandemic when the adult social care (ASC) sector in particular was experiencing intense pressures. Perhaps inevitably, a recurring theme from our participants was that they intended, but had not yet had the opportunity to experiment as a result of these pressures or, where they had, some of the benefits had yet to arise.

Respondents often explained that the time wasn't right for them to implement ideas that they had learned in the training, as a result of day-to-day pressures and workload:

Participant 302: (Public Sector) "I think I would [have applied the learning]. I think the way things have been, since then. Like I say, with people leaving and recruiting and getting new people on-board, there's been less opportunity to. And probably a bit of, you go to this masterclass, you go to this training and then the next day, you're just sucked back into your emails and your to-do list and you just end up back on that treadmill.

"So, it's definitely – if I'm honest – a bit of that, as well. But I wouldn't… I feel like I learned things that I didn't know before and so, I think when the time is right, I would use them."

Participant 396: (Private Sector) "At this moment in time we're all in maintenance mode, we have to be because there's only so many hours in the day."

R: "Anything that you want to do differently, going forward? Anything new?"

P: "Not that I can think of at the minute. We're just a bit bogged down with some projects at the minute, (Laughs) so I've got my head in those, but yeah." Participant 550 (Private Sector)

Specific circumstances in the team were also a factor that inhibit the application of learning or its impact:

Participant 373: (Third Sector) "Oh no, that was it. 'A' was off poorly and 'S' had just lost her dad. So neither of them were about. It was a very sad time. So I said [to the coach], 'I'm all geared up to have the conversations' and I wanted to have had them for our last session, but I can't have those conversations. But I genuinely feel really ready to have the conversation. I feel confident about it."

Unsurprisingly the impact of the pandemic was a significant factor constraining change and the impact of the training:

Participant 16: (Private Sector) " I would go as far to say I've built the agenda, I know what I'm doing on the day. I've been able to have time to reflect on it because it's been delayed. Unfortunately, I would have been doing that in November and the peer learning was September time. So it's just a bit of a shame really, it's got delayed by Covid."

Specific organisational circumstances could also mean that intentions to experiment or change practice did not come to fruition, either because they created a blockage to change, or simply because the opportunity to make changes did not arise:

R: "What did you go onto, what did you commit to doing differently and then go on to do differently, in that part where you do the 'I will?'"

P: "It was 'I will,' it was about developing meetings. Not our SMT meetings but just meetings with my department managers. Then again this thing about moving buildings, the building work got in the way, if you see what I mean. That's been my hold-up really but it's still mine. My commitment to do that." Participant 306 (Third Sector)

R: "Have you had a go at trying out anything in practice that's different since the master class?"

P: "Not yet but that's only because I've not really had the chance because it was around the same time that the people I was managing were leaving."

R: "Sure, yeah."

P: " I've not really had any new projects that I've been able to assign. But it is something I'm aware of and like next time I do get the opportunity, I will definitely be thinking about like idea generation and the voice. It's something that's there." Participant 489 (Third Sector)

Some respondents reported that factors relating to their role in the organisation limited the possibility to effect change. In some cases they didn't have the authority to make changes or improvements to practice, or the ability to influence wider practice:

Participant 467: (Third Sector) "The challenge I've got, so my role is I work as a team leader. And then, above me is what you would call a service manager. So, in a service like this, the service manager is the overall boss of the service, if that makes sense. And if you think you're like in a company, you'd class myself as like a supervisor.

"So it kind of means that I've got some power and influence, but there's a lot of power and influence I don't have as well. So it's kind of like there's some changes I'd be really keen on bringing and discussing, but it's an element that at the moment in my current role I can't influence."

Other contextual constraints were also noted, one being around financial pressures in the adult social care sector, particularly around the challenges of training for zero-hours staff:

Participant 460: (Third Sector) "We booked the team meeting for 'ideas generation' – but we can't really afford to pay the staff for another Monday this month [to do more training]."

Wider organisational culture and leadership style were also inhibiting factors for some:

Participant 268: (Public Sector) "I listen to my staff but I think, as a wider organisation, we need to do that….. Feedback to our senior managers that actually workers don't feel they are listened to. They haven't got a voice and… how we look at ways of developing that… At the moment people… are very flat and I think they either feel that they're not being listened to or they are just so fed up that they can't be bothered to have that fight in them really."

7.3.2.7 Conclusion

The quantitative evidence presented in Table 7.3 suggested that an overwhelming majority of participants gained new knowledge, committed to experiment with a change of practice, and made good on that commitment. Significant numbers of managers also reported making improvements to their practice, spillover effects to team/

organisation practice, positive impacts on staff, and improvements to good and productive work. These more distal elements of the Theory of Change are harder to track, and may take longer to be observed (and thus fall outside our research window), so it may be that our data underestimate the prevalence of these outcomes.

The analysis of qualitative data (above) both corroborates and enriches this picture. In respect of each of the management challenges, 'conflict' and 'creativity', there is widespread evidence of learning and of practice outcomes. This applied to each of the outcome categories, with the exception of improvements to organizational practice in respect of the 'conflict' training, where evidence was sparse. This may be because it is hard for managers to influence formal organisational conflict handling procedures, though there is ample evidence of them changing their own practice in the informal arena.

As the evidence above suggests, managers reported many and varied outcomes. Some of this involved application of particular techniques and tools that they learned in the training, but there was also extensive evidence of change of approach or management style. This manifested itself, for example, in more one-to-one meetings with staff, better listening skills and more participatory styles of management. Managers reported feeling more confident, less pressured, and having more time and 'headspace'. There were reports of staff felling more valued and less pressured, and there were numerous reports of performance and productivity improvements.

Of course, not all managers were able to apply their learning, and we note in the thematic analysis a range of contextual factors that impacted. Specific organisational circumstances were often a barrier. For example, workload, financial pressures and other organisational change.

7.4 Deeper Exploration Via Case Studies

7.4 Case Study 12: ROD
Attended Conflict Sessions (Participant 611 - GM)

Context

Rod is a commercial manager in government. He has worked at the same level in different government departments for five years and been a line manager for two years. He has one direct report and his role requires him to work with a broad range of stakeholders. He is degree-level educated. At his previous government department, he was part of a cohort of leaders on a structured training programme that lasted several months and he planned to attend a seven-day line manager training programme in the new department he has recently joined. He is motivated by personal development. He joined GELL as it was a free training opportunity and "I thought it would be useful as I prepare myself to potentially manage a larger team".

Rod's organisation has many well-established people management policies and procedures, including in conflict handling. Rod describes the culture as one where individuals try to be pragmatic and avoid any escalations, but he states that some individuals can be difficult and this relates to his current conflict challenge which he articulates as "dealing with individuals who do not want to listen to the views of others, nor the rules and processes that need to be followed to achieve their desired outcome". This challenge relates to the management of a key stakeholder that he is required to work with.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass

Rod attended the conflict masterclass as he hoped to gain tips, techniques and real-life examples of handling conflict. He enjoyed participating in the interactive breakout group activities **[Learning together]**. During the masterclass, he committed to experiment with working on his personal biases, his world view, and how he is perceived by others (using active listening and non-verbal signals) **[Intend to experiment]**. He later decided to also experiment with the Thomas Kilmann conflict styles model **[Intend to experiment]**. After the masterclass, he reported learning about the causes of conflict, conflict handling techniques, the 5 W's model and real-life examples **[Gain knowledge]**. He also explored the resources on the Wakelet Resource Bank and read about a team profiling tool another participant suggested during the masterclass **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Learning together]**.

Peer Learning

Rod also attended peer learning, with the first session running the week after the masterclass. He chose to do so as he prefers learning by talking through an issue with others **[Learning together]** and has participated in peer learning previously as part of his organisational leadership training programme. His challenge for the peer learning group relates to one individual he finds difficult to work with and who does not listen to his opinion. He enjoyed "bouncing ideas off others" in the group as it helped him see issues differently and gain different perspectives **[Learning together]**, **[Make sense]**. He reflected that he was able to talk more openly to people outside of his own organisation who were "non-judgmental" which prevented him from being "guarded" **[Reflect]**. The facilitator helped him understand different conflict resolution positions and that he does not always need to have the solution to every problem **[Gain knowledge]**. Rod did not bring a new challenge to the second or third session but reported that he learned from supporting other participants' challenges **[Gain knowledge]** and developed an 'I will statement' from listening to his peers; to "try to use more curious and open questions, as it applies to almost any situation" **[Intend to experiment]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]**.

While Rod attended the peer learning sessions, he also attended a 'soft skills workshop' in his organisation which introduced him to new techniques that he applied to his conflict challenge. He experimented with those techniques alongside his learning and discussions with the GELL peer learning group **[Experiment]**. He shared some of these ideas with his peers in the GELL sessions **[Learning together]**. The GELL peer learning facilitator observed that Rod started mirroring her coaching style and using similar facilitator prompts with other participants during the peer learning sessions, as they progressed **[Improved manager practice]**.

Outcomes

Masterclass

In his post-session survey returned the day after the masterclass, Rod's self-reported scores shifted from 5/10 before attending the masterclass to 7/10 afterwards, for both knowledge and confidence. **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Improved manager practice]**. However, when we spoke to Rod some months later about his GELL journey he recalled that he had been interested in the masterclass and stated that "I don't think I was available that day." We can assume that he did not recall his attendance and/or the knowledge he had previously stated that he had learned had not 'stuck'. We have no further evidence of his outcomes from attending the masterclass on his management or organisation practice. However, he had a strong recollection of the peer learning sessions and their impact.

Peer Learning

Following advice from one of the peer learning group, Rod discussed his stakeholder conflict challenge with team members in his organisation and his own line manager to get further advice on how they manage him which he found useful **[Learning together]**. The combination of these internal discussions and the advice from the peer learning group helped him decide to not take any action but accept the status quo **[Learning together]**, **[Make sense]**. He found the decision and conversations with peers reassuring as it was a longstanding conflict situation **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**.

Rod reported that following the peer learning group sessions he has not "drastically" changed his management practice, but the sessions have supported him to gain further knowledge and develop soft skills and confidence **[Improved manager practice]**. He did, however, state that he "feels better equipped to handle challenging situations with other people" and has since experimented with different techniques in his organisation **[Experiment]**. He reported that the impact of the training did not extend to an organisational level due to the large size of his organization, but he felt that peers in the group in smaller organisations may have been able to have more impact. He subsequently decided that, after five years in role, he was ready to move to another department when a new role arose which he viewed as a better learning opportunity.

7.4 Case Study 12: ROD

Attended Conflict Sessions (Participant 611 - GM)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge ***	Learning together *
Reflect*	Experiment*
Make sense*	

$\longleftrightarrow$

Outcome

Experiment Improved manager practice **	Positive impact on staff
Improved organisational practice	Improvement in good and/or productive work
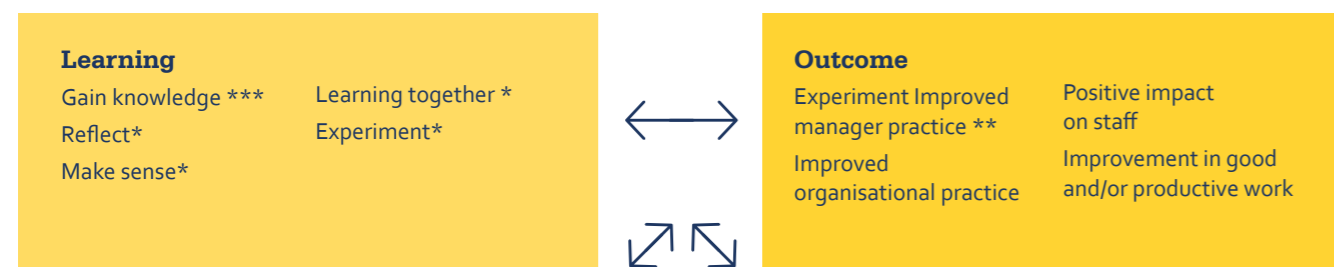
How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ GELL training helps manager gain different organisational perspectives alongside participation in sophisticated learning and development provision in their own large orgamisation.

+ Relatively inexperienced line manager of small team has opportunity to practice skills of line management with stakeholders to prepare him for managing more staff.

+ Manager motivated by personal development activities.

+ Manager develops behavioural skills to support his general behavioural practice through mirroring peer learning facilitator behaviours.

- Manager 'saturated' with learning resulting in inability to recall attendance at masterclass and modest outcomes.

- Relevance - managing conflict challenge was not related to the line manager role.

- Large organisation where manager has limited ability to influence organisational practice.

- Manager of one direct report with limited ability to impact line management practice until relevant challenge arises.

7.4 Case Study 13: LEAH
Attended Conflict Sessions (Participant 220 - ASC)

Context

Leah is a social worker by background, and moved into a management position six years ago, where she leads a multidisciplinary team. She has had some in-house line management training on things like HR policies and procedures, and is currently completing an MBA via an apprenticeship.

Leah's frontline service had to adjust quickly to homeworking during the pandemic. Alongside this, she says the team have been "firefighting" for many months, which is affecting morale and is impeding the ability to introduce new initiatives, as people are focused on ensuring the essentials are completed.

Leah completed our masterclass, peer learning and coaching on conflict. Although Leah works in a sector where conflict situations arise regularly, she says "I'm not somebody that goes looking for conflict". She was drawn towards GELL partially to gain evidence for her apprenticeship, and was "up for a bit of extra training" . She was interested in the chance to meet with other managers.

Leah reflects that the team's culture, including her line manager, are primarily task-driven rather than reflective (despite reflective practice being a key tenet of being a social worker), and this may be hindering her ability to make her positive changes stick. She suspects that this culture stems from further up the organisation.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference [in bold/brackets] to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass

Leah found the masterclass useful. During the session, she reflected on the importance of setting boundaries with her team, as remote working meant that they were in constant contact with her which impacted her concentration in meetings and during focused work [Reflect]. Leah found the Thomas Kilmann conflict styles model useful [Gain knowledge], as it highlighted her tendency towards cooperation to get things done [Reflect]. The Window on the World exercise helped her to recognise that she may need a different approach with different people [Make sense]. Another idea from the masterclass that resonated with Leah is the idea of Wait: Why am I talking? [Gain knowledge] "I have that in my head a lot [...] Why am I thinking I need to give the answer to this?" [Reflect].

Peer Learning

Leah has not participated in peer learning before and enjoyed the approach: "It was really, really helpful [...] And it's that thing about turning your camera, that, let everyone else discuss, it was amazing [...]." Leah noted that while her group comprised managers from various organisations and sectors, each manager brought similar challenges that the others could relate to [Learn together].

In the first session, Leah discussed the tension of running a frontline service remotely. Pre-pandemic, she had worked hard to create a positive team dynamic. "I currently feel that we are losing what we had built up and I am unsure how to recreate that." [Reflect]. She wanted to offer sufficient support to her team whilst they were homeworking. However, this meant her team were in constant contact with her, and she found it hard to focus on her own workload. She committed to find ways to empower the team and encourage knowledge-sharing amongst themselves, to reduce the dependency on her and enable her to focus on her own work [Intend to experiment].

Another key learning for Leah during peer learning came from another participant's challenge [Learning with others]. They were addressing underperformance in the team, and Leah noted that using HR processes can be helpful levers to improve performance [Gain knowledge]. This is something she'd previously avoided, considering them too formal for everyday line management [Make sense]. "What was very helpful was just to reflect really on the importance of using the policies and procedures that were already in place and not being afraid to follow those early doors".

Coaching

Although Leah has regular supervision with her line manager, she has not had coaching before, and found it particularly helpful. She often found herself arriving to coaching sessions without a particular management challenge, but having three sessions enabled her to step back [Reflect] and explore issues at a deeper level, and made her more likely to embed the changes [Intend to experiment].

Leah noticed that she wasn't using some of the techniques in her social worker toolkit, such as motivational interviewing and solution-focussed approaches [Reflect].

"I suppose what was useful was looking at what was underneath the whole, why do I have to jump in and answer questions, what's stopping me using those coaching things. [...] And I think part of it was when I started being manager, I thought I should just be able to tell everybody all the answers, all the time. And clearly I don't need to do that." [Make sense], [Intend to experiment].

Coaching also helped Leah to notice that she wasn't addressing issues directly [Reflect], and to find ways to do this in a way that felt natural to her [Experiment]: "And we had some very honest conversations about, actually no that wasn't good enough and this is the job and this is what needs to happen. So it kind of gave me the impetus, I think, to have those conversations". Leah reports that, whilst one staff member left, the other has become better at developing her own solutions [Improvement to Good and Productive Work].

Outcomes

Leah says that workload pressures have been a major barrier to making the changes she would have wished to. She is completing an MBA part-time, which is "taking up most of my head space".

Through her experience with GELL, Leah has realised [Reflect] that she sometimes avoids conflict or opts for a "cooperative" approach, when an assertive approach would be more appropriate [Make sense]. Changes to Leah's practice, and particularly to changes beyond her team, have been impeded by her context.

Leah aimed to increase team autonomy by "stepping back", and using coaching techniques to help them to feel more empowered [Experiment]. She reports changing her approach, which seems to be a culmination of learning from all three interventions. She feels more comfortable with not knowing all of the answers [Improved manager practice], and with delegating key tasks to her team. She resists jumping in to Teams chats to answer questions, and her team have responded to each other's questions effectively. She has been much more effective at maintaining her boundaries. Leah has adjusted her approach in supervision sessions. She finds it more natural to explicitly state when she's taking a coaching approach, and uses phrases like "let me stop talking and you give me your thoughts" [Improved manager practice].

As a result of the Peer Learning, Leah has been working on creating better working arrangements within her team to prevent non-urgent interruptions, such as asking her team

to check her calendar or send her a message before calling her **[Improved manager practice]**.

Inspired by Leah's experience of the GELL project, she suggested her team introduce peer support meetings to discuss complex cases **[Improved manager practice]**.

These are run by her team, without her, to encourage the team to be self-sufficient and reduce their reliance on her **[Improvement to good and productive work]**.

Leah has also been using HR support and policies to support her team. "I think that's something that we all spoke about really, about sometimes not always wanting to go down that route, but that that was important to use that really, I suppose. So it's a clear process." One of Leah's team was obviously overwhelmed, but kept saying he was fine. Rather than accepting his first answer, Leah adopted a more assertive approach to have a conversation with him **[Experiment]**, where he confided "Actually yes, it's really difficult". She used tools such as regular meetings and action plans to support the individual **[Improved manager**

practice], and whilst there was a slow start, Leah reported positive improvements to the individual's performance and wellbeing **[Positive impact on staff]**. She believes she would be more proactive in using HR tools like action plans in the future **[Improved manager practice]**.

When we meet Leah several months after the GELL interventions, she noted **[Reflect]** that these initial good intentions were slipping. She is coaching less, and "stepping in" more, and still feels the need to take responsibility for things that she's delegated to her team. Leah found her final interview with our researcher a useful reminder of the goals she had set for herself, which perhaps highlights the importance of regular reminders, check-ins, and accountability in developing management practice.

A key learning for Leah has been "none of the strategies I have considered are quick fixes **[…] [Reflect]**. "It has made me reflect on why I take a certain approach - what is in it for me (being the person who has the solutions) and why I don't need to prove that anymore **[Make sense]**. This has been eye opening for me."

Context + Mechanism = Outcome

Learning		Outcome	
Gain knowledge ***	Experiment***	Improved manager practice***	Positive impact on staff**
Reflect***	Learn with others ***	Improved organisational practice**	Improvement in good and/or productive work*
Make sense**			

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Leah's ability to adapt her conflict style and be more assertive has a positive impact.
+ Leah has live management challenges to work on and experiment with.
+ Leah enjoyed working with others as part of peer learning.
+ Leah has an appetite for learning - is completing an MBA.

- Remote working and workload pressures reduce team morale and appetite for change.
- Team culture (and possibly organisational culture) is task-focussed and not reflective.
- Workload pressures, lack of accountability and MBA "taking up headspace" mean that some changes don't stick.

7.4 Case Study 14: STUART
Attended Conflict Sessions (Participant 330 - GM)

Context

Stuart is a team leader in a large private sector organisation where he has worked for the last 11 years in a line management role. In his current role he manages a team of 10 direct reports. He holds a level 4 management qualification which he gained with a previous employer. His current organisation encourages staff learning and has a well-established internal training offer but Stuart hasn't attended any of the available modules due to time constraints.

Stuart's organisation has well developed policies and procedures for conflict handling which are supported by an HR and compliance department. However, Stuart was unable to describe the organisation's conflict culture as he has "never seen or been around it (conflict)" and "I just try and get on with everybody". He describes his team as a "pretty good bunch" who have good relationships with each other. However, working remotely through the pandemic has been a line management challenge for Stuart who notes his conflict management challenges are "not being able to get the team together, managing isolation and emotions". He also wants to learn about "how to manage different personalities with different situations". Stuart explains that he has never had to deal with conflict formally, such as handling a disciplinary or grievance complaint.

Stuart's motivation for joining GELL is to gain new perspectives on how other managers handle conflict and use different management styles because of his lack of experience in doing so. For example, he wants to understand whether HR get involved, how high conflict situations escalate in organisations, and what practices and language other managers use for different types of people. Stuart recognises that he adapts his management style to each individual in one-to-ones and team meetings.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference [in bold/brackets] to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change

Masterclass

Stuart found the conflict masterclass "easy to follow and well managed". He felt comfortable in it and liked how it was facilitated. He was keen to join other GELL interventions if the same facilitators delivered the sessions. He reported that the breakout groups were "really good" as other participants shared experiences [Learning together] and when it came to feedback "we were very much made to feel like there's no stupid questions". He learned about different styles for managing conflict and from listening to other managers' experiences [Gain knowledge], [Learning together]. In the breakout activity he reported that "we had a good group who were open and honest about why they were there. I was happy to share my views and experiences and also listen to enhance my learning" [Learning together]. He also learned the importance of "reflecting before reacting" and getting advice to make informed decisions [Gain knowledge]. He related this to how in the past he has "just fired an email off […] and then thought "I really shouldn't have sent that, should I?'" [Reflect]. In his post session survey, he also reported picking up new knowledge and skills in active listening [Gain knowledge] and intended to experiment in one to one's and team meetings by "switching off all other comms" [Intend to experiment].

Stuart decided not to enrol in the coaching or peer learning because he prefers learning in a larger group environment where there is no pressure to speak (like he perceives there would be in peer learning) and he preferred being in "listening mode". He enrolled on the creativity masterclass but sent apologies. However, he later re-joins the GELL programme in management challenge 3, attending a masterclass and peer learning group on the topic of 'getting the best out of your team'. He explains to the facilitator in his peer learning pre-meet that he decided to join peer learning to stretch him out of his comfort zone of listening, suggesting a seed was sown in management challenge 2.

Outcomes

Masterclass. In his post masterclass survey Stuart reports that he feels more confident in dealing with conflict in different situations, rating his confidence level as 8, (pre-attendance he rated as 6). His self-rated knowledge and skills scores pre- and post- masterclass are also 6 and 8 respectively [Gain knowledge]. However, Stuart states that he has not had the opportunity to put his learning into practice since a conflict situation has not yet arisen with his team where he can apply the knowledge and skills learned.

Despite this, he has applied some of the learning in another area of his practice, when a contract is changed and he faces some resistance. In this example he asks for stakeholders views and opinions on the changes to diffuse the potential for conflict [Experiment], [Improved

manager practice] and to ensure everyone is working to the same end goal. He adds that this is a change he has made with team members in one to ones and team meetings in relation to the contract change [Experiment]. He reports that helping team members see that the change is 'for the good of the contract' is well received by his team but suggests this is down to their existing good working relationship.

7.4 Case Study 14: STUART
Attended Conflict Sessions
(Participant 330 - GM)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge ***   Experiment***

Reflect***   Learn with others ***

Make sense**

⟷

↗↘

Outcome

Experiment/Improved manager practice*

Improved organisational practice

Positive impact on staff

Improvement to good and/or productive work

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Experienced managers' who is inexperienced in the topic keen to learn from other line managers experiences.

+ Masterclass attendance improves manager confidence levels if a relevant situation were to arise in future - possibly from listening to other managers share experience.

+ Manager identifies way of experimenting with new way of managing conflict outside of line management role.

- Minimal reflection as topic does not relate to manager context or experience.

- Manager does not make sense of learning as there are few opportunities to put the learning into practice or experiment with them.

- Lack of experience of formal conflict handling limits manager participation in peer learning where their perception is there is a need to share experience.

7.4 Case Study 15: GAVIN
Attended Conflict Sessions (Participant 463 - ASC)

Context

Gavin is a manager in a small adult social care charity. He is primarily responsible for IT and data analysis, but also managers HR-related issues too. When he took on HR responsibilities, he was supported with an NVQ qualification and does "little courses like [the masterclass]" throughout the year. He opted for the two-hour masterclass, and not our peer learning or coaching, because the topic resonated and the time commitment felt clear: "So with the conflict resolution training you knew how it was going to be, you knew your commitment would be X amount of time. Whereas coaching it could be varied and you wouldn't be sure how much time and effort we would be able to put into that. So yeah, that's one of the reasons why we chose it, and obviously the topic as well was quite catchy and quite informative right from the start."

Gavin describes the organisation as "close-knit" , and rarely experiencing conflict or "HR issues". He believes that, when these issues arise, the organisation listens, and is flexible and understanding. He says this culture derives from the core work of the organisation, which supports people with disabilities and their families are treated with empathy. "If we don't offer that same ethos to our staff, then there's a bit of a weird conflict there."

Although rare, when conflict arises it typically stems from a lack of communication. "[...] it's just either people communicating too late, not really explaining the severity of an issue first, and then once it escalates, 'Well you said this'. And then someone says, 'Well, I didn't realise it would have such an impact on the day-to-day work." To prevent situations like this, Gavin is keen to introduce some formality so that solutions are discussed and documented, rather than in "ad hoc corridor meetings".

Gavin was drawn to GELL to hear others' perspectives on handling conflict. In particular, Gavin was keen to hear from bigger organisations [learning together].

Gavin has been on other conflict courses, and describes how a key theme of all of them has been to treat people as individuals, and see their perspectives. He describes a situation (which occurred before the masterclass) where staff were reticent to return to the office after working from home during the pandemic. Rather than a blanket policy, the leadership team treated everyone as individuals, which had a positive impact.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference [in bold/brackets] to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass

Gavin describes their internal conflict processes as informal. Through the masterclass, he realised that this was okay [Reflection]. "Sometimes you feel like we're very lax and when we look at doing the course it kind of reinforces that we're not really doing anything super wrong or anything majorly different [...] So that was nice to know, because sometimes when you're working in such a close-knit area, you don't realise you're probably doing okay at times." Through the masterclass, Gavin learnt about different structures for handling conflict, and ways of escalating things [Gain knowledge]. Gavin reports that, as a result of the masterclass, he's able to recognise conflict earlier [Gain knowledge], and offer "those little informal chats a bit earlier, and making sure you give staff time to talk more rather than just butting in and offering a solution before even considering every angle" [Improved manager practice]. He thinks it's important to do this regularly. He heard other participants [learning together] mention solutions that were offered outside of the workplace [Gain knowledge], which he has since adopted [Improved manager practice].

Gavin enjoyed the opportunity to discuss challenges in a breakout room during the masterclass. Due to technical issues, only one other participant ended up in the breakout room, but they had a good conversation. They were based within the same town and, although the other organisation was much bigger, Gavin was glad to able to "see how they do things" [Learning together], [Gain knowledge].

Outcomes

Since the **masterclass**, Gavin describes his approach to conflict as more reflective [Improved manager practice], and he now listens more rather than immediately trying to problem-solve. "I just generally listen more rather than offering direct guidance and that's what I've reflected on more, is whether or not I can provide more direct guidance than what I usually do."

Gavin has also implemented a change he learnt from another participant – to have conversations off-site [Improved organisational practice]. "Yeah, and obviously the outside of work thing was a nice topic to discuss in the meeting we had. And that's what we've implemented as well, so you can go to Costa Coffee and have a chat instead. So yeah, so those are the things we've implemented".

Gavin has also strengthened a policy so that it outlines how to escalate issues, and who to escalate them to. Before, if staff had an issue, it wasn't explicit how to raise an issue, or with whom, which Gavin thinks put people off raising issues [Improved organisational practice]. Gavin has noticed an improvement to communication within the organisation,

following conversations about how they want to be more open about the demanding nature of the work they do [Impact on staff]. Gavin notes they have become closer as a team [Improvement to good and productive work].

Although Gavin has not noticed an improvement in productivity, which is carefully measured in his organisation, he reported that he'd noticed consistency where he'd expected a dip in productivity due to the operational pressures resulting from Covid, and the likelihood of another lockdown [Improvement to good and productive work]. "So I think that would be positive, not seeing that dip."

Gavin is clearly keen on continuously developing in the area of conflict, and is hoping to obtain funding to attend a mediation course.

7.4 Case Study 15: GAVIN

Attended Conflict Sessions
(Participant 463 - ASC)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge ***   Experiment***

Reflect***   Learn with others ***

Make sense**

←→

↗↙

Outcome

Improved manager practice***   Positive impact on staff**

Improved organisational practice***   Improvement to good and/or productive work*
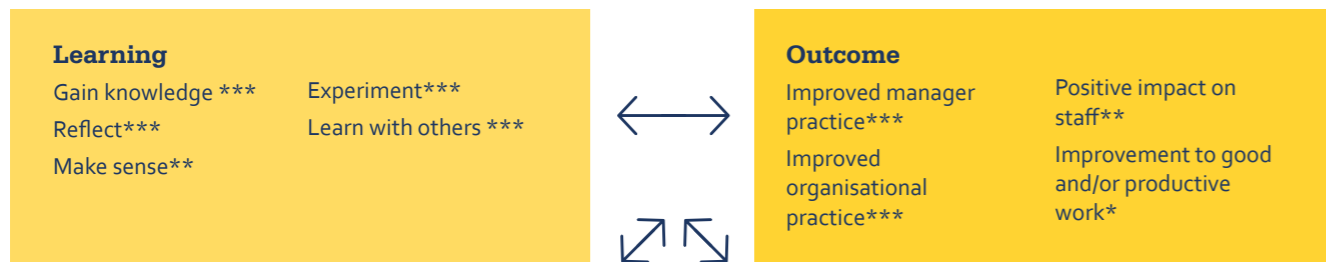
How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Although working in a challenging context, Gavin is a senior manager in a small organisation, which has enabled him to make changes rapidly, such as updating policies and introducing off-site meetings.

+ Gavin has been on previous training courses and has been reflecting on conflict within the organization, which has helped him to understand which approaches may work best. This may explain why 'experimenting' seems less important- he has fully committed to the things he's introduced.

+ Gavin is keen to treat staff as individuals, which reflects the ethos of the organisation.

- The downside of the dynamic nature of this organisation is that decisions are made 'ad hoc', and Gavin is keen to introduce some structure and process to ensure good ideas are not lost, and people are clear on their roles and goals.

7.4 Case Study 16:
ELLIE
Attended Creativity Sessions
(Participant 475 - GM)

Context

Ellie works as a service manager in a social enterprise with a team of approximately 90 staff and directly line manages 12 team leaders. She has almost five years' line management experience but has worked in her sector much longer (15 years). She is degree-level educated. On becoming a line manager she describes not receiving any formal line management training from her organisation except for training on the content of HR policies, what to do/not do rather than how to do it, and has learnt to be a line manager on the job. She feels that her transferable skills from working previously in a therapeutic role have supported her personal development as a line manager. She enjoys supporting other managers who frequently are promoted into management roles because of their technical expertise, rather than their people management skills. Her aim is to try and "transform them more into a manager that could actually manage anybody".

Ellie reported that the training (on the topic of creativity) "came at the perfect time" in terms of her organisational context. During the pandemic, her team worked remotely and received less scrutiny from commissioners who had "been kind to us", but since then the organisation needed to implement performance management and find creative ways of improving team performance to meet five year national service targets. She states she would have "fought" to attend the training had it not been free to attend and "jumped at the chance to get booked on". During her learning journey, a new HR manager came into post in her organisation who provided a new source of support to line managers to tackle performance management issues with staff.

Ellie describes her team to be one that "always think of different ideas to me and they are really good" but struggles to "create a space for these to be shared". However, during the pandemic the burnout that her managers and staff experienced resulted in reduced problem solving and managers stepping in to resolve frontline staff issues in "rescue mode". Ellie recounts her journey during GELL as being about needing to mentally take a step back and enable people to problem solve for themselves.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference [**in bold/brackets**] to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass

Ellie attended the creativity masterclass which she described as "helpful and useful" as she learned new models and theories such as attribute sting, the escalator of voice and the concept of psychological safety [**Gain knowledge**]. She also reported gaining knowledge that helped her label practices she uses in her everyday practice that she had not previously formally recognized, ways of validating her practice [**Reflect**], [**Make sense**]:

"A lot of the time I possibly do things, but I don't know the knowledge, or I don't know what it's called, or I don't know that there's a model that you can use. I think what the biggest learning for me going on the masterclass was actually that this is a thing."

Though she found attending an online masterclass more accessible, Ellie stated that she learns better when in a room in person with other people. She reported that there is an "initial moment of awkwardness" when you enter an online breakout room as there's not time to develop rapport, like in the physical classroom [**Learning together**]. Nevertheless, the masterclass was useful and Ellie took time to "reflect on it, in a sense of what was relevant and what I could use in my team" [**Reflect**], [**Make sense**]. She explained that she would have liked more time during the masterclass itself to process some of the ideas shared and check her understanding of them [**Make sense**].

Coaching

Ellie attended coaching sessions also on the topic of creativity. She has received a little training on coaching herself previously and delivered some coaching skills training to her staff but has never been 'fully' in the role of coachee herself before. However, she stated that a coaching skillset uses similar skills to those from her therapeutic background.

The coaching enabled her to follow-up on ideas shared in the masterclass and check her understanding of them with the coach [**Reflect**]. She also explained that having a series of coaching sessions after the masterclass supported her learning because "it's easy to forget about one-off training sessions that you never go back to reflect on" [**Reflect**], [**Make sense**]. Her coaching goal was to "feel more confident in how to problem solve with my team without putting too much pressure on them and them feeling like I am not taking the ownership for what they might feel is my role". She reported that she "got more from the coaching than the one-off training (masterclass)" and the combination of the two worked well together because the masterclass gave her "the initial resources and skills" [**Gain knowledge**] and the coaching then enabled her to implement those ideas and talk them through with the coach [**Make sense**], [**Learning together**].

During the coaching sessions, the coach introduced new models and ideas to Ellie that were relevant to her line management challenges but extended beyond some of the content covered in the masterclass [**Gain knowledge**]. The coach was flexible to Ellie's needs. Ellie stated that the coaching was effective as she was required to report back her progress in between sessions to the coach because "if you go back to a meeting and you've not done what you said you were going to do...it's just not going to sit well with me" [**Intend to experiment**].

Outcomes

Masterclass. Ellie formed an intention to experiment with online collaboration tools demonstrated in the session, such as Padlet, and those that other participants shared [**Intend to experiment**], [**Learning together**]. Due to the remote working context, these would help her gather more voice, views, and ideas from her team. However, we learned some months later that she had not completed this as she described herself as a "systematic learner" and someone who needs to discuss things she has learned with others (something she did not have the opportunity to do in the masterclass or in her organisation). She recognised that many of the voice practices that were covered in the masterclass were in place in her organisation, and this validated that her own management practice was good [**Reflect**]. She described this as her biggest learning from the masterclass and understanding this helped her use the established processes in a more structured way [**Make sense**], and she talked to other managers in her own organisation about them, which gave her credibility [**Learning together**].

Ellie wanted to use the attribute listing creativity tool in practice but could not think how to make it relevant to her team and context at the time [**Make sense**]. However, the masterclass helped her identify that, in her role as a manager of other managers with a large broader team, her focus needed to be on her 12 team leaders, and an idea of holding a management away day with "employee voice at the centre", that she had been thinking about prior to the masterclass, became a more concrete intention [**Intend to experiment**]. The development of this away day overlapped with her coaching sessions so she could explore this further.

Coaching. Whilst the masterclass "solidified" that Ellie needed to get her away day booked in, the coaching helped her flesh out what the day would look like [**Make sense**]. During the coaching sessions, Ellie asked to learn more about staff engagement and the coach shared a new model with her [**Gain knowledge**]. Ellie read more about it in between sessions and then the coach and coachee discussed ways she could put her ideas into practice in the forthcoming team away day [**Reflect**], [**Make sense**] [**Intend to experiment**], [**Learning together**]. They also discussed creative ways of engaging the managers in the meeting, such as using storytelling and objects that represented experience to spark creative ideas [**Intend to experiment**], [**Learning together**]. Ellie reported that the away day went really well, with good manager engagement, and enabled her to put the engagement

7.4 Case Study 16:
ELLIE
Attended Creativity Sessions
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model into practice by creating a team shared purpose **[Improved organisational practice]**.

She reported that it had a positive impact on staff as she received positive feedback **[Positive impact on staff]**.

A second change to practice from coaching was a re-structuring of her weekly team meetings, where she decided to split the agenda across different weeks to enable more focused discussions and allow more time for her team to make progress between sessions **[Improved organisational practice]**. She experimented with this during the coaching **[Experiment]** and, when we spoke to Ellie some months later, this was a continued successful change to her practice **[Improved organisational practice]**. She found this structure change led to more joint collaborative relationships between team leaders and gave them the opportunity to take ownership of their problems **[Positive impact on staff]**. It resulted in outcomes such as improvements in team confidence, creativity, and ownership for service targets where, rather than missed

targets as problems, they would now proactively analyse the data and set out a plan of action **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improved organisational practice]**, **[Improvement to good and/or productive work]**.

Ellie reported that, in terms of her management style, she has become more "leadership focused than management focused" because she has more knowledge and is more insightful **[Improved manager practice]**, and steps back more with her team, encouraging them to generate their own solutions, factors that have supported her development as a line manager **[Improved manager practice]**.

Ellie had intended to run a further team away day and other activities but when we met Ellie again she explained these were put on hold as she was due to take a period of absence from work. She was temporarily seconded to a bigger head of department role with a smaller people management remit.

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning		Outcome	
Gain knowledge***	Reflect**	Improved manager practice***	Positive impact on staff**
Intend to Experiment***	Make Sense***	Improved organisational practice***	Improvement to good and/or productive work*
	Learning together***		

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Manager is motivated to learn and develop others and is focused on driving improvements across her team.

+ Timing of the training meets an organisational need as performance is a key organizational focus post-Covid providing an opportunity to experiment.

+ The appointment of a new HR manager supports her to implement performance management processes.

+ Manager can implement changes to practice across her team with few organisational constraints.

+ Staff respond positively to her improved manager practice and begin to mirror that behaviour in meetings with other teams.

- Manager struggles to progress learning without the opportunity to talk that learning through with others (she may benefit from peer learning within her organisation or profession).

- During her learning journey the organisation instigates a large office move at short notice which impacts on her time and energy.

7.4 Case Study 17:
LILY
Attended Creativity Sessions (Participant 460 - ASC)

Context

Lily is owner-manager of a small not-for-profit company in the third sector, a role which she has held for six years. Although Lily is the owner, her role is very hands-on. She became a manager of a small team several years ago when her previous employer expanded. Alongside this, she completed a Level 4 management qualification. She then spent several years in a an education role, teaching, where she was not a line manager but found herself being a key point of contact.

Lily was drawn to GELL because she feels she never makes time to go on informal training. Whilst teaching, she taught business studies to A Level, but reflected "I bet there's more stuff that goes on nowadays in management courses that I mustn't know about". She appreciated the flexibility of being able to choose her session dates. She also liked that it was delivered by a university.

Lily works in a small organisation where time and money are carefully managed, and many staff are part-time. When considering ways in which to engage her team creatively, she is conscious that any additional resource – such as extra time for team meetings – may involve paying staff overtime, and may not be desirable for staff who choose to work part-time.

When GELL came along, Lily was facing a challenge with a team member, whose behaviour had changed when she was given a longer contract and more hours: "she literally changed overnight [...] I probably didn't actually see her in action as much as I should have before signing her up". Lily recognised that as the organisation grew, she would need to formalise some processes and consider new solutions.

Lily registered for both the conflict and creativity masterclasses, and creativity coaching. She would have preferred face-to-face sessions as she's not a fan of working online.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference [in bold/brackets] to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass

Due to connection issues, Lily wasn't able to complete the conflict masterclass but she did work through the online resource bank, including a conflict styles questionnaire. "There was that questionnaire and when I was reading those questions [Gain knowledge] [...] Well, it hadn't even crossed my mind; I'd always thought I was like the good collaborator and communicator of keeping everybody informed [Reflect]. But then I realised I do end up compromising a lot [Make sense]."

Lily was interested in how to approach line management creatively. She had a mental image of arts and crafts, which didn't resonate with her! In the creativity masterclass she learnt about psychological safety [Gain knowledge]. "I was a bit more aware of when you have team meetings, how I've sat in thousands of blinking team meetings over the 30 years" [Reflect]. "With that psychological safety element, it made me realise how some people feel quite nervous in a meeting and how some people might not want to actually say what they're thinking [Make sense] [...] I'd always been quite confident really in saying what I wanted to say in a team meeting. And so never really considered how other people might not be."

Coaching

Lily's busy life meant she wasn't always able to prepare for her coaching sessions, or find a private space. This didn't seem to impact on Lily's learning. Her ability to experiment in between coaching sessions was impeded by Covid-related issues. To fit in with her schedule, Lily completed her three coaching sessions before she did a masterclass on creativity. This meant that our skills coach used part of each coaching session to discuss useful models or tools that were relevant to Lily's context [Gain knowledge].

Lily's coaching sessions helped her to reflect on her management style [Reflect]. In a previous organisation, she had been "over-managed", where her one-to-ones were rigorously documented, which Lily thought was "over the top". She describes how she went "from one extreme to the other" in her own management practice, where her one-to-ones were very informal and not documented, other than the odd note in her diary where follow-up was needed. Through coaching, Lily decided to formalise things [intend to experiment] by asking the staff to prepare for one-to-ones by reflecting on a variety of questions to understand what support they needed, both at work and in their home life. One staff member was concerned that the conversation was related to their performance, but Lily reassured her that it wasn't anything to worry about [Impact on staff].

Lily decided to use an idea generation tool (attribute listing – demonstrated on the creativity masterclass) with

her team, across two sessions [Experiment]. In the first meeting, the team brainstormed new initiatives they could introduce for their learners. Due to the Christmas break and Covid-related absence, there was a gap before meeting to evaluate and agree the best ideas. Another challenge was the uncertainty of their staff's employment, and therefore having enough resource to implement their ideas. Two temporary staff members were providing additional resource, but their contracts were ending. Happily, Lily was able to extend their contracts, providing the resource needed to realise their ideas.

Through coaching, Lily was prompted to think about informal employee voice mechanisms already in her organisation. She noticed [Reflect] that "We frequently spend lots of time at the end of the day "chit chatting" and occasionally I think "Oh gosh I really need to dash off or this is pointless [...] as not everyone is here to listen". However, I've realised that a lot of this informal chat is helpful to the team". This prompted her to consider how to ensure the whole team hear the same messages - not just those who are in the office at the end of the day [Reflect]. "When I was a teacher [...] every day started with a formal address from the headteacher. Much as this seemed a bit onerous at the time [...] I realise that it was an important time to hear any notices and have the chance to bring up any brief points that were important to the school from each department." [Make sense]. Lily concluded that she needs to help the team understand the importance of these briefings and prioritise attendance at them, as it can be hit-and-miss [Intend to experiment].

In between her coaching sessions, Lily read several articles from our online resource bank to consolidate her knowledge and spark new ideas. "I have used the Wakelet on several occasions and enjoyed reading the articles and information on there. It's great that lots of useful resources are all in one place rather than searching endlessly on the internet, only to find unhelpful information. Obviously some things are useful but knowing that it's been screened for its reliability and authenticity is really helpful to save lots of time wasting" [Gain knowledge].

Outcomes

Lily reports that introducing one-to-ones has been successful "I think they welcomed that private space [...] that was their time dedicated to them" [Impact on staff].

By the time the participant was interviewed, she was also engaged in coaching and peer learning for our final management challenge (Getting the Best from your Team), and so the outcomes were beginning to blur together. She reports that the coaching and peer learning have helped her to address the issues within her team, including the person she was initially having the biggest challenge with. She says this has improved morale across the team, "at one point the atmosphere, you could cut with a knife [...] so we've addressed that and it wasn't easy but we got over it" [Impact on staff]. Following the success of dealing with this challenge, Lily describes herself as more confident and assertive [Improved manager practice].

7.4 Case Study 17: LILY
Attended Creativity Sessions
(Participant 460 - ASC)

In terms of team creativity, Lily reports that although the team were good at coming up with ideas anyway, separating the idea generation session from the critique session prompted them to come up with more ideas and operate more creatively **[Improvement to good and productive work]**.

In her coaching portfolio, Lily reports a huge jump in skills and confidence – from three out of ten to nine **[Improved manager practice]**.

Lily has shared her learning from GELL with her business partner: She likes the idea of the 'employee voice'. "We feel we have always ensured that employees can say what they think about how things are running, new ideas etc but with arranging the team meetings more formally this will help to focus the staff into a more productive use of time at the end of our working days." **[Improved organisational practice]**.

Context + Mechanism = Outcome

Learning		Outcome	
Gain knowledge***	Experiment***	Improved manager practice***	Positive impact on staff**
Reflect***	Learn with others	Improved organisational practice***	Improvement to good and/or productive work*
Make sense**			

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Owner-managed small firm enabled changes to be implemented rapidly.

+ Timeliness of the topics enabled Lily to address ongoing challenges at work.

+ Flexibility of the sessions enabled Lily to get involved alongside her busy role.

+ Space to reflect on prior experience of being led helped Lily to become a better leader.

- Challenges of the pandemic, including illness and self-isolation slowed progress.

- Tight organisational resources (time and money) meant additional demands like team meetings must be carefully considered.

- Small, close-knit organisation means problems quickly escalate.

7.4 Case Study 18:
JEAN
Attended Creativity Sessions (Participant 496 - ASC)

Context

Jean is a manager in a charity providing adult social care services. She has completed ILM Level 4 in management, and maintains her continuing professional development with "odd sessions" such as webinar or half-day events, as well as training in previous organisations. In-house training tends to centre on performance management, and Jean was drawn to the creativity masterclass with GELL as she has not done anything on creativity and employee voice for a long time.

Jean describes the culture as "positive and inclusive", and attributes this to a change in CEO four years ago.

When she first started line managing, she described herself as a "people pleaser", but as she's got older, she realises that people aren't always going to be happy with business decisions. Her goal is to ensure that people are respected, valued, empowered and enabled. "It just enhances everybody's experience as long as you're keeping some sort of control on it as well."

Jean changed roles around three months after the masterclass. When we meet her for her interview, she's been in her new role (within the same organisation) for four weeks, where she's been given additional responsibilities alongside retaining her original role. She notes it was difficult starting the role remotely. Her focus in her first few weeks has been to build relationships, and get the information that's required to do her role. The change in role contributes to her limited opportunity to put her learning into practice, at least in the short-term.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass

Jean reports that her biggest learning from the masterclass was, "about just enabling the voice, that you don't have to have an outcome from the creativity. It's about enabling the creativity and that you're not always looking for something that you can then adopt in your practice or that will enhance things, but it gets people thinking, and don't knock people's ideas." This resonated with her personal experience of being someone who likes to talk things through – starting off with a seemingly great idea, and then working through the practicalities and realising it's a 'no-go'. In particular, the "escalator of voice" stood out **[Gain knowledge]**, with ideas on how to increase staff involvement, which is something she wants to do more of [reflect]. Jean felt that the session was well facilitated. "The presenters obviously knew their stuff. I felt there was a lot of information given, but it wasn't information overload for me because it was about, this is how we can do things, and then you're given the resources to look at yourself."

Jean valued the opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities in breakout rooms **[Learn together]**. She remarked that, although there were small numbers in her breakout room, "… we came up with some good ideas, and sometimes that gives you the chance to actually talk…". One of her fellow participants worked in the same sector as her. He shared what his organisation was going to improve culture, trust and feedback opportunities **[Gain knowledge]**, which made her think about opportunities for her to develop things with her new teams [reflect]. "It was very much a reminder that people worry about their jobs and about being too honest. That was the main thing that I took from that one." **[Make sense]**.

Jean also picked up a practical 'attribute listing' tool to use with teams **[Gain knowledge]**, which she feels will be beneficial for generating ideas and brainstorming **[Intend to experiment]**.

Outcomes

For Jean, the masterclass session came at an important time, as she was moving into a new role. "[…] it made me think **[Reflect]** about how I could start off from the beginning in building up trust and showing people that I value what they do and their insight into their role." She's introduced some changes into her management style **[Practice change]** to invite ideas to improve working practices.

Interestingly, Jean seemed to reflect during her interview and consider thing she wants to try with her new team, perhaps suggesting that the interview was an important accountability touchpoint for her. She's hopeful that she's set a strong foundation with her new teams. Jean feels "a bit overwhelmed" in her new role, but intends to continue

developing team relationships with meetings and away days when things feel more settled **[Intend to experiment]**. She's also keen to use the attribute listing model. She wants to share ideas from the masterclass with others in her team, particularly line managers as she thinks this would help them with their line management style, as well as helping them to understand where Jean's coming from too **[Intend to experiment]**.

Jean has not used the online Resource Bank much, but says "I did have a look because I liked the style of the session and the fact that you could then dip in and out of the resources to what suited you and what you wanted to do." It seems to retaining line manager attention to keep learning independently is challenging when they are very busy.

7.4 Case Study 18: JEAN
Attended Creativity Sessions
(Participant 496 - ASC)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge**   Experiment*

Reflect**   Learn with others*

Make sense*

Outcome

Improved manager practice*

Improved organisational practice

Positive impact on staff

Improvement to good and/or productive work

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Masterclass was timely for Jean as it coincided with her new role, and provided an opportunity to set intentions for her management style going forward.

+ Jean valued the opportunity to share ideas with people from outside of her organisation.

+ Jean enjoyed picking up a couple of practical tools to use with her teams at a future date.

- The busyness of new role has impeded Jean's opportunity to put some of her new learning and tools into practice.

- Jean's reflectiveness during her interview suggests that she may have benefitted from some kind of follow-up to help her make sense of her learning and set concrete future goals.

7.4 Case Study 19: HAFSA
Attended Creativity Sessions (Participant 489 - GM)

Context

Hafsa works as the sole HR practitioner in an SME in the charity sector. She is degree-level educated and studying part-time for a masters degree in HRM. She has been in her current role for one year, prior to which she was an executive assistant to the CEO. She is new to line management and has six months experience managing two temporary trainees, who have since left her organisation, but there are plans in place for her to line manage interns going forward. She describes knowing the theory of management and has put some of this knowledge into practice when advising managers in a recruitment and HR role in a previous organization, and since then with her two trainees. Hafsa has enjoyed managing the two trainees and "watching them grow", though she reports that she found it challenging to recruit, induct, train, and manage them whilst in lockdown during the pandemic when all her contact with them was remote – a further layer of challenge for a first-time line manager.

Hafsa was attracted to GELL because it was free management training offered by a university, and because it was on the specific topic of creativity, which appealed to her rather than other "boring management training". She reports that creativity is an issue for her organisation, in particular for the marketing and fundraising teams in her organisation.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass

Hafsa experienced the creativity masterclass as "an interactive group-based workshop" which she enjoyed **[Learning together]**. She recalls the key message to be that to enable creativity employees need to feel comfortable to voice their opinions, and also recalls the 'toothbrush'/attribute listing creativity exercise **[Gain knowledge]**. She reported that the toothbrush activity was a tool she would use with her team to get their "creative juices flowing" **[Intend to experiment]**. During the masterclass, she liked the group work in breakout rooms as she enjoyed meeting and learning from more experienced managers **[Learning together]**. She recalls learning about how they were managing remote workers through Covid and related this to her own experience **[Reflect]**.

Hafsa explained that she was interested in attending both coaching and peer learning initially but decided not to join peer learning due to her inexperience as a line manager as she "does not have much to offer" (other line managers) yet. However, she would like to do peer learning when she has a few years of line management experience. She can't remember why she didn't follow up on coaching.

Outcomes

Masterclass. Hafsa didn't get an opportunity to try out anything she learned in practice from the masterclass as her trainees left her organisation shortly afterwards and she has not had any new projects to assign. Despite this, she intends to still think about how she can apply idea generation tools and voice practices when she has direct reports again **[Intend to experiment]**. She states that the masterclass made her more aware of employee voice and helped her to recognize that, as she is becoming more senior in her organisation, she needs to not lose touch with "the junior staff members and still make sure that I can relate to them" **[Reflect], [Improved manager practice]**.

Context + Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge*	Make sense
Intend to experiment*	Learning together**
Reflect*	

⟷

Outcome

Experiment/Improved manager practice	Positive impact on staff
Improved organisational practice	Improvement to good and/or productive work

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Manager recognizes relevance of the topic to her organisation which engages her with it.

+ New manager learns from hearing more experienced managers in different organisations share their challenges.

- Manager views creativity as an organisational issue affecting other departments so topic lacks some relevance to day-to-day practice.

- Training is of limited value afterwards as manager has no direct reports to put skills into practice.

- A lack of confidence in individual line management abilities limits the manager taking their learning to a deeper level in peer learning.

- Brand new line manager preoccupied with challenge of how to manage remote workers during pandemic.

7.4 Case Study 20: LUCIE
Attended Conflict and Creativity Sessions (Participant 495 - ASC)

Context

Lucie is a services manager, working for a local office of a national charity, which provides healthcare services to the adult social care sector. She has worked for the organisation for seven years, and did some management training a "very, very long time ago", but nothing specifically about management recently.

Lucie completed a masterclass and peer learning on conflict, and coaching on creativity. She was drawn to GELL because she had not had time to focus on her professional development during the pandemic, and the topics were pertinent because she had noticed a number of conflict issues within the teams, which she describes as "unusual". Creativity was also an area of interest for her, as they are redesigning services, and the wider landscape is changing. She describes the courses as a good fit and "very timely".

When it comes to creative approaches, some of the contracts they deliver lend themselves much more naturally to a fresh, innovative approach than others do. She believes that her senior leadership team are encouraging of creativity, and "how we can evolve and change things". She doesn't consider herself to be a creative person, and found GELL helpful to consider how to focus her thoughts on how to be creative.

Lucie describes herself as lacking confidence when it comes to conflict. It's a rare occurrence within her team, and she doesn't think that her organization is always effective in bringing it to a conclusion.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference [in bold/brackets] to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.
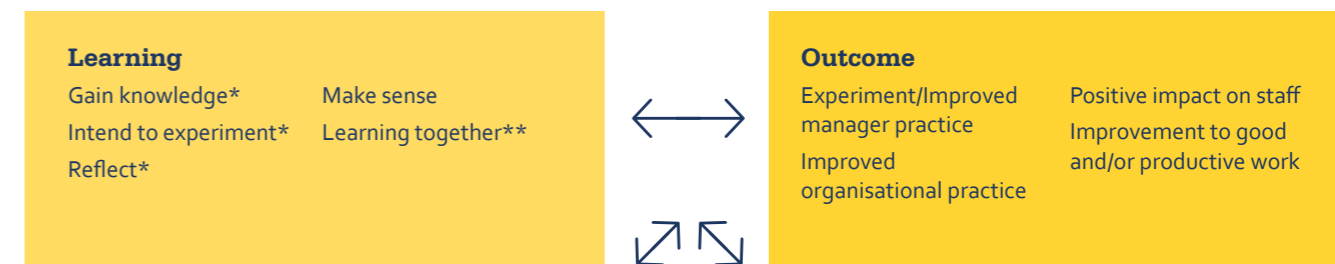
Masterclass

Lucie enjoyed learning about conflict theory, which she says increased her knowledge [Gain knowledge]. She discussed her experience with her line manager, which helped her to realise that others struggle with conflict too [Make sense]; [learn together].

Peer Learning

Lucie was drawn to the peer learning sessions because she was keen to share ideas with people outside of her sector [Learn together]. "We don't have much contact with people beyond [The third sector], unless like the local authority are doing a consultation". Due to illness, Lucie attended the first and third sessions. In the first session, she felt that some participants contributed less than others, and by the third session "the people that came back for that third session were the ones that had stuck out to me in the first session". That said, she found the third session, which was a smaller group of 3-4, more useful than the first larger session. She noted that, whilst the peer learning sessions were about creativity, some discussions were really about conflict within the team [Reflection].

Lucie wanted to discuss a challenge with an individual who was particularly confrontational. Lucie wanted to identify a positive way forward, as her previous attempts weren't working. Lucie describes the experience as "really quite reassuring actually to hear other people with very, very similar issues." [Learn together]. Lucie also appreciated the opportunity to share information – one participant signposted her to a service that Lucie went on to share with her HR team.

Lucie committed to approaching a conflict situation in a different way, using a more assertive style rather than an accommodating style [Intend to experiment]. She's not been able to put this into practice yet, due to changes within the organisation which are preventing opportunities to experiment.

When she met with our researcher a few months after peer learning, Lucie struggled to recall some of the details of the sessions, and coaching seemed fresher in her mind. "I can remember very, very clearly about the one-to-one coaching and that creativity and what we talked through there."

Coaching

Lucie opted for coaching because she had one particular topic on an area she lacked confidence, and hoped that "one-to-one contact with somebody would really help focus my mind on that piece of work […] So I was quite specific in what I wanted to achieve from that one, I think, a lot more so than the peer learning sessions" [Reflect]. Lucie's intentional approach towards her coaching sessions may explain why Lucie found them more useful than peer learning.

Lucie was concerned that she is not a naturally creative person. The coach explained the differences between creativity and innovation [Gain knowledge], which Lucie had not yet covered on the masterclass. She found this insightful and helped her realise [Reflect] that it doesn't necessarily need to be her that creates things – she can influence the team environment in which creativity can thrive [Make sense].

During the pandemic, the organisation adjusted workplans to ensure they could deliver contracts during lockdown. They wanted to take the learning from their changes to practice, and incorporate it into their ways of working going forward.

Lucie manages two team members who have quite creative streaks. The two team members had worked for the organisation for a long time, and Lucie was keen to ensure they stayed, especially as there was high turnover elsewhere in the team. She explored ways in which to boost their engagement and set a goal [Intend to experiment] to meet the team members in an less formal setting to have more open conversations.

Lucie describes the coaching as "cathartic" and suggested to her HR team that it would be useful to introduce coaching to the organisation. She used her coaching sessions to challenge her own "potential tunnel vision" [Gain knowledge]; [Make sense]. "So I found it really, really helpful. And I did actually say to our HR department, "I think I could do with a one-to-one coach every day at the moment.""

Outcomes

In terms of developing creativity, Lucie has had limited opportunity to put her learning into practice, to experiment, or see an impact on her team. "So obviously we had meetings booked and things and then, we had to cancel and postpone because of Covid issues. So they know that it's in the pipeline and that it's being looked at. To be fair, I think it's going to be pushing into the next financial year before we start to really notice the impact of it on staff."

Lucie is more positive when describing changes to her management style. The team were facing a particularly busy period of referrals following a large lull. Rather than approaching it by saying "just carry on and see how we get by", Lucie adopted a more positive approach [Improved manager practice], helping the team to see the bigger picture by emphasising how important the referrals were for the successful delivery of the contract [Positive impact on staff].

7.4 Case Study 20:
LUCIE
Attended Conflict and Creativity Sessions
(Participant 495 - ASC)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge**   Experiment*

Reflect**   Learn with others*

Make sense*

⟷

↗ ↖

Outcome

Improved manager   Positive impact on staff
practice*
                        Improvement to good
Improved   and/or productive work
organisational
practice

**How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+)
or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes**

+ Lucie has live management challenges that are relevant to
the topics of conflict and creativity.

+ Lucie benefited from understanding she's not alone in
struggling with conflict, which she was able to discuss with
her manager.

+ Lucie had a clear goal to work towards in coaching, which
led to a better outcome.

- Lucie had limited opportunity to experiment in between
sessions due to Covid and workload-related pressures.

- Conflict is a rare occurrence in the team, meaning Lucie has
limited opportunity to develop her skills and confidence.

7.4 Case Study 21: LEWIS
Attended Creativity Sessions (Participant 483 - GM)

Context

Lewis is head of staff development in a small family-run, private sector business. He's held this role for one year and it is his first line management post after graduating from his bachelor's degree. His role involves recruiting, training and the day-to-day management of 20 part-time sports coaches who work across different sites. Lewis enjoys the responsibility that comes with his job and is highly motivated to learn and bring that learning back to his organisation. He has a good working relationship with the three other managers in his organisation, who include the company directors. Business activity paused during Covid, giving the management team the opportunity to problem solve and "build systems and everything in the background". Post pandemic, the organisation experienced an influx of business and is now in a period of growth where the environment is fast paced with "constant change". Lewis' role is pivotal to this growth as it is enabled by their ability to recruit more coaches and retain them.

Lewis highlights some of his line management challenges to include engaging part-time coaches with organisation changes and new projects required for the company expansion, and handling team conflict. He reports having to "cherry pick" which projects to involve different coaches in as he trusts some coaches more than others and differentiates them by experience and professionalism. He recognizes that, prior to his attendance at GELL, the coaches have had little visibility or say into the company plans as they are busy in their day jobs and have not been given the chance to contribute.

Lewis attends both conflict and creativity masterclasses as he wants to learn from more experienced managers and take that learning back to his organisation. He views his participation in GELL as "an opportunity for me to start to grow and develop myself". He is also keen to develop others. Lewis also opts to attend one to one coaching on the topic of creativity.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference [in bold/brackets] to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass

Lewis attended the creativity masterclass to learn new techniques to take back to the team. In terms of employee voice, he learned the importance of "allowing" his team members to talk and input their ideas [**Gain knowledge**]. He describes his biggest learning to not "shut down" emerging ideas from his team to prevent momentum building and that he should not "interrupt the creative flow" [**Gain knowledge**]. He noticed that he had seen such interruptions in management team meetings [**Reflect**].

Lewis reported the conflict masterclass to be more useful than the creativity one because it helped identify "set ways you can go about managing", whereas creativity is where "you've just got to allow the conversations to happen" [**Make sense**]. He stated that having a structure to follow in different situations "was easier for me to process, and then start to implement" [**Gain knowledge**], [**Reflect**] [**Make sense**]. We infer here that Lewis refers to the conflict handling styles model that sets out different conflict styles for differing conflict situations.

During the masterclasses, Lewis engaged well with both the way the sessions were designed and with the facilitation style. He describes the masterclasses as "a combination of education and experimentation" as he learned different strategies and techniques [**Gain knowledge**] and then got chance to think through that knowledge in relation to a case study in breakout rooms with other managers [**Reflect**], [**Learning together**]. He enjoyed discussing with other managers how they have overcome their past challenges [**Learning together**]. Lewis describes being in the sessions as 'a very safe network' that kept conversations confidential and that the facilitators were 'light-hearted, in the sense that you were never getting marked or scrutinized for what you were saying'. They did not tell participants what they 'should' go and do in their organisations but made suggestions of things that they might try.

Lewis reported there to be lots of information in the masterclasses which made it "quite difficult to nit-pick the specific things out that you will be able to implement, as most effectively within my job role" [**Make sense**]. He commits to experiment by giving staff voice about company direction, informally and formally [**Intend to experiment**].

Coaching

Though Lewis signs up for creativity coaching, some of his challenges merge across both conflict and creativity topics. For example, he discusses issues with the coach such as: finding time to do line management and encourage team voice, a difficult relationship with a team member, managing underperformance, balancing creativity with sustainable organisational growth, and the speed of organisational expansion. He reports that bouncing ideas

off the coach helps him develop better ideas about what he should do and how to apply his learning to a range of problems [**Gain knowledge**], [**Learning together**], [**Reflect**], [**Make sense**]. His coach notes that he has a 'lightbulb' moment where, through their joint discussions and his reflections, he surfaces his personal concerns about the speed of the company growth [**Reflect**], [**Make sense**]. He assimilates learning from the creativity masterclass and considers how to spend time thinking creatively with the management team [**Make sense**], [**Intend to experiment**]. Lewis committed to experiment by sharing responsibility for coaching sessions that involve his team, to create action plans relating to the recruitment activity, and to be more purposeful about some of the tools the organisation is using to create a positive culture [**Intend to experiment**]. He also intended to talk to the management team about the speed of the company expansion, and whether it was appropriate. Lewis reports that, in comparison to the masterclasses, the coaching has been "more beneficial' as "I find it easier to process things when I'm having an informal one-to-one discussion" [**Learning together**]. He states that the coaching helps him consider what he needs to do in specific situations and how to overcome different problems [**Make sense**], [**Intend to experiment**]. His coach reports him commenting during the sessions "that's a good question, I hadn't thought of that" [**Reflect**].

Outcomes

Masterclass. Lewis reports that, from the creativity masterclass, he freed up time to have one-to-one conversations with each of his direct reports so they can share their ideas and he encourages them to put their ideas into practice, delegating more [**Improved manager practice**]. He reports consciously making efforts to listen to them [**Improved manager practice**] and plans for the full team to discuss and think through how to implement their ideas at a forthcoming staff training day [**Improved organisational practice**]. Lewis noted a change to his team members who have "started to step up and take a little bit more responsibility" which he sees as a direct impact of the one-to-one conversations [**Positive impact on staff**], [**Improvement to good and/or productive work**]. He also reports improvements to informal communications such as "passing conversations", both with staff and other managers, and notices that staff are now starting to proactively solve problems with "a better level of buy-in" [**Improved organisational practice**], [**Positive impact on staff**], [**Improvement to good and/or productive work**].

Lewis encountered a difficult situation shortly after the conflict masterclass which resulted in him having to "fire a coach" for performance reasons. He uses the conflict styles model to do so which "gave me a better understanding" that he had to change his preferred collaborative style and be assertive [**Experiment**]. He states that: "As a result of that workshop, when I went into that conversation with the coach, I just went straight in, took control of the, and was able to, quite effectively, deal with it. As a result, it actually went quite well [...]. That was, not an enjoyable conversation for me to have, but as a result of that masterclass, it definitely made it a lot easier for me." Lewis reports that, in terms of his individual manager

LEWIS
Attended Creativity Sessions
(Participant 483 - GM)

practice, he is "more aware of how I handle situations" relating to both creativity and conflict, in terms of the impact of his actions and behaviours on his team and thinks more consciously about how he interacts with them **[Improved manager practice]**.

Coaching. When we interviewed Lewis, he had not completed all his coaching sessions and therefore we do not fully understand the full impact of the completed coaching series from his perspective, however his coach reported that he had held one-to-ones with all his coaches and was delegating more **[Improved organisational practice]**, **[Improved manager practice]**. After all three coaching sessions were complete, his coach reported that Lewis recounted having more open and purposeful conversations with his team, and began acting on their views **[Improved manager practice]**. Lewis also began to trust his staff more, giving them more responsibility and rewards proactive

behaviour **[Improved manager practice]**, **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvement to good and/or productive work]**. His coach noted that he seemed to develop enhanced appreciation of the tensions of working in a high growth small business and began to uncover possible conflict between his personal values and this context.

Overall, our data suggests that coaching enabled Lewis to experiment with numerous new practices that he had learned from the masterclass, and to tackle specific contextual challenges resulting in increased levels of staff involvement. Lewis also gained a better understanding of the importance of staff voice and involvement in organisational change.

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge**	Experiment*
Reflect**	Learn with others*
Make sense*	

⟷

Outcome

Improved manager practice*	Positive impact on staff
Improved organisational practice	Improvement to good and/or productive work

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Manager who is new to line management motivated to develop skills both due to personal desire and the need to do so in a rapidly expanding organisation.

+ Masterclass content gives manager ideas about new things he can experiment with in relation to both conflict and creativity.

+ Timeliness of training aligns to live organisational challenges enabling manager to experiment.

+ Manager role in small organisation enables him to put ideas into practice that have positive impact on staff.

+ Coaching enables manager to explore his context and relationships with others more deeply and to further explore content from both masterclass topics with his coach.

+ Facilitator creates a safe psychological space for learning in masterclass where despite lack of manager experience, manager is confident to contribute.

- Amount of content in masterclass is overwhelming for manager who lacks experience and requires support to think through how it relates to context.

- Coaching uncovers unresolved tensions about organisational context that may require further exploration outside of the programme.

7.4 Case Study 22:
KIM
Attended Conflict and Creativity Sessions
(Participant 490 - GM)

Context

Kim leads a small team in a charitable organisation. This small organisation partners with various providers and charity organisations in health services. Kim has been in post for three years and this is her first line management role - she describes it as "her first rodeo" (a possible in reference to the challenging nature of people management). Kim describes working in a "close-knit supportive team" with little hierarchy. Previously, she worked as a coach for service users in the team she now manages. Her team work alongside other regional teams and Kim's team's workload is the busiest.

Prior to her appointment to a line management role, Kim participated in a management development programme in her organisation that lasted for a year. However, she states that it is her own line manager, with whom she has a good relationship, who has supported her to develop into her line manager role. She enjoys the responsibility of the line management role alongside organising, supporting and caring for her team. Kim articulates some of her current line management challenges as "managing my own wellbeing as well as managing the staff's wellbeing" as she prioritises their needs over her own and is "not the best delegator". Promoting staff health and wellbeing is a priority for her organisation.

Kim is interested in both the creativity and conflict topics. In relation to creativity, she explains that her team share their creative ideas and support each other well as a team. However, some team members are silent in team meetings, and she has found online working enforced through the pandemic "reduces the flow of conversation", thereby limiting employee voice. In relation to conflict, she joins the GELL programme with conflicts relating to team members and with external partners in mind. In her own organisation, conflict tend

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass

Kim attended both the creativity and conflict masterclasses as she was interested in both topics though, at the time, "my head […] was more around the conflict I was having with the team". She was unsure what she would gain from the creativity masterclass since she feels her team are already quite creative but "then I did really get a lot from the creativity one" **[Gain knowledge]**.

During the creativity masterclass, Kim enjoyed discussing and hearing about other managers' challenges and solutions to developing creativity online **[Learning together]**. Her own line manager also attended the masterclass and afterwards they discussed how to use some of the masterclass ideas in their broader team meetings **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]**. She picked up new tools she could use and learned about employee silence **[Gain knowledge]**. Kim committed to experiment by scheduling creativity time into team meetings, and to use the 'toothbrush activity' creativity tool **[Intend to experiment]**.

During the conflict masterclass, Kim learned different ways of dealing with conflict, such as by using the WAIT acronym **[Gain knowledge]**. She found the breakout case study helpful as it concerned a conflict arising from stepping up to be a line manager of colleagues who were formerly peers. This mirrored Kim's personal experience stepping up to be team leader **[Reflect]** and another participant shared the same experience **[Learning together]**, something she found reassuring **[Make sense]**. She stated that the conflict masterclass, and hearing about other managers' conflict challenges **[Learning together]**, helped her think through what specific challenge she would bring to the coaching sessions that followed **[Reflect]**.

Coaching

Kim had coaching on the topic of conflict. She discussed challenges with the coach relating to a serious mental health issue with a team member, and workload and sickness issues in her team. Talking her challenges through with the coach helped Kim recognize that she could not solve all problems herself and did not always need to step in and take action **[Learning together]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**. She found it 'really useful' that the coach was an HR expert who shared her experience with Kim, as it enabled her to check if she could do additional things to support her team members that she had already considered **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Make sense]**. She also found that writing things down to help her formulate a plan helped her manage the situation better for herself **[Make sense]**, **[Intend to experiment]**. Talking her challenge through with someone was also important: "I think in that moment I really just needed to express that conflict that I was struggling with" **[Learning together]**, **[Reflect]**.

Peer Learning

Kim attended peer learning on the topic of creativity. The group was small with two other managers from different organisations. She describes the experience as "really good" and the group were open, honest and "settled into each other really quickly".

Kim found the peer learning 'kind of opened my eyes up'. She recalls sharing her challenges and that all three peers had similar creativity challenges that they shared, working through the pandemic, and "getting people back to feeling normal" **[Learning together]**. She recalls having to make an 'I will' statement relating to coming out of Covid and reigniting the passion back in her team to share voice/creative ideas **[Intend to experiment]**. She got new ideas from "when the peers were talking behind my back (laughs)", when she turned her camera and microphone off and listened to the group generate ideas about her challenge **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]**. She had a specific idea about how to bring something new to her team meetings to create an opportunity for staff voice **[Intend to experiment]**. Kim shared the 'WAIT' acronym from the conflict masterclass with peers **[Gain knowledge]** and how she had been using it in her practice **[Experiment]**. When we met Kim some months after the final peer learning session, she shared that her group have continued to meet independently every two months and had a couple of meetings.

Outcomes

Masterclass. Kim reported that she didn't put anything into practice immediately following the conflict masterclass because her conflict coaching followed shortly afterwards, but the masterclass helped her prepare a challenge to take to coaching. She did report that hearing about other managers' similar problems to be reassuring "it gave me that kind of, you're not on your own in the situation" **[Reflect]**. She reported that she had not yet used the 'toothbrush' creativity activity but plans to at her next full team day in a few months' time **[Intend to experiment]**.

Kim explained that she felt the "masterclasses were a good introduction to everything, and I suppose without doing the masterclasses I wouldn't have been prepared for the peer-to-peer and then the coaching" but that "I definitely got more from the peer-to-peer and the coaching".

Coaching. Kim experimented by meeting one-to-one with a staff member to discuss a conflict situation, held timeline meetings with staff that were well received, and developed a return to work plan for a team member **[Experiment]**, **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvement to good and/ or productive work]**. Kim reported that she "feels better" about managing conflict since the coaching gave her more tools to use and "better insight my own management style" **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Improved manager practice]**. She has changed her practice in that she steps back before going into a situation to solve conflict and "rescue people" and helps staff resolve things themselves rather than getting directly involved **[Improved manager practice]**. She reports this to be her biggest learning 'not finding the solutions to

7.4 Case Study 22:
KIM
Attended Conflict and Creativity Sessions
(Participant 490 - GM)

Learning

Gain knowledge**   Experiment*

Reflect**   Learn with others*

Make sense*

Outcome

Improved manager practice*   Positive impact on staff

Improved organisational practice   Improvement to good and/or productive work

How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ Relevance of a live conflict challenge with a team member attracted manager to GELL – a timely topic and opened door to further changes in practice in creativity.

+ Lack of hierarchy in small organisation enables line manager to enact changes.

+ Good relationship with manager's own line manager gives ability for manager to discuss learning supporting implementation of change.

+ By first attending masterclasses on relevant topics to their live challenges helps manager gain knowledge/spark ideas to then deepen their learning in coaching and peer learning

+ Changes to manager practice influence changes to team confidence.

+ Safe space created in peer learning and positive relationships developed between peers encourages peer learning practice outside GELL and exploration of how this might work in internal organisational context.

+ Easy to remember practical tools in masterclass (e.g. WAIT) straightforward to embed in manager practice.

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everybody's problems' as "the coaching taught me more about me managing me rather than how I manage the staff" **[Reflect]**.

Peer Learning. Kim implemented a new practice where team members share positive learnings and outcomes at the end of each weekly meeting, **[Improved organisational practice]** something that she believes has motivated her team as it "reignite(s) that passion for the job that we're doing" and emphasises "why we do the job" and encourages collaborative conversations **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvement to good and/or productive work]**. She also reports that it has improved her delegation skills and staff have more autonomy to make decisions with her support **[Improved manager practice]**. Kim believes this has freed up her time to "do leadership rather than be everything to everybody" **[Improved manager practice]**. In addition to Kim's peer learning group still meeting independently of GELL, she has discussed the peer learning technique with her parent organisation and discussions have begun about the possibility of introducing this across different services **[Intend to experiment]**.

When we spoke to Kim again some months later she had been promoted to a management role, responsible for the regional team leaders. She reflected that the GELL training had helped her embed into her new role following promotion **[Reflect]**. In particular, standing back more and not jumping in to problem solve by using the WAIT technique (from the conflict masterclass) **[Gain knowledge]**: "I think the 'WAIT', because it was so easy to remember and because I really connected with the always talking and resolving [...] it's really resonated with me in that aspect of my practice [...]. Not talking and jumping in to put myself in a position where I'm taking on more responsibility."

She has extended the positive reflection activity to all her team leaders, becoming an embedded practice across her organisation **[Improved organisational practice]**. It continues to bring "more of a positive feeling to the team, good practice and shared practice across the team" along with the momentum gained from a return to office working" **[Positive impact on staff]**. In addition, two team members have been promoted, and Kim believes that, in part, this was as they developed more confidence due to Kim's changes to her management style (delegating more, giving more autonomy). **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvement to good and/or productive work]**.

7.4 Case Study 23: ROSE
Attended Conflict And Creativity Sessions (Participant 339 - ASC)

Context

Rose is a well-established senior manager in a charity providing adult social care services. She recognises that as a manager, it's important to keep learning. However, she has done a lot of training in the past and this, combined with her demanding schedule, means that "it's got to be really worthwhile for me to go on things".

Rosie described morale in the organisation as quite low, possibly due to Covid. Although morale is not as low in her own team, the CEO is keen for all managers to actively address this. Rose felt that there were cultural barriers to creativity, with some staff being embedded in old practices, and sceptical of change and new ideas, which puts people off trying new things. Rose attended our conflict masterclass, as well as peer learning and coaching on the topic of creativity. She says of GELL as "this one of the most useful things I've ever been on".

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference **[in bold/brackets]** to the learning pillars in our Theory of Change.

Masterclass

Rose described the masterclass as "good", but felt that it covered things that she's already adept at, including having challenging conversations, which is something other participants have reported struggling with. She would have preferred a more strategic focus to help her career development **[Reflect]**. "I would quite like to go up management-wise, but I don't know how. I don't know how to prove that I'm good at what I do."

Peer Learning

Our peer learning sessions involved three 90-minute sessions over 5 weeks. As well as bringing live challenges with her, Rose learnt from other participants' challenges and experiences **[Learn together]**. She recalls "No ideas surprised me or I felt were new to me, it was the actual process of discuss the challenge that allowed the ideas to be produced". She valued the protected time and open questions from other participants to prompt her thinking **[Make sense]**, and reflected on whether her own management style may be hampering people's creativity.

For Rose, there wasn't enough time between sessions to enact her goals, but by the time we met her for an interview several months later, there were many changes. Rose identified that she needed to increase income through existing and new channels. Using our 'flash peer learning' format **[Gain knowledge]**, she took the question to her team, rather than trying to do everything herself **[Experiment]**. She felt confident in doing this as she'd observed the GELL facilitator leading sessions **[Learning together]**.

She describes the experience as "very scary [...] a complete loss of control", but acknowledges that "my solution would not have looked anything like what we ended up with the team. It would have not even been a tenth of what we ended up with. It was so much better doing it as a team'"**[Make sense]**.

Coaching

Rose described coaching as "an extremely useful experience". She found 'the process of being listened to, my points summarised back to me and then questioned about my issue has been extremely insightful.' **[Make sense]**.

As standard at GELL, we would deliver coaching sessions fortnightly. However the demanding nature of Rose's role meant she wasn't able to make progress between sessions. Rather than missing the opportunity to work on real-life challenges, Rose and the GELL coach agreed to meet less frequently, enabling Rose to make progress between sessions.

As well as working on a live challenge (bringing several teams together from across the organisation on a major project), a key goal Rose set herself was to adopt more of a coaching approach. She recognised that by stepping in and problem-solving – both at home and work - she risked disempowering those around her, and inhibiting their suggestions **[Reflect]**. Rose reports using coaching techniques successfully in both individual and team settings, where she that in the past, she would have had a much more directive approach **[Experiment]**.

Rose has used coaching to great effect with a team member at a career crossroads who said "That's been the most useful conversation I've had [...] I can hear your coaching questions in it [...] I feel that it's been very unbiased conversation". **[Impact on others]**.

Outcomes

When interviewed by our researcher several months after participating in GELL, Rose had made great progress. She struggled to attribute outcomes to individual interventions, particularly when describing the way she's incorporated questioning techniques into her management practice, which she seems to have developed through both peer learning and coaching **[Improved manager practice]**.

Rose found the **peer learning** sessions "invaluable", and has adopted the practice monthly into her team meetings, where individuals can bring large or small problems **[Improved manager practice]**. This is working really well for her. "And it just, not only is it a practical solution, but actually I think staff really value the fact that their problem is valid enough to take up half an hour of our team meeting to really try and focus in and, you know, and problem solve it" **[Positive impact on staff]**.

As well as a strategy which exceeded her expectations, Rose believes the team are engaged and taking proactive ownership of areas that she previously have had to drive forward **[Impact on others]**. She's noticed an increased confidence in one of her admin team, who is less reliant on Rose to check things, and is critiquing other work practices. "And has started to come to me with, perhaps not the solution, but, 'I'm thinking that we could do something around this'". **[Improvement to good and productive work]**.

Rose reflected on her leadership practice that she may have been "suppressing creativity by trying to help, when actually I am disempowering staff". Rose has noticed that the team feel more empowered and she no longer needs to initiate every piece of work **[Improvement to good and productive work]**.

Rose confided her concerns with this approach. "Is it always positive? Because my concern being that everybody's really worked, you know, they work at 100% anyway. And I think some of it, why I try and do it myself, is I don't want to overload people, but consequently you end up overloading yourself really." These concerns – and the objective reality of high workloads - may pose a barrier to Rose sustaining her changes.

7.4 Case Study 23:
ROSE
Attended Conflict And Creativity Sessions (Participant 339 - ASC)

In her Peer Learning portfolio, Rose reported "My workplace have been extremely interested in the learning that has taken place and I would hope that if I can embed 'problem of the month' or a team Kanban board I could present it to other Heads of Departments as an example of good practice." This was rolled out in many other areas of the organisation. Others' interest in her learning led to sharing of good ideas **[improved organisational practice]**.

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge**   Experiment*

Reflect**   Learn with others*

Make sense*

Outcome

Improved manager practice*

Improved organisational practice

Positive impact on staff

Improvement to good and/or productive work
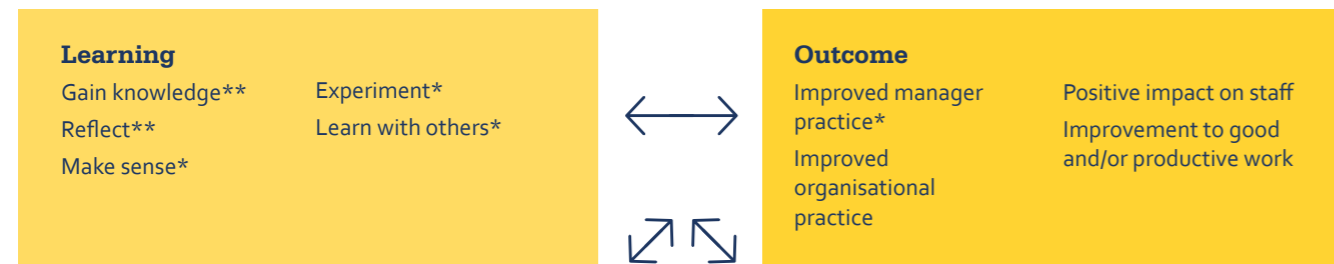
How Context Shaped Outcomes: Enabling (+) or Constraining (-) Learning and Outcomes

+ The sessions were timely for Rose, and provided her with the strategic space she needed to reflect and find her own answers.

+ Rose appreciated being able to share ideas with others from her sector, and valued the open questions from other participants.

+ Rose's self-reflection and openness to new ways of working enabled her to identify things that were holding her and her team back, and take steps to address them .

+ Rose was enabled by being able to flex the coaching schedule around her workload.

+ Rose had early success experimenting with coaching questions, which propelled her to keep going.

- Rose's role is very demanding, and there was not enough time between peer learning sessions to put ideas into practice.

- Rose is senior and experienced, and unlike many of our participants, was very comfortable in conflict situations, and so the masterclass did not as useful to her as coaching or peer learning.

- Rose is concerned about her team's workload, and worries about delegating too much and overloading them. She is equally concerned with under-utilising them, and sometimes struggles to reconcile this in her head.

7.5 Cross Case Analysis: What Do Case Studies Tell Us About What Works For Whom And Why?

We selected case studies so that they were broadly representative of the different sessions that people had attended and also so that they covered a range of positive and less positive outcomes. The twelve managers had a range of management experience, and most had had some management training, though for some this was quite distant in time.

The managers expressed a range of motivations for attending the training. For some it was a desire to refresh their management knowledge. Others were looking ahead to future roles and wanted to develop competence or demonstrate professional development. The fact that the training was offered by a university was attractive to some managers, in terms of its credibility, and the bite-size nature of the masterclass was attractive to one participant. Many of the managers referred to a desire to connect with other managers, and to see what other organisations were doing. For many of the case study managers the topics covered in the training were particularly relevant at the time, addressing specific issues that they were facing in the workplace. Many of these were related to pandemic/post pandemic conditions, which had created particular challenges around employee voice and handling 'problem' situations. Some participants referred to increased workload pressures, for them and their team, arising from the post-pandemic conditions and the need to find solutions that would ease the pressure, not least on them as managers themselves. Others, though fewer in number, referred to long-standing issues in the organisation as a stimulus for attending.

7.5.1 Masterclasses

Here we summarise learning from the masterclasses as described by the case study participants, and reflect on their value as a self-contained learning experience, and as a foundation for further interventions.

Masterclasses As Self-contained Learning Experience

Gain Knowledge
For most managers, the masterclasses were a very effective way of acquiring new knowledge. Some reported learning new theory, definitions, models or frameworks. Most reported picking up new techniques or interventions. One delegate reported preferring the latter to the former. The mix of 'input' and discussion was generally seen as effective. One manager felt that too much material was introduced in the sessions, another felt that there wasn't enough 'new' material for a manager with her experience, and another could not remember what had been covered, or even that he had attended (when we interviewed him a second time). That said, the masterclasses were well-received as a vehicle for gaining knowledge by a large majority of case study managers.

Learn Together
The fact that the masterclasses were participative, and included 'breakout' discussions, was well-received by the case study managers. Managers found that the 'safe space' and 'confidential' nature of the breakout discussions was conducive to learning, though one manager said that she found it difficult to generate the necessary rapport in online group work. Managers found it both informative and reassuring to hear of other managers' challenges and to discuss possible solutions. Less experienced managers said that they learnt from more experienced ones, and managers learnt from finding out what happened in other sectors and in larger organisations.

Reflect
The masterclasses produced less evidence of reflection than they did of gaining knowledge and learning together, however it is clear that they stimulated a good deal of reflective behaviour among participants. Much of this happened after the session. For example one manager came the conclusion that his more informal approach to conflict handling was acceptable (having been previously unsure), and another reflected on reasons why some people don't participate in meetings. Participants reported reflecting on how techniques that they had learned about in the masterclass might apply in their organisation.

Make Sense
Again, there was good evidence of sense-making amongst participants. A number of managers reported coming to a realisation as to how things needed to change in their organisations and how they might do things differently. One participant felt that they needed more time than was allowed to digest new material and 'make sense' of its implications. Some sense making took place after the sessions, where participants discussed their learning form the masterclass with other managers.

Experiment
Around half of the case-study managers reported committing to experiment with learning from the masterclass – for example committing to involve staff more in decision making, allowing discussion time in meetings, using particular techniques to generate activity/tackle conflict.

Masterclasses As A Gateway And Foundation For Peer Learning And Coaching

Most of the case study managers went on to undertake another form of learning – peer learning or coaching. It is not clear from the data whether the attendance in the masterclass was instrumental in them doing so. However, it is clear for other data that the value of the masterclass, and familiarity with and respect for the facilitators, was often a factor in participants continuing their journey in this way. Likewise, we have little indication in this data of why participants chose not to continue beyond a masterclass, though one participant indicated that they didn't want to engage in peer learning or coaching as they preferred the larger group learning environment where there was less pressure to speak. Interestingly this participant did decide to attend peer learning in a later series of sessions, having apparently gained confidence to overcome this aversion. For those participants who did go onto peer-learning and coaching, there was good evidence of the masterclass being foundational of their experience of other interventions-particularly in relation to coaching – though this was not the case of all participants. One respondent reported discussing a particular tool (introduced in the masterclass) in the coaching sessions, and developing a plan for using it in her workplace. Another reported using the coaching sessions to assimilate learning from the masterclass and discuss how it might be used to generate creativity within his management team. A third manager reported that the masterclass had confirmed that she needed to run an away day with her team, and that she then developed and refined that idea in the coaching sessions. Finally, one participant reported that the combination of masterclass and coaching worked well, as the former provided her with "initial resources and skills" and the latter enabled her to talk through ideas with the coach and explore ways of implementing them. There was also one manager who reported bring material and ideas from a workplace training session to the coaching session, and using it as a basis for learning.

7.5.2 Peer Learning

Just under half of our case study managers had engaged in peer learning. There was evidence of learning in relation to each of the five learning pillars underpinning the training interventions, with 'learning together' being most prominent.

Gain Knowledge
Gaining knew knowledge was a less prominent outcome from peer learning than it was in the masterclasses, however there was evidence of this. A number of managers referred to knowledge that they had gained from peers in listening to them discuss their challenges, and from their comments on their own challenges. Managers also reported gaining knowledge from the facilitator.

Learn Together
This was the primary learning pillar in the peer learning. Participants regularly talked about the benefits of discussing problems with others and hearing different perspectives. One respondent explained the process of discussion was useful in generating ideas. It was reassuring, and practically useful, that others faced similar challenges, albeit in different contexts. Learning from others in different organisations was seen as particularly beneficial, especially for managers who felt a little isolated in their own environments. For example, one manager reported picking up an idea about HR support which they were then able to share with her own team. One respondent reported learning about facilitation from the GELL facilitator, and modelling her behaviour on that in team meetings.

Reflect
There was some evidence of reflection in relation to peer learning. One respondent explained that the non-judgemental aspect of the group discussions helped delegates to reflect on their own practice. There were a number of concrete examples of reflection. One manager described reflection on the difficulties of recreating a team dynamic when working remotely, another reflected on her experience of stepping up 'from the ranks' to be a team leader. One manager reported sharing some of her reflections from the peer learning with her team.

Make Sense
The peer learning sessions seem to have been a good environment for stimulating sensemaking . There were are number of examples quoted by our case study participants. One manager spoke about the realisation of a need to use more open questions, another of the need to use formal conflict handling approaches in some situations. A third manager began to question whether their own communication style was hampering creativity in their team.

Experiment
Most of the managers who attended peer learning committed to experiment with new techniques and approaches. One undertook to experiment with new conflict handling techniques, another with a specific tool to generate creativity in team meetings, and a third with a more assertive style in conflict situations. One manager went further and experimented with the flash peer learning methodology that she had experience in the sessions.

7.5.3 Coaching

Half of our case study managers engaged in coaching. There was evidence of learning in relation to each of the management learning pillars, with particularly emphasis on 'reflection' and 'making sense'.

Gain Knowledge
As might be expected this wasn't the most prominent learning aspect in the coaching sessions. However, there was some interesting evidence of this. The programme used HR specialists as facilitators, rather than generalist coachees, and this appeared to have an impact. For example, coachees were able to help coaches with definitions and concepts, introduce models, share their own experiences, and tailor the discussion of the content of particular challenges.

Learn Together
Again, this pillar wasn't as prominent as it was in the peer learning sessions, however there was some 'learning together' in evidence. Some respondents talked about the value of being able to talk through problems with the coach and 'bounce' ideas off them.

Reflect
Reflection was a major element of the coaching sessions. It was evident that the coaching sessions both allowed time for reflection (otherwise difficult for managers to find) and particular prompts for it (provided by the facilitator). Participants reported coming to number of observations on their own practice during the coaching sessions, about what they were doing too much of, too little of, or doing in a way which wasn't conducive to positive outcomes. They also reflected on their own management style and management goals, and on managing themselves.

Make Sense
Sensemaking was again a strong aspect of the coaching sessions. The opportunity to talk through problems and potential solutions with the coach was seen as valuable. One respondent talked about the coach helping her challenge her "tunnel visions", another about how working with the coach enabled her to see that she can influence creativity in her team without her necessarily being the creative force. A third manager explained that the coach helped her realise that she couldn't solve every problem herself, and that it wasn't always necessary to step in an take action. The process of coaching seemed to help with this sense making. As one manager put it, "the process of being listened to, [having] my points summaries back to me and then questioned about my issue has been extremely insightful"

Experiment
The coaching sessions seem to have been a good environment for encouraging experiment. Part of this seemed to be the fact that the series of sessions enable the coach to hold participants to their intention to experiment, and also to discuss and refine experiments. There was time to discuss potential experiments with the coach, and explore ways in which to experiment, "in a way that felt natural", as one respondent put it. Examples of experiments included: asking staff to formally prepare for one-to-one meetings, meeting staff in less formal settings in order to open up conversations, and, sharing responsibility for leadership in team meetings.

7.5.4 Outcomes

The outcomes arising from the learning were similar among case study participants as they were in the wider sample. A small number of case study participants made no, or very minor, experiments with, or changes to, their management practice. However, a majority of them did so. These ranged from introducing one-to-one meetings with staff, taking steps to elicit the views of staff and involve them in decision making, and changes to their approach to handling conflict situations. Others introduced approaches with their teams that they themselves had been exposed to in the training. For example, peer learning problem solving groups, and coaching techniques.

As was the case with the wider data stet, there were fewer reports of impacts on staff and on wider organisational practice, but these were not insignificant in number. In relation to the impact on staff, delegates reported staff taking more responsibility and ownership of tasks, issues and problems, and of them valuing the opportunity to have their voice heard and have dedicated time with their manager. One delegate talked of team members regaining their "passion" for the job, and another reported more of a sense of shared purpose within the team. One case study participant reported greater confidence levels amongst staff and linked this, in part, to promotions that two staff members had secured.

Impacts on wider organisational practice included the introduction of new team meeting systems and new procedures to guide staff in escalating issues and concerns. Good practice learned from the training was sometimes shared with other team leaders, and in some cases practices (e.g. peer learning, voice mechanisms) were adopted more widely.

Finally, there were a number of reports from case study participants of improvements to good and productive work which they attributed to their learning. These were varied but included: improved team cohesion, greater staff autonomy and self-reliance, improved creativity, and in one case, productivity exceeding expectations.

7.6 Management Challenge 2 Conclusion: 'What Works, For Whom And Why?'– Key Points For Policy And Practice

The Good Employment Learning Lab is seeking to learn 'what works for whom, and why' to develop the people management skills of line managers and, so, to improve good work and productivity. In management challenge 2, we have analysed a rich dataset about the learning experiences of managers undertaking training in managing conflict and fostering creativity. In this section, we provide a 'take away' of our findings for commissioners of line management training, policy for good and productive work and management development practice. As our Learning Lab is about making sense of tricky problems with policy and practice, we look forward to using our learning to think with stakeholders about the implications of our findings for different settings and challenges.

7.6.1 Who Learnt What, And How?

Our rapid analysis of learner journeys in management challenge 2 (learning to manage conflict and creativity) suggests that learning was in evidence from each of the different interventions, and this is borne out in the qualitative thematic analysis and analysis of case studies. Masterclasses were particularly effective in imparting knowledge but, on account of their interactive nature, were also able to stimulate learning with others. There was less scope for reflection and sensemaking, though there was nonetheless evidence of this. The quantitative analysis suggested that masterclasses were less likely to generate experiment with practice, and the qualitative data suggest that this is likely to be because they don't have the 'accountability' element that is present in the peer learning and coaching interventions. As they were 'one-off' events there is no continuation of commitment to follow through on learning, and no 'peer pressure' or pressure from the coach to deliver on undertakings in previous sessions.

Peer Learning proved to be effective in generating learning with others, as might be expected form their design, but there was also strong evidence of 'gaining knowledge', both from peers and the facilitator. Opportunities for reflection and sensemaking were available and there is good evidence of delegates taking these up. **Coaching** proved to be particularly effective in stimulating reflection and sensemaking, both arising from the in-depth and recurring conversations with the coach. However, delegates also learned from, and with, the coach (the coach's topic expertise being valuable here). Coaching seemed to be particularly conducive to generating experiment. The accountability factor was important here, as noted above, and also the opportunity to revisit, review and refine experiments as the coaching series progressed. The quantitative analysis suggested the commitment to experiment was more or less universal across interventions, but actually following through to experiment in practice was much more common where coaching supplemented a masterclass, and the reasons may be apparent in the preceding discussion. In general, we found better practice outcomes form the training when coaching was involved than where it wasn't. We can't be certain from the qualitative data why this might be, but it is plausible that the greater opportunity for reflection and sense-making in the coaching sessions than in other interventions may underlie this.

7.6.2 Who Did What, And Why?

The quantitative data show impressive evidence of impact on practice arising from the training interventions (Table 4.1). To recap, two-thirds of managers experimented with a change in practice , and half of manages consolidated that into a change in their practice. Just under half of participants were recorded as having noted a change in organisational or team practice, and a similar number were recorded as identifying a positive impact on staff. Half of respondents noted improvements to good and productive work. We suggest these figures may be an underestimate, given the time lag in capturing improvements in relation to the relatively short research window.

As mentioned above, the best outcomes came from those delegates who attended a masterclass and coaching, and we speculate on the reasons in the section above. Masterclasses on their own don't appear to have the same impact on outcomes, which may not be surprising given

they are 'one-off' nature and of short duration. Managers may find it harder to sustain change without continued contact and support. There was some evidence that masterclasses were foundational for the benefits of other interventions. The quantitative evidence suggests that outcomes were relatively less positive for the small sample of delegates who attended peer learning or coaching without having first done a masterclass. The qualitative evidence suggests two reasons for this: first, that the participants don't always have the knowledge base to benefit fully from the more in depth interventions, and; second, that masterclass topic provided a useful focus and boundary for the later work. It is an interesting finding that in management challenge 2, peer learning doesn't seem to lead to as many positive outcomes as coaching (though there were many positive ones). It is clear in the case study data that the main (though not sole) benefits of peer learning, as with the masterclasses, derive from 'learning about', even though the input source is different (peers rather than the facilitator, in the main). Coaching seems to derive more of its benefits from reflection and sense-making. It may be that these outcomes, together with the support and prompting of the coach, help to stimulate greater impact on practice, though we cannot say definitively.

As the quantitative data show, not all participants go on to make improvement to practice and/or report other positive workplace outcomes, even when it is clear that they have acquired learning from the intervention(s). Our thematic qualitative data and case study data give some important clues as to some managers are able to engender actual workplace change and others are not, and to shed light on how context + mechanism = outcome. We have categorised contextual factors into 1) participant factors 2) role/organisation factors 3) wider social/environmental factors, and examine each in turn.

Participant Factors
The case studies showed that positive outcomes tended to be associated with strong motivation from the participant to learn and change practice. While this may be in some sense 'intrinsic' to the individual, the data suggest that it was often related to other factors, for example, whether they were involved in other development activities, or whether the training fitted into a wider development plan. It was also often related to change in the participant circumstances, for example a new, or growing role. Interest in the particular topic also impacted on motivation to learn and change, either in cases where the topic was new, or the training clearly built on existing knowledge. Conversely, lack of knowledge on a topic could lead to participants being 'overwhelmed' with new material and unable or unwilling to proceed or follow through. Lack of confidence could be an inhibitor to learning, for example when working in sessions with more experienced managers, and an inhibitor to changing practice in circumstances where further support (e.g. discussions with the facilitator) was no longer available. On the other hand, there was evidence that confidence could develop during the training, and this had a positive feedback effect, with early modest success breeding greater appetite for learning and change.

On a practical point, the flexibility of delivery, particularly of coaching, helped enable engagement among busy managers.

Role/Organisational Factors
Again, these contextual factors were very much in evidence. The relevance and timeliness of topic of the training to the organisation was key to support and opportunity to effect change. Not all participants had opportunities to experiment with practice, either because circumstances meant that they didn't arise (e.g. conflict situations) or because organisational factors inhibited this, or simply because they had too few reports for them to implement meaningful change. This may also be because of cultural factors inhibiting change, or lack of devolution of authority to line managers. A number of factors emerged as conducive to managers being able to effect changes quickly. This seemed to be easier in smaller organisations or where there was a culture of more ad hoc decision making. Conversely this made it harder to embed or spread change. Specific organisational changes could be helpful, for example change programmes that could be 'piggy-backed' upon, or the arrival of a new HR manager. Good relations with one's own line manager seemed also to be conducive to successful change. Workload pressures, lack of resources and confounding organisational changes emerged as significant inhibitors.

Wider Social and Environmental Factors
These were perhaps less evident in the data. The pandemic, emergence from it, and the workload, change and resource pressures that it put on managers was the most prominent of these. In some cases this made training topics particularly relevant and the need to change practice particularly pressing. In other cases it created barriers to change. The training environment for line managers seems to have been another important background factor. Some managers seemed insufficiently trained for their roles, or more accurately had received management training earlier in their careers, and this had not been refreshed or updated to meet new challenges and changing roles. The focussed GELL training session appeared to meet both specific and general needs for many managers. The data also speak to a sense of isolation for many line managers, and an untapped need for managers to connect with and learn from other managers, to broaden their perspective and develop their confidence.

8.

Evaluation Of Management Challenge 3: Getting The Best Out Of Your Team

8.1 Evaluation Of Management Challenge 3 (Getting The Best Out Of Your Team)

8.1.1 Introduction

In this section of the report, we present, analyse and make sense of the empirical findings from our research on the impact of our third wave of interventions, Management Challenge (MC) 3. This series of interventions covered one topic, 'How to get the best out of your team', and was delivered across our two learning labs, Greater Manchester (GM), and Adult Social Care (ASC). We start by presenting a thematic analysis of the data on the learning acquired during the interventions, before moving onto to an equivalent analysis of their application in the workplace, including impact on manager practice, employees, teams, and organisational outcomes. We also present a rapid estimation of learning and outcome journeys for all managers who took part in MC3. Finally, we present 12 manager case studies, detailing the learning and practice outcomes for each, and analysing those through the context +mechanism= outcome framework outlined in the methodology section of the report.

8.1.1.1 Getting The Best Out Of Your Team

MC3, addressed in both Learning Labs, 'Getting the best out of your team'. In line with our focus on good employment, the intervention was designed to support line managers to harness employee skills and potential, design effective roles and establish effective career pathways. These are all fundamental premises of good employment. The Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, for example, has a criterion of 'Developing excellent recruitment and progression' and job design is one indicator of job quality in CIPD's Good Work Index (https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/work/trends/goodwork#40068).

Drawing on, amongst other things, Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Model, we explored how to design roles that enable workers to utilize their skills fully and progression routes that develop and deploy skills productively (Bailey et al., 2017). In ASC in particular, role design is crucial to recognizing that, while care work is

technically low-skilled (Rainbird et al., 2011; Gospel, 2015), it is relationally high-skilled (Atkinson and Lucas, 2013). Facilitating progression pathways is also important as these are scarce (Gospel and Lewis, 2011). Here, market-based limits to management discretion must be recognized; commissioning commonly dictates visit lengths and offers low prices. Nevertheless, creative interventions within these constraints were presented. The intervention also focused on skills development, adopting a "high road" approach to people development where employees are considered an asset, not a cost. Skills acquisition at one level then creates a need for progression pathways (Atkinson and Lupton, 2019; Bailey et al., 2017). We incorporated activities on holding career conversations to establish employee expectations/aspirations: how to conduct these (appraisals, career management processes etc); and how to draw up plans with employees and work towards these.

In line with our Theory of Change (Figure 1), improving these management practices should lead to better employee and organisational outcomes (Knight and Parker, 2019). For example, there is convincing evidence of links between job design and improved productivity and our own work demonstrates the key role of skills utilisation in high-performing organisations (Atkinson and Lupton, 2019). Others have identified how job designs that are high in positive job characteristics (e.g. autonomy, social support, job feedback, support, moderate job demands) can lead to positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction, increased well-being, work safety, job performance (Parker, 2014). Conversely, poor job design can lead to de-motivation, stress and burnout (Knight and Parker, 2019), The Theory of Change we are proposing to develop management skills in getting the best out of your team is illustrated in Figure 6.

8.1.1.2 Attendance At Interventions

Interventions were offered by Learning Lab, targeted at both GM and ASC managers in the partner Local Authorities. In the GM Learning Lab, a total of 105 managers attended masterclasses, 11 peer learning and 20 coaching sessions (Table 8.1). In the ASC Learning Lab, 66 managers attended masterclasses, 13 peer learning and 12 coaching sessions (Table 8.2), the lower number reflecting the sectoral pressures in adult social care at the time of intervention delivery.

Figure 6. The GELL Theory of Change for Getting the Best Out Of Your Team: How We Propose That Learning Interventions Will Improve Line Management Practice, to Manage Getting the Best Out of Your Team

Evidence about management development
Using/testing management development theory by deploying 5 pillars of learning: gain new knowledge, reflect, make sense', experiment and learn together.

Evidence about better management practice in Getting the Best Out of Your Team
Using/testing theory about ways of getting the best out of your team

KNOWLEDGE

Context
Variation in managers, their teams, organisations, sectors and wider environments'

Learning intervention
Masterclass, peer learning, coaching in Getting the Best Out of Your Team

Learning Pillars
Gain new knowledge, reflect, make sense, experiment, learn together

Improved management practice in Getting the Best Out of Your Team

Improvements in Good or Productive Work
Considering the subjective experience of the manager or workers, working conditions and work efficiency

Sector or place-based community learning

Iterative feedback loop for learning journeys that involve multiple interventions or independent learning

Improved organisational practice in e.g. offering skills development, designing motivating roles, having career

Positive impact on staff

Better practice in the place/sector

Many managers attended a combination of interventions (Table 8.3). Of 280 participant managers, 131 attended just a masterclass, 15 a masterclass plus peer learning, 21 a masterclass plus coaching, and 5 attended all three interventions. Smaller numbers combined other interventions, with 2 doing just peer learning, 3 combining peer learning and coaching and 4 just attending coaching sessions. We reflect on the effectiveness of these combinations in Section 8.4

Table 8.1. Greater Manchester Good Employment Lab – Learning Interventions for MC3 Getting the Best Out of Your Team

Intervention	Quantity of groups	Sessions per group	Managers Reached			
			Manchester	Tameside	Salford	Total
Masterclass	6	1	26	41	38	105
Peer Learning	3	3	3	4	4	11
Coaching	20	3	6	7	7	20

Table 8.2. Adult Social Care Good Employment Lab – Learning Interventions for MC3 Getting the Best Out of Your Team

Intervention	Quantity of groups	Sessions per group	Managers Reached			
			Manchester	Tameside	Ch/S*	Total
Masterclass	6	1	24	24	18	66
Peer Learning	3	3	4	3	6	13
Coaching	12	3	5	2	5	12

*Chester and West Cheshire and Salford

Table 8.3. Manager Learning Journeys MC3 Getting the Best Out of Your Team

Learning Journeys of Participants	Greater Manchester	Adult Social Care Lab
Total	110	71
Masterclass only	84	47
Masterclass + peer learning	5	10
Masterclass + coaching	12	9
M'class + peer learning + coaching	4	1
Peer learning only*	1	1
Peer learning + coaching only*	1	2
Coaching only*	3	1

*No masterclass.

8.2 Management Challenge 3: Thematic Analysis Of Learning

In this section, we explore "manager learning" within the Theory of Change. Specifically, we explore what new knowledge and learning the managers acquired about getting the best out of your team. We also explain how this knowledge was acquired by making reference to the various management pillars. Overall, the training in MC3 was received positively by most managers, with the detail of this presented in Section 8.3. Most suggested that they had learned a range of skills and techniques that were interesting and supported their practice, as we now outline in detail.

8.2.1 Manager Learning In Masterclasses

In terms of gaining new knowledge, many managers referred to new and useful ideas and concepts that they had "picked up" about how to get the best out of their team. A number made reference to the concept of "flight risk" that was introduced in the masterclass. This refers to employees who the organisation is at risk of losing. Managers reflected on the concept in relation to their own team members and whether any of their teams were a flight risk. Some went on to reflect on

how they could make roles more fulfilling to reduce the risk. One manager commented, for example, that since the masterclass she had begun reflecting on whether the roles in her team were interesting enough and what she might need to do in the future. This was new reflection and prompted the manager to wonder "is that person happy in their work?". Other managers had similar reflections:

Participant 65 (Third sector, GM): **"Some of the topics are very relevant, I wrote down some notes… when I was thinking about a flight risk. I did have someone in my team who was a flight risk, or has been. Ironically, feel like she's been a flight risk for a couple of years."**

Various managers referenced other helpful concepts such as the skills framework and progression pathway. These helped managers to have a better understanding of the skills mix in the team and how to balance its strengths. Similarly, managers recalled the Job Characteristics Model, explaining that it was helpful as a way of thinking about the kinds of work their teams were doing and the tasks that were part of their role. The "pizza boy activity" proved popular with many of the managers commenting that it helped them to think about the importance of offering more varied roles more.

Participant 747 (Public sector, GM): " The example that was used was the pizza type person trying to advertise on the street corner, and they were just stood there with a sign pole and the questions were how could you make that job better for them, make them engaged and get more sales. It was a bit of an eye opener that sort of example, just thinking... it is the same in any job isn't it? The team I have got they have been doing something for two years, is that the right way of doing it, are they just doing it because they have always done it that way, could we make more of it? That sort of flipping things around a little bit, thinking more about the job description rather than the individual."

In addition to gaining knowledge about how to make roles more interesting, managers reflected on the importance of giving their staff autonomy and maximising their sense of self control and mastery. Managers also talked about how gaining knowledge about the importance of getting job descriptions "right" and thinking through the design of the job and making the job appealing. Here, managers had learnt that this could result in increased staff motivation. One manager talked about the need to find ways of energising her team following the pandemic and, in this context, discussion of how to energise and revitalise teams was particularly powerful. Similar to MC1 and MC2, managers appreciated masterclass themes being supported by academic theory and, in MC3, while not all the content was new, they valued the academic theory:

Participant 065 (Third sector, GM): "Some of those things are really quite relevant, not new, but... giving some academic theory behind it rather than just knowing some things in practice. Or you've forgotten the academic bit of it and just a little bit of a different shuffling about of what was important to think about, I suppose".

Managers particularly valued the section on career conversations, which helped them to reflect on their importance, particularly with staff who are looking to progress. Managers reflected that these conversations would be useful in helping members of their team to begin asking themselves "where do I see myself going?". For some managers, career conversations were a completely novel idea and something that they had not contemplated before. Following the masterclass, some had experimented with having career conversations:

Participant 820 (Public sector, GM): "I keep going back to it, it was that career conversation, because that wasn't something I did or had even really sort of contemplated. Yeah, it was just like, 'Ooh yes, that's definitely a gap that I need to fill'."

A number of managers referred to the section or skill mix, gaining new knowledge about the importance of understanding the skills mix in the team and understanding where gaps lay. The importance of recognising the skills and strengths of each team member was also mentioned as an important learning point by several managers. Here, they commented that the masterclass had helped them to begin thinking about their colleagues as individuals with different needs, challenges and strengths. Some had not been applying this to their team and noted that the masterclass gave them ideas on how to value individual differences. Others reflected on the importance of understanding the strengths of their team and how managers could support people's weaknesses. One manager made sense of how continually playing to people's strengths could encourage people to shy away from tasks that they are unfamiliar with:

Participant 831 (Public sector, ASC): "So, it was about trying to see how I shaped that and played to people's strengths. I felt that it did help me with that as well, just sort of stepping back and thinking about people's strengths and weaknesses, and who would be good to do what, and how do I foster that kind of team ownership of those things rather than me just saying, 'You need to do this.'"

The masterclasses provided valuable opportunities to share experiences and learn together. Similar to MC1 and MC2, managers particularly valued hearing that other managers were experiencing similar challenges in getting the best out of their teams. Through the breakout rooms, in particular, they learned about the challenges that other managers were experiencing. Some newer managers found this especially helpful, finding the break-out rooms to be a reassuring space for sharing challenges. Many of the managers reported an increase in confidence following the masterclass, gaining reassurance that they were "on the right lines" with their management style:

Participant 266 (Public sector, ASC): "There were some changes that I've made, but I think there's a lot of strengthening on what I was already doing as well. [It] gave me that confidence to go, 'No, I was right actually, I'm on the right lines and I'm going to continue to do that, but I'm going to push it further'."

Not all managers felt they had acquired new knowledge. One manager, for example, said that she had joined the masterclass to find specific solutions to some issues she was experiencing but did not find them. Nonetheless, she enjoyed it and found it useful to listen to how others were approaching things. Another did not feel that the title of the masterclass reflected its content and that the recruitment material was not relevant. A third manager felt that, whilst she had not been exposed to new content, it was valuable to be reminded of certain concepts and ideas. Other managers recognised that whilst the content might not be immediately relevant, it could be at a later date.

8.2.2 Manager Learning In Peer Learning

Managers largely found peer learning to be a positive experience in learning and developing practice. Specifically, they commented that the overall experience was beneficial, providing them with a space to reflect, take time out, listen to others and acknowledge the complexities of managing people. There was much discussion of how the peer learning resulted in managers sharing experiences and picking up tips on how to manage. Managers found the peer learning to be "cathartic and like a weight had lifted" (Participant 645, Third sector, GM).

A number gained new knowledge about themselves as managers, with some gaining reassurance and validation from peers that the way they were handling challenges was "good enough". For example, one manager explained that she now understood that, given her short time being a senior leader, she had handled a particular situation well. Here, peers provided validation for her actions. This manager also learnt that it was acceptable in certain situations to seek support from her own manager. Another had come to realise from talking to the peers that she was better at handling things than she thought:

Participant 660 (Public sector, GM): **"I probably was quite a reflective practitioner and, sometimes, I didn't give myself credit or maybe I came out of it feeling I was a bit stronger than I thought I was."**

Many managers used the sessions to reflect on their management style. One manager realised that whilst she thought she was a coaching manager, this wasn't the case, as she often gave her team answers rather than encouraging them to find things for themselves. Another reflected that, whilst he is quite an emotional person outside work, in work he tended to be more conservative. He was curious whether this meant he was overlooking the emotional impact on his team in certain circumstances. The opportunity to reflect led him to decide that he wanted to consider emotional impacts more fully. Others reflected that their own confidence levels as a manager were part of their challenges and came to understand that this was something to be addressed.

Many managers also gained valuable knowledge and insights into how to manage "tricky issues". They felt they received useful advice, guidance and tips on what they could and, for some, understanding that the challenge was a "complex one" proved helpful in itself:

Participant 660 (Public sector, GM): "I got quite a lot of advice on things that I could do. Some of the things I'd already done... but I did take quite a lot away from it. I'd spoken to HR... but... it gave me a sort of reassurance that that situation was really complex. When I was talking about it, [participants] were saying, 'Oh, that's a really complex situation, really difficult'. And as a manager it was one of the most challenging things that I've done really."

For some managers, talking to peers gave them the confidence to go on to address tricky and complex challenges in practice. One manager explained, for example, that the peer learning gave her the confidence to have conversations with workers that might have otherwise been avoided and "tackle certain things head on." Managers talked about learning how as a manager you could adapt your style to more effectively work with challenging people as well as how to set appropriate boundaries with such characters.

Managers also acquired new knowledge about how to improve day-to-day working relationships between staff members, how to help their team to understand each other more, how to have more effective team check-ins, as well as how to be more visible to their team. Some managers reached the conclusion that they needed to hold more career conversations with their team in order for members of their team to feel career development is a shared goal. A number of managers also made reference to models and tools that they had been introduced to in peer learning such as horizon scanning, PESTLE, GROW and a "Pizza boy" activity that explored how to make inherently dull jobs more interesting. It is likely that, for some, this consolidated learning from the masterclass. Managers explained that these were tools that that they wanted to try in order to best support the team to ready themselves for upcoming challenges. It is not clear whether these models were new to the managers, or whether the peer learning sessions had simply alerted them to the value of employing them in relation to their challenges and dilemmas.

Some managers commented that "working with others" to make sense of their challenges in peer learning helped them to reach realisations about how they had been managing the team. One noted, for example, that she realised that she had not had full team meetings for some time and from the conversations with the peers she began to wonder if this would be helpful. Sharing their challenges with others also helped managers to understand more fully what was underlying persistent issues. For example, one manager realised that some of the managers in his team lacked interpersonal skills and had become managers on the basis of their technical skills rather than their people management ability. When thinking about such issues, some newer, less experienced managers particularly valued the perspectives of more experienced managers:

Participant 804 (Third sector, GM): "I got some really good advice... because everybody else [had been] a manager for a while at least.... It was really useful, to make sure that staff are on track.... We designed role profiles with them, bringing any input from the workshop, but also what they'd been sent in the peer learning."

In terms of mechanisms, managers talked at length about the value of working with others and discussing their challenges openly with other managers. Several points were raised in this regard. Firstly, managers valued being able to discuss things with people who had similar problems and experiences. Akin to the break-out rooms in the masterclass, this helped them to feel "less alone" with their challenges, as well as alerting them to new ways of tackling certain issues. The value of working with people outside their own organisation was also highlighted, a finding also reported on in MC1 and MC2. Working with people outside of one's own organisation brings fresh perspectives and alternative ways of thinking about things. Managers also

valued the opportunity to explain their issue and listen to others share their thoughts. This helped managers to step back from their situation and listen to what others felt might be the source of the challenge. Several managers also mentioned that the facilitator was an essential aspect of what "worked" for them in the peer learning, explaining that they often offered helpful suggestions as well as asking thought provoking questions. Finally, it seems that having space between peer learning sessions (approx. two weeks) and having multiple sessions over a period of time allowed managers to reflect between sessions and take actions based on these reflections.

During peer learning, managers committed to experiment with new practices such as:

- Creating a visual representation of the current state of play

- Resuming a multi-disciplinary teams approach

- Using a "BMW" [bitch, moan, whinge] exercise with the team to identify issues, making sure that there is a future-focus so that issues are addressed and not just aired

- Setting up meetings with the new IT manager to talk about service needs

- Surveying the team to understand their concerns and challenges, as well as providing a baseline from which to track progress

- Conducting skills audits to help team members to understand their skills.

8.2.3 Manager Learning In Coaching

Managers largely found coaching to be a positive experience, noting that it was "cathartic" and an opportunity to "get things off their chest and think of ways to move forward." When asked what new knowledge they had acquired, managers referenced a number of models and concepts, for example, the GROW model for coaching, which helped managers to ask questions in a certain way in order to support employees to achieve their potential. Managers also valued some of the practical resources such as a Ted Talk on "how to tame your advice monster" and how to encourage people out of their comfort zones.

Similar to the peer learning, many managers found that the coaching helped them to understand their own management style better and reflected on their own approach and how they handled certain issues with their team and colleagues. One manager, for example, learnt that her approach could sometimes be quite confrontational even though she was also a supportive person. She came to realise through the coaching that this might have made her team confused about who she was on a given day. Others were reminded of the importance of listening, realising that they often did not do this. Some reflected that they perhaps needed a more structured approach at times and to be more assertive,

setting deadlines and giving the team direction. Managers also talked about how the coaching helped them to think about how they could adapt their style of communication to deal with people, as well as how to draw upon their own strengths:

> Participant 770 (Third sector, GM): "The sessions helped me to understand my own management style better. I had to stop and think about my own approach to various issues affecting my work with colleagues such as conflict management, assertiveness, negotiation, giving feedback. Reading about this and discussing it with my mentor helped me to understand the issues better and helped me to see where the responsibilities lay. I have a better understanding of skills gaps in the team and I am going to address this with the team to strengthen our organisation's resilience."

> Participant 673 (Third sector, ASC): "The skill of adapting communication with the people you're working with has been something valuable I've improved on. Although I was aware of this previously, through the coaching I've been able to hone into how I can achieve this by tapping into the strengths and qualities I already possess such as empathy and coaching."

In reflecting on their own management style, managers talked about how the coaching sessions helped them to consider how they were managing certain situations. Through this process, they picked up new tips for handling situations better. One manager, for example, learnt about checking in with a staff member after meetings so she could get a better sense of what had been understood. Managers valued the opportunity to talk openly with the coach about particular challenges and think about alternative ways of addressing certain problems. Here, participants valued the support and guidance received, with one manager noting that she had little support and guidance from within her organisation and this had led to her feeling overwhelmed. Some managers reached the conclusion that they only had so much influence on what an employee does. They argued that they could only create the environment and culture for people to develop and that, ultimately, it was the employee's decision to be proactive in relation to development. Equally, managers learnt not to always give answers and advice so freely, enabling employees to learn from experience:

> Participant 728 (Public sector, GM): "The challenge for me is that I can't control what a person thinks or would do, so it's [for] them to decide that. The only thing I could do is give them all the tips and tools and things like that, but at the end of the day, it's [for] them to decide… which is hard for me because I want her to progress, but in the end it's her decision."

Another manager made a similar point, concluding that she did not have to do so much for her team:

> Participant 692 (Public sector, GM): "One of the main skills is putting the onus on team members to come up with suggestions, rather than feeling that I have to

come up with the solutions all the time."

Many managers talked about gaining new knowledge in relation to how to manage their team. They were reminded of the importance of having thoughtful conversations, using open questions and the importance of active listening. Others had learnt about the importance of encouraging staff to think creatively about their role and how to vary and enhance it. Many managers had come to recognise that a mix of things can help people to feel more engaged. During coaching, managers committed to experimenting with a range of new practices such as:

- Setting up development days and planning how things might be different with team leaders

- Drafting a paper on a business case for more resource in team

- Having conversations with line manager about how manager they are preventing things moving forward

- Nipping issues in the bud and calling out inappropriate behaviour when it is happening

- Providing team members with clear examples

- Encouraging staff to think creatively about their role and what they want to achieve over the next year

- Asking staff to consider how they can keep a healthy balance in work by varying/ enhancing their role.

8.2.4 Summary Of Learning From Interventions

In this section, we summarise the learning that emerged from each of the different interventions, with reference to the "learning pillars" that underpinned their design.

Masterclasses
Masterclasses were primarily a vehicle for participants to gain knowledge and were effective in that. Numerous managers referred to frameworks and models that they had picked up in the masterclasses, and, particularly to exercises and techniques that informed their thinking and offered possibilities for application in the workplace. However, it was also clear that masterclasses generated other forms of learning. The breakout rooms offered opportunities to learn together with other managers. Masterclasses also provided participants, through the exercises and breakout discussions, with the opportunity to reflect on their practice, to make sense of their context and experience, and plan for change.

Peer Learning
The peer learning sessions had most impact in offering participants the opportunity to learn together. In particular, they afforded intensive opportunities to learn from the experiences of managers in other organisations and sectors. Sharing challenges and hearing others' observations on their situation also offered opportunities to reflect on problems, context and practices. However, it is also true that the peer learning, like the masterclasses, offered opportunities to gain knowledge. Participants learned from

their peers (and the facilitator) about effective ways to tackle problems.

Coaching
The coaching sessions offered in-depth opportunities for participants to work through problems and develop solutions. They were primarily effective in helping participants to reflect and make sense. Participants commented on the way in which the challenges and prompts of the coach encouraged them to examine and re-evaluate their practice, and also to develop and explore new solutions and approaches. Coaching was also helpful to participants in gaining new knowledge, although this wasn't their primary purpose. Rather, coaching offered an opportunity for managers to absorb and contextualise the expertise of the coach. As we'll see when we examine outcomes, some managers themselves adopted coaching styles, modelling their approach on what they had experienced in the coaching sessions.

8.3 Management Challenge 3: Learning And Outcome Journeys And Thematic Analysis Of Outcomes

Although our research is primarily qualitative and our key aim is to identify context, mechanism and outcome relations (rather than quantitative patterns), we know that commissioners of line management training are interested in the incidence of outcomes for our learners. Consequently, we present an estimation of line manager learning and outcome journeys that we produced via some rapid analysis (Table 8.4). **Two factors mean we report this as an estimation. First, our dataset is extensive and, as this task was undertaken after our thematic data coding was complete, it was not possible to re-visit every item of data to make a judgement about the journey of each manager. We also did not have capacity to cross-validate judgements about whether outcomes have been achieved. Second, we can only report on outcomes that we observed and it is likely that there are more unobserved outcomes, perhaps particularly related to longer-term goals such as organisational change and good and productive work. For these two reasons, the figures that follow are likely to be an under-estimation of outcomes.**

Data reflects the learning and outcome journeys of 107 managers who participated in MC3. Of this, 59 completed only a masterclass, another 35 combined a masterclass with either coaching (20) or peer learning (15), 5 undertook all 3 interventions and 8 attended peer learning and coaching but with no masterclass. We discuss in more detail the patterns of learning and outcomes across the MC3 interventions, although the relatively small number of managers means that interpretations of patterns should be treated with caution.

Gaining Knowledge and Committing to Experiment:
All but one manager indicated that they had gained knowledge with 85% also committing to experiment. Commitment to experiment was lowest in the masterclasses than in other interventions (73%), which probably reflects their less intensive nature. In all other (combinations of) interventions, a commitment to experiment was given by all managers.

Outcomes:
Three quarters of managers reported experimenting with a change in practice, with a similar number reporting improvements to their practice. While these figures are encouraging, proportions then drop as we proceed across the ToC categories. Only around 20% indicated improvements to organisation practice had resulted, just under a third suggested there had been positive impacts on staff and 28% reported improvements to good and productive work. Despite diminishing proportions, as we noted above, these are likely under-reporting and are nevertheless suggestive of change resulting from the interventions at a number of levels.

Masterclass only:
Managers who attended only a masterclass were less likely to indicate positive outcomes than those who had also attended other interventions (at least where there were sufficient numbers of participants to make comparisons meaningful). Nevertheless, over 60% reported having experimented and made improvements to practice. Improvements to organisational practice, impacts on staff and improvements to good and decent work broadly reflected the overall intervention proportions of change reported above (21%, 31% and 28% respectively). These figures are generally higher where the masterclass was combined with another intervention, except where it is combined with peer learning/coaching. As there are only 5 managers in this category, this is not a meaningful comparison. The later categories of the ToC are also less positive when masterclasses are combined with peer learning, despite the earlier stages being more positive (see below). Generally, it appears that attending a masterclass often has a significant impact but not as much as when it is combined with coaching (see again below).

Masterclass and peer learning (no coaching):
Managers who supplemented a masterclass with peer learning (but went no further) had very similar results to those who had attended only a masterclass in the early stages of the ToC, but less positive outcomes in its later stages. Reasons for this, other than relatively small numbers in the group (15), are unclear.

Masterclass and coaching (no peer learning):
Outcomes for these managers were stronger than for all other interventions/combinations of interventions. Nearly all experimented with changes to practice, and with 30-40% reporting improvements in the other outcome categories. This appears to be the most effective combination of interventions.

Table 8.4. Rapid Estimation of Learning and Outcome Journeys

Observed Outcomes	Learning Interventions Undertaken by Managers*					
	MC only	MC+PL	MC+C	MC+PL+C	PL+C (no MC)	Total
Number of managers on which we have data	59	15	20	5	8	107
Gained knowledge	59 (100%)	14	20	5	8	106
Commit to experiment	43 (73%)	15 (100%)	20 (100%)	5 (100%)	8 (100%)	91 (85%)
Experiment	36 (61%)	12 (80%)	19 (95%)	5 (100%)	7 (88%)	79 (74%)
Improved manager practice	37 (63%)	12 (80%)	19 (95%)	5 (100%)	7 (100%)	80 (75%)
Improved organisational practice	12 (20%)	3 (20%)	6 (30%)	0 (0%)	2 (25%)	23 (21%)
Positive impact on staff	18 (31%)	3 (20%)	8 (40%)	1 (20%)	3 (38%)	33 (31%)
Improvement to good and productive work	15 (25%)	3 (20%)	8 (40%)	1 (20%)	3 (38%)	30 (28%)

*MC = masterclass, PL = Peer Learning, C= Coaching

Masterclass, peer learning and coaching:
Small numbers (5) here require caution, though all reported experimenting and improvements to management practice. None reported improvements to organisation practice and a fifth reported improvements to both staff and to good and productive work. Unlike MC2, this was not the most effective combination of interventions, but again there is a small numbers effect.

Peer learning and coaching (no masterclass):
The majority of managers in this group (8) reported experimenting and all reported improvements to practice. A quarter reported improved organisational performance and nearly 40% improvements to both staff outcomes and good and productive work. While reasonably effective as an intervention, small numbers in the group require caution in data interpretation.

Summary:
All interventions and combinations of interventions led to positive outcomes, in all cases for at least a fifth of managers, and in many cases for around a third. Masterclasses (on their own) were effective, and appeared to be foundational for coaching. Masterclasses and coaching was the most effective combination of interventions.

8.3.1 Outcomes From Getting The 'Best Out Of Your Team' Interventions

In this section, we use our Theory of Change to explore outcomes from the "Getting the best out of your team" interventions. These interventions were designed to encourage managers to experiment with relevant techniques and we then explored any changes to management practice, together with any improved outcomes for organisational practice, staff and good and productive work. As we evidenced earlier, there was good attendance at the masterclass, peer learning and coaching sessions and managers were positive about what they had learned.

8.3.1.1 Experimenting With Management Practice

In the interventions, managers were asked to commit to "trying out" new management practices and here we consider resulting changes to practice. Not all managers reported experimenting, but

the rapid estimation data above indicated that a majority of managers (75%) did, and we explore in detail here.

One of the main forms of experimentation was around role design that emphasised creating more variety and interest in people's job roles:

Participant 897 (Public Sector, GM): "Well, I guess keeping in mind the stuff about making things a bit more varied and interesting. That was definitely on my mind.… I did put that in place, which hopefully has given [staff member] a bit more variety… I gave her a bit more freedom to do the whole [inductions] thing really. That has worked well because she thinks that's her baby now and that is good."

Participant 804 (Third Sector, GM): "I now involve team members in role design and all have new job descriptions suited to interests, strengths and organisational direction. We now have new 1-1 and team meeting structures to enable participation and have career conversations as part of CPD talks. I now better understand how to individually support team members, especially when they need additional help or direction, and feel more comfortable adapting my own style in these situations."

Other forms of experimentation focused on offering development and career progression support:

Participant 747 (Public Sector, GM): "I have committed to adapting how I approach development conversations so the style changes from me simply offering answers and guidance to one where I try and explore with the individual what they want and need from development. I have also started to implement a peer to peer coaching and mentoring system…. to allow the individuals to be more open and transparent on where their development is needed."

Participant 339 (Third Sector, ASC): "It's about having those conversations more with staff around the importance of… their own progression, that I've not had in the past. I suppose my one-to-ones have been very much about 'how are you getting on and that specific workstream', not about them themselves and looking at their skills. Which in a way, I need to do that. And that might well come in, funnily enough, next week is my start of all my PDR conversations."

Participant 728 (Public Sector, GM): "I committed to use open questions, let the person decide what he/she wants to do and to use GROW questions and use organisation facilities on career management like the virtual career centre etc."

Others had experimented with exploring individual learning styles with staff and tailoring development to these (Participant 614, Voluntary Sector, ASC) and using "BMW" in team meetings (Participant 639, Voluntary Sector, ASC). Another common outcome was for managers to

experiment with a coaching style in their interactions with their employees, either directly as result of the content of the training sessions, or through modelling their behaviour on their own GELL coach. There were numerous examples of this:

Participant 894 (Private Sector, GM): "Creating some coaching questions to integrate into meetings. Managers were far more engaged and came up with ideas and solutions that I wouldn't have considered. They also seemed to be more committed to the project I was promoting because they felt involved."

Some managers reported experimenting with both changes to job roles and a coaching approach,

Participant 749 (Public Sector, GM): "Readjusting jobs and their role profiles to provide better and more challenging roles to keep people motivated, challenged and engaged rather than solely looking at the need of an organisation in a clinical capacity. I also discussed using my wider network to support a colleague with mentoring and coaching after not finding an avenue internally."

While most reflected that their experimentation was positive, some did note the need for caution around this. One, for example, said:

Participant 614 (Voluntary Sector, ASC): "When I very first started, I came in gung-ho with loads of ideas and I started implementing changes. And then there was feedback that it was all going too fast…. And I realised I had done that; I was just being too exuberant. So, I slowed right up and then I started to listen…."

Experimentation did then need to be balanced with employee appetite or capacity for dealing with change.

8.3.1.2 Improved Manager Practice

There were numerous examples of managers making concrete changes to their practice following experimentation, with 75% reporting this in the rapid estimation data and we present examples here. Although we do note that not all did implement change:

Participant 872 "(Public Sector, GM): "I wouldn't say I've changed anything. Sorry, that's probably not what you want to hear."

Changes that were made tended to be of two kinds: changes to the manager's style or approach, or changes to particular aspects of practice. Starting with the former, some managers referred to having become more approachable or more confident:

Participant 859 (Public Sector, GM): "I think it's just making sure that I conduct myself in a less managerial

role and more of a team leader type role. Making sure that the staff know that. But mostly I think it's just making sure that we're around at the times that we need to be around as well."

Participant 673 (Third sector, ASC) "I think it has just given me a little bit more confidence in the role. I think I'm definitely, there's absolutely loads of stuff for me to learn, but I think what it's helped me do is just be a bit more comfortable with where I'm at rather than constantly feeling like I'm somehow behind or I'm doing something wrong. I think it's really helped in that way."

Participant 606 (Public sector, ASC) also wanted to introduce peer learning, although she was experiencing some resistance from what she referred to as "autocratic management". Another learned from the intervention and implemented a mentoring scheme:

Participant 747 (Public Sector, GM): "The mentoring thing is probably the biggest change that has been implemented and been running for a couple of months now as a trial with a couple of people. I did a little PowerPoint slide on coaching and what that is from what I learnt from the Grow model. I said 'This is a safe space informal conversation between the two of you'… I don't ask any questions as a result of the conversations. They jointly agree if anything needs to come to me, so it is kind of open, and nothing comes out of that if it doesn't need to."

For some, the change to their management approach appeared to be quite far reaching:

Participant 747 (Public Sector, GM): "I am probably spending more time thinking about management as a discipline rather than just something that happens. Reading a little bit more on the internet, books, textbooks, just looking at other opportunities for courses and what not. I think to me it has formalised it as a discipline really, that it has to be thought about and you have to invest time in management, it's not something that just happens naturally, to get the best from people."

Others reported changes more specific to the management challenge, covering practices around developing skills, job re-design and career progression, and building trust and autonomy. Taking first skills, managers made frequent reference to intervention concepts such as skills frameworks, strengths-based approaches and the zone of peak performance. Emphasis on skills supported both in current role, where managers reported that employees were taking more responsibility and needing less supervisory support, and thinking about future roles:

Participant 614 (Third sector, ASC) "I've observed where her strengths are.… We do a lot of work in our one-to ones about what we both feel her strengths are. And as a result, she's looking out, we think there's a role coming up in a particular department that might really suit her and she seems keen."

Managers made clear links between better understanding of skills and efforts to redesign jobs, the manager below again referencing intervention tools and efforts that supported with this:

Participant 674 (Public Sector, GM): "We've looked at a lot of the questions that we looked at during the masterclass. Looked at those skills that people have, where they want to be, what they need to do. And that strengths-based approach really…. [An away day] was designed for staff to look at, mainly at what do you want to keep, what do you want to get rid of and what do you want to start doing within the team. I used some of the theories, some of the questions, like the Hackman & Oldham's job characteristics model, that sort of… those tasks and skill varieties and things like that in there. We looked at the skill mix within the team, those hard skills/soft skills."

Hackman and Oldham was frequently mentioned, as was the "pizza boy" exercise. Participant 570 (Public sector, ASC), for example, having used it with his team to explore how to make their jobs more interesting. Participant 893 (Public Sector, GM) and Participant 862 (Third Sector, GM) placed similar emphasis on role redesign, encouraging team reflection to develop more interesting roles. While largely positive, one manager did sound a cautionary note in that she had developed a rotating team lead role to offer additional responsibilities but that:

Participant 374 (Third sector, ASC): "[It] did go down like a lead balloon! I'm not going to lie (laughs). I think, on reflection, it's how I presented that role. People thought that I was giving them more responsibility and that they needed to be paid more blah-blah."

The manager had had one-to-ones with the team to address the situation, but noted a potential pitfall of role re-design.

A number of managers changed their practice around career progression, often making direct links between the interventions and changes implemented:

Participant 868 (Public Sector, GM): "There's a part on career conversations and that was something because the person that I line manage is definitely very motivated and wants to go far within the organisation. So, I made a point of having a meeting and saying, "Where do you want to be and how can we get you there?" I think it was pretty close to after the masterclass, because I sort of came out of it and I was like, "That's something I definitely want to do." So, I think it was whenever we had our next catch up, I was like, "Yeah, we'll discuss this."

Participant 697 (Third Sector, ASC): "I was one of those people, the appraisals, you know, negative-negative… I'm coming in with this negative, oh gosh, it's appraisal time, again, what a pain. Then that's going to be communicated to the people doing the appraisals, they're going to feel negative. So, it's about trying to have that big shift and say 'Okay, let's look at this as

a time for reflection and sort of celebration of all the things that you've done over the last year and look at what you might want to be doing the next 12 months, how you see your role developing. What would enhance it for you if you like'. Changing that whole attitude, flipping it over completely really."

As part of work around skills development and role redesign, managers also explained how they had adapted their practice to step back and allow their staff more autonomy:

Participant 804 (Third Sector, GM): "Just on some of the inputs, especially around job design and independence and trust… Whereas before, it was probably a bit more centrally managed…. So I think we've definitely pushed it, and I've encouraged the other [managers]… just trusting more because [employees] can do it. And I'm recognising that failure is an option."

Participant 868 (Public Sector, GM): "Then also things like autonomy in trying to make sure that I'm… trying to teach the process but not like suffocating. Really making a big effort to just give [employee] that option, to learn independently and have that sense of satisfaction if he works it out on his own, but then still supporting him, so it's not like he's overwhelmed. Yeah, I think I've been trying really hard to give him that autonomy over his work."

In developing understanding, the interventions also caused some managers to reflect on their own positions. Facilitator notes, for example, suggest that at least two managers (Participants 606 and 848) were considering their roles in their current organisations as new understanding led them to question the organisation's values. Participant 606 (Public sector, ASC) in particular talked about having learned a lot about herself in this process, and not wanting to be part of a management team that treats staff poorly. Interventions thus had the potential to create change on a number of levels.

8.3.1.3 Improved Organisational Practice

Here, we consider how interventions created change beyond an individual manager's practice, generating change in the wider team or organisation. Some of this change involved Manager sharing their learning from the programme within or beyond their own team, although the rapid estimation data suggests that this happened in only around a fifth of cases:

Participant 676 (Third sector, ASC): "{We reviewed resilience, emotional intelligence, appreciative enquiry theory and asked how we could get the 'best out of their teams'. I asked [other] team leads to introduce this in their meetings and one to one sessions. I asked them to ask 'why they come to work for the service?

Why do they do the job they do? How could we enhance opportunities for growth?"

Participant 706 (Third Sector, GM): "So the other managers have been able to refer to the bank of tools, even if it's just to do the three-month probation…. Then it was positive doing a couple of the tools with my team like the SWOT analysis and it meant that we were able to reassess and change a couple of our practices and the ways that we work as a team. I think that's been really positive."

Other managers reported significant changes instigated to ways in which their teams were managed. One relates to an organisation-wide mentoring programme (Participant 862, Third Sector, GM), and another to the way one -to- one and team meetings were framed and focussed:

Participant 804 (Third Sector, GM): "Our one-to-ones and team meetings are now far more structured. Which is, again, the feedback from peer learning, because they were very much like the one-to-one would be a general chat… Team meetings are very similar; before it was a case of we're going to sit in a room for an hour and chat, but it could go off on any kind of tangent. Whereas now, we've kind of got it broken up into sections of we do a reflective exercise to look at how we feel the last month has gone. And then there's a section specifically for challenges, either personal or team, and how we can work together to address them. So, yeah, there's definitely more structure there that has been really useful. Because I think otherwise before we could have quite easily spent an hour just talking about what we'd seen on TV for a bit."

Participant 750 (Third sector, ASC): "What came out of it was in our team meetings, was we're going to have 10 minutes where we [all managers], we call it 'care to share.' Which is something that's happened in the next four weeks that you've noticed one of your team members has done that a quality, a skill and even if that's not there, a practice…. you saw them handle and deal really well."

Some managers told us how new practices within a team had "spilled over" into wider practice change in the wider organisation,

Participant 893 (Public Sector, GM): "Going back to this point where we removed a task, it was a case of 'Yes, it helps the team, helps with capacity, but there's other skills across the organisation that can pick up the work'. It doesn't necessarily need to sit with the team. We had the opportunity to think outside of the team as to a bit of a skills mix."

Participant 804 (Third Sector, GM): "We trialled the team meeting structure in our sub-group for our little team….. So, we brought them in for our team, and now they're used across the board. So, I think it's been one of those where we've tried it, maybe tweaked and changed things so that it works. And then others have kind of seen that it has worked, or I've fed back that

these are the outcomes of it, and then others have taken them on board too."

However, as this manager explains, when asked directly, it is not always possible, or it can take time, for good practice to spread beyond the immediate team:

Participant 692 (Public Sector): "In terms of appraisals, I don't feel that it has had a wider organisational impact. Maybe when we've been doing it for a year, because that's how long our appraisal process runs. If we're getting really good feedback from this way of doing it, then perhaps that could be shared wider across the organisation. But at the moment it's definitely just within our team."

8.3.1.4 Positive Impact On Staff

We now turn to the benefits to staff of changes in practice made following managers' participation in the interventions. These were reported by nearly a third of managers and had a variety of aspects, from increased confidence, to more varied roles and better use of skills, through to better career prospects.

We start by reporting some examples of changes to employee outlook and experience, before moving on to some of the more tangible impacts. A typical example was how changes to team meetings, and mechanisms for involving and empowering staff had led to greater confidence, both among managers and employees:

Participant 804 (Third Sector, GM): "I'd say the main [benefit] is confidence, especially in terms of trusting people more. There have been a few members of my team, ……they've had those opportunities to run sessions… six months into their first full-time job. And yet they're trusted to run training sessions, and put the programme plans together…They are doing evaluations after. .. It's giving them more confidence to kind of say 'We can do it', because a few months ago they'd have had no idea at all where to start."

Participant 266 (Public Sector, ASC): "Obviously the person who has gone on to do the….. apprenticeship, her confidence has just gone through the roof. She was saying, "I can't do it, I can't do it, I won't be able to do it, I won't get through the interview." Then I said, "Just put in, just put in for the interview." So, she put in for the interview, we had a few chats before it. she went for the interview, she did really well. She got the place and she was just on cloud nine. So, it's given her that boost of like, "Flipping heck, I could actually do this".

There were also improvements in terms of stress levels or attitudes:

Participant 893 (Public Sector, GM): "In terms of motivation, it's probably helped as well. I've seen a

distinct change from when the point of team members have been less stressed and a bit more relaxed in our bi-weekly team meetings, less tension I would say."

Participant 651 (Public Sector, GM): "Everybody is always smiling and pleased and it really does pick up the room a little bit. We did it yesterday, so we had our face-to-face monthly manager meeting yesterday… And I shared something about a member of staff that had come to my attention. It sounds a bit cheesy, but team like to clap and like to give hugs and say, "Well done." They're very… they're quite an emotional team and they get something from that connection, that positive connection."

In similar vein, another manager reported how a staff-led system of sharing in successes had led to an improvement in team morale and engagement:

Participant 651 (Public Sector, GM): "How that works in practice is when anybody has got anything that's kind of… that's been successful or they've had praise, either sent via compliments or comments or anything really, that we see as something that we should be praising and celebrating as a team, that gets sent to this member of staff who collates them so that every week, we have it on the agenda. She leads on that part of the section, making sure that there is time and space given to it. So yeah, it's certainly been really well received. I was quite surprised myself as to how eager the team were to do it actually and to give the time to it. ….. What I would say is that it certainly felt like there was a bit more of a buzz."
One of the core topics of this intervention was to encourage managers to think about ways of providing more variety for in roles. There were some reports of this having benefits for staff:

Participant 804 (Third Sector, GM): "Staff generally provide positive feedback about their roles and the opportunities they have to develop and try new tasks. Some hindrances have been encouraging others in the organisation to try the same with others, but overall it has been a successful opportunity to share learning and review staff happiness and wellbeing."

Participant 897 (Public Sector, GM): "I did put that in place with the lady that is working for me, which hopefully has given her a bit more variety. And the work that she was doing for inductions as well, I gave her a bit more freedom to do the whole thing really. That has worked well because she thinks that's her baby now and that is good."

The interventions also encouraged managers to support skills development and careers progression amongst their staff. Again, there were some reports of positive outcomes for employees in skills development:

Participant 749 (Public Sector, GM): "The mentoring worked out well, I was able to assist the individual in gaining a mentor externally and becoming a paid member of an association relevant to her role."
Participant 674 (Public Sector, GM): "Somebody else

wants to be a team leader, so we've given her some line management skills and some line management of other staff and looking at what courses she might want to do in the future."

Outcomes for career progression were also frequently referred and often powerful:

Participant 266 (Public Sector, ASC): "We were talking about progression for workers, which has worked out really great because some of my workers have left because we've encouraged them (laughs) to progress, so they've kind of realised… well, built their confidence really and gone on to other roles that maybe pay a bit more money and have a little bit more to them. So we've gone… we were looking at not only progressing up the ladder, but sideways. It's about opportunities as well, which I hadn't really thought about it like that when I was previously having conversations in supervisions or appraisals about where do you want to take your career"

Participant 673 (Third sector, ASC): "Probably the one biggest impact is the member of staff who was for at least six months applying for other jobs on a monthly basis. But I think that recognition of the fact that she wasn't happy, that she wasn't feeling fulfilled, that she felt like she was banging her head against a brick wall with the work she was doing. And making a conscious decision to move her into a different department to give her opportunities to start again, I think that's been really positive. And she seems really excited and really keen, and she's the one that's going to be mentoring the new member of staff. So I think it's given her a bit of a new lease of life."

8.3.1.5 Improvements To Good And Productive Work

We now turn impact from the interventions on good and productive work in the teams and organisations where managers worked. This is the "end point" of the Theory of Change and the rapid estimation data suggests positive outcomes in 28% of cases. We recognise that inevitable limitations in access to participants plus collecting data relatively quickly post-interventions mean our findings here are somewhat sparse. We do, nevertheless, outline what is possible based on the experience of a relatively small number of participants.

There were a range of improvements discussed. Taking first retention:

Participant 651 (Public Sector, GM): "[In the intervention] "they talked about who your flight risk was…. it kind of reframed my thinking. And made me think about, okay, it doesn't all have to be financial, there's other stuff that we can do to help keep people wanting to stay working for us. So we had a really good conversation based off that really and really

thought together about what it was, what was she struggling with really… And since then, an opportunity has just come up for her to kind of go up into the next senior practitioner in my team and so she has… we thought about what would get her ready for that and she has applied for it. So yeah, from a keeping her {perspective}, she's a fabulous member of staff."

Changes focused on improving individual's skills enabled improvements in the functioning of the wider team, development of greater autonomy for staff reduced management workload and improved ownership:

Participant 645 (Public Sector, GM): "So what this has enabled me to do is reflect back to her my experiences to enable her to see where she is really good, and how she can use where she has some really amazing skills to enable the {team} to get them {to move} forward… I think having a very experienced senior practitioner who… is being enabled and given permission to step back from doing some of that and get her caseload reduced to enable her to do the mentoring, which rebalances that tier of the team. I think what it's done, it's enabled the ream to be more rounded."

Participant 967 (Public Sector, GM): "I'm starting to {see the impact}. Because they don't come through as much as they did because I always think if people are ringing you every five minutes, you have to worry about them, sometimes. So, that's how I'm trying to monitor by saying, "Well, you do that and tell me when you've finished it and come back and tell me what your findings are." And that seems to be working. And like one person I don't need to manage at all, now, she's off and just doing her own thing but within kind of her job description."

Participant 729 (Public Sector, ASC): "But, for me, going into that meeting now with this staff, I've said to him, "This is what I hear. This is what I think you've got the potential to do. This is what I think that you should be doing. What do you think?" And we've had that discussion, we've had that conversation. For me ownership is the biggest thing about anything for me. Because once you've got that bit where people own a process, own the decisions, own everything, they're more likely to do it because it pleases them, than it pleases you. And when they're involved, you're likely to get better outcomes from it. So having that conversation with him, and this is three, four weeks into that conversation, he's more productive in his role."

Other managers also referred to improved productivity, alongside improved opportunities to develop work and gain new business:

Coaching notes on Participant 614 (Third sector, ASC) Since the last [coaching] session. 614 saw a different feel in her team – team members were more productive, and she herself felt that she had time now to get things done.

Participant 804 (Third Sector, GM) "So we're now doing programmes in schools that we never did before, and that came from a young member of staff recognising that [opportunity]."

Participant 747 (Public Sector, GM): "somebody through the conversations [we have had] identified the type of project they feel their skills are suited to and that they would like to get involved in. And that has created extra work for the team off the back of that as I have been able to go and speak to some of the other managers and offer our support really to people who I thought had no particular interest in this bit of our world… So, I think we are busier as a team and the feedback from above is more positive. They seem happy, there are more smiles on their faces."

We finish with a quote from a manager who reflects on how changes fed through into a range of positive outcomes, in terms of ownership, collaboration and leadership:

Participant 692 (Public Sector, GM): "Yeah, I think the change in the appraisals probably made people more motivated and take more ownership of their goals. For example, if they know at a team meeting they're going to have to present on a certain project, or a certain activity, they're developing their leadership skills as well. And it's very genuine rather than tokenistic, which perhaps it can feel like sometimes when you are doing appraisals, so that's good. And it also means that team meetings are more interactive, that the whole service feels like much more of a collaboration, people have the opportunity to lead on their ideas. With the buddy system, that obviously develops staff confidence, but also makes sure that when we have new members of staff starting, they've got someone… they've got a peer for support as well as having a line manager for support."

8.3.1.6 Conclusion

"Getting the best out of your team" presented a sophisticated set of management practices that relate to how to best develop skills, use these within effectively designed jobs and support with career progression so as to enhance employment relationships with staff, team dynamics and wider organisational practices. In-depth qualitative and rapid estimation data together suggest that, for many managers, the interventions provided the stimulus to experiment with new practices and techniques. For some, this involved using particular techniques. For others, it involved adopting a different approach or mindset and changes went beyond the specific focus of the intervention, and into their broader management "style". There was also evidence of managers embedding changes to their own management practice, for example, in job design, though less evidence of change to wider organisation practice. Nevertheless, it was notable that many managers felt that within their team

they could influence job design, even if in relatively simple ways. Certainly managers felt that they were better able to identify and use skills and support with career progression, even if this meant staff leaving the organization. Context was influential in change, with a lower degree of organizational change sometimes resulting from unsupportive wider management teams.

Experimentation and changes to practice also led to improved staff outcomes and more decent and productive work. While this evidence was less plentiful, this perhaps reflects both the time needed for interventions to take effect and challenges in tracking change. That said, there were a number of reports of particular changes that created improvements in staff relationships, motivation and performance. Staff valued the opportunity to develop skills, to reflect on how their jobs might be undertaken in different ways and career conversations that were held. The set of activities signaled to staff, according to our managers, that they were important and valued, and this in itself created improved staff attitudes. More effective job design also supported improved productivity and, in some instances, retention although as noted above, it could also lead to turnover. This was mostly in the adult social care sector, where managers could see the benefit staff progression beyond their organisation to the wider sector.

8.4 Management Challenge 3: What Works For Whom And Why? Deeper Exploration Via Case Studies

In the sections above, we used thematic analysis to explore how learning works, and what outcomes occurred from our interventions. We have sought to identify how contexts shape this process. In this section, we use case studies of particular managers to explore in more detail the relationships between context, mechanism (learning) and outcomes. This is crucial in achieving our ultimate aim of identifying how context + mechanism = outcome (C+M=O).

We initially selected cases with positive outcomes so that we could explore in detail the context and learning relations that produce success. We also commissioned additional follow-up interviews with some of these managers to explore longer-term outcomes. In order to explore what factors inhibit success, we supplemented more positive cases with analysis of managers with few or no outcomes from participation in interventions. We have also ensured that all types of intervention are included in our case studies. Following our case studies, we present some comparative analysis of cases to identify C+M=O relations.

8.4 Case Study 24:
ERICA
(Participant number 374, Adult social care)

Context

After attending a masterclass and one peer learning session on creativity in Management Challenge 2, Erica re-joined the Good Employment Learning Lab to attend a masterclass and a whole peer learning group (three sessions) for our third management challenge.

Erica is a registered manager in a private care home. She's been a line manager for several years and holds a diploma in Leadership and Management. Erica is currently the only manager on site, due to a team leader vacancy which is proving difficult to fill. This means that her busy role has intensified even further, as she's stretched between strategic responsibilities, administration and covering for staff absence. She feels that she's often caught up in things that she shouldn't be. She's very conscious of treating her team consistently – following procedures and ensuring a paperwork trail where required. Erica's organisation does not have in-house HR, meaning she can feel unsupported when issues arise.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference (in brackets) to the relevant learning pillars. **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]**, **[Intend to experiment]**.

Masterclass

Erica struggled to recall details of the masterclass in her interview, due to the amount of time that had passed. She remembered learning about roles and responsibilities, and how to make the team feel more involved by "putting myself in the staff members' shoes, to see how they would interpret the ways I was working as a manager" **[Gain knowledge]**. She enjoyed that the sessions were interactive and involved breakout rooms **[learning with others]**." "[Most participants] were of a similar background or in the health and social care field, which helped and it helped me understand that it's not just me going through the same thing, it's generic issues people were coming across."

Peer Learning

Erica opted for peer learning rather than coaching because she feels it suits her learning style better **[Learning with others]**. When she was interviewed, Erica's recall of her peer learning experience was much clearer. She talked about the timeliness of the sessions which helped her to deal with a live challenge. In one session, she discussed a conflict in the team. She had initially planned to present a different challenge, related to our topic of "Getting the Best Out of your Team", but this issue was more pressing.

Erica presented a challenge where two team members were not getting along. She had been tempted to keep them apart, but through peer learning discussions **[Learning with others]**, she committed to encouraging them to work together to improve the relationship **[Intend to experiment]**. This didn't work out as well as Erica had hoped. She reflected **[Reflect]** and concluded that she could have presented the opportunity differently, and so she spoke to them individually **[Intend to experiment]**, giving them the opportunity to ask questions, which worked better **[Improved manager practice].**

Erica also discussed how to limit her team's dependence on her. Erica noted that they have had champions for many areas, but she didn't feel she was developing them effectively **[Reflect]**. "…there's no point just saying we've got champions if they need training, they need to be able to promote it within the team." Through peer learning, she recognised "I might be the manager, but that doesn't mean I have all the answers, you can learn from each other" **[Making sense]**.

Erica described valuing the role of the facilitators "…they were knowledgeable and there were things that they had a lot of experience and knowledge on, that they used as examples" **[Learning from others]**. She also appreciated the facilitators' follow-up emails: "… I think that little positive, even though it was like probably to everybody,

not individual, but the fact that your opinion and input was welcomed and actually it benefitted the group".

Erica felt the group worked well, and described how people were respectful, knowledgeable, and offered support to each other **[Learning with others]**.

Outcomes

When we met Erica for her first interview with us, things seemed positive. She reported that, as a result of her actions identified at peer learning, the conflict situation improved and the staff seem happier, and were working better together **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvement to good/decent work]**.

Erica also said that her team were less reliant on her **[Positive impact on staff]**. Erica had implemented a rotating shift lead role **[Improved manager practice]**, which she described as a "work in progress". Alongside this, an existing staff member had been promoted to team leader **[Positive impact on staff]**. Following this, Erica noticed her team addressing issues directly rather than involving her unnecessarily, which she saw as a really positive step **[Improvement to good and/or productive work]**.

Erica adopted a strategy discussed during another peer learning participant's challenge **[Learning with others]**. She offered team members ownership of parts of their team meetings **[Improved manager practice]**. This meant that the team felt confident and their contribution was valued **[Improvement to good and/or productive work]**.

However, when we met Erica for a second interview, several months after her peer learning sessions, things were difficult in her team. Unfortunately, after an initially positive start, a couple of people in Erica's team have not warmed to the team leader, and the situation was becoming challenging to manage. Off-site HR support meant that Erica did not feel supported, and the situation was taking a lot of time for her to address. This was impacting on her ability to put plans into action, and impeding her confidence.

8.4 Case Study 24:
ERICA
(Participant number 374, Adult social care)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge*	Make sense
Intend to experiment*	Learning together**
Reflect*	

$\longleftrightarrow$

Outcome

Experiment/Improved manager practice**	Positive impact on staff**
Improved organisational practice	Improvement to good and/or productive work*

Context

+ Erica was open to new ideas to improve things within her team.

+ Despite her initial experiments not going to plan, Erica did not give up, and took action to remedy the situation.

+ Erica is a leader in a small organisation, and has a good amount of autonomy to make changes in her team.

+ The sessions were good timing for Erica – she was able to apply her learning to live challenges in her team.

- Erica's role is very busy, pulled between strategic and operational issues, as well as covering for staff absence.

- Although there were some initial positive changes, Erica has lacked support following involvement with GELL, which is impacting her confidence.

- Off-site HR support and lack of peers around her means Erica feels isolated when dealing with challenges.

8.4 Case Study 25: YVONNE
(Participant number 606, Adult social care)

Context

Yvonne is a social worker in a local authority with 10 years' experience. She has three years supervisory experience and is a practice educator who supports students through their social work training, something she loves doing. Yvonne describes herself as good at both her practice educator role and social work. Though she does not have formal management status, in her supervisory role she is responsible for the allocation and completion of work and "welfare and all that emotional content". She's not done any management training but has completed supervisory and practice educator training. Yvonne explains that in her field, management training isn't offered until appointment into a formal management post.

Yvonne has been unsure about whether to move into a formal management role though an opportunity to step up arises when her own line manager is soon to retire. She first joins GELL in management challenge two, encouraged by her line manager as part of her development journey into a management role, where she attends both creativity and conflict masterclasses and a peer learning group on creativity. Yvonne continues her GELL journey in management challenge three, when she attends a masterclass and peer learning group. In both challenges, she "ruled myself out" of coaching "because of only being a supervisor" and she "didn't think it was right to join".

One of her challenges is to support the development needs of young social workers in a management culture context she describes as having shifted to being "procedural, rules-based, top-down". Yvonne recognises her need to remain professional in this context as an experienced social worker, to be a positive role model to less experienced colleagues, allowing them to "vent" to her but for her not to do so herself (something she perceives she needs to do to "be seen as future management material"). During her attendance at GELL interventions in management challenge three, there is a change of senior management in her organisation. A new "transformation agenda" results in the removal of Yvonne's supervisory responsibilities, and the appointment of agency managers during the change period. Yvonne is offered other "development opportunities" which never materialize. This leaves her feeling "disempowered" and "like I had hit a glass ceiling". She describes the organisational context as "demoralising for social workers", resulting in retention issues. She subsequently resigns her current post and at the time of our interview with her, after her participation in GELL has ended, she had accepted a new role as a social work project manager.

Learning Interventions

In this section we record participant learning with reference (in brackets) to the relevant learning pillars. **[Gain knowledge], [Reflect], [Make sense], [Learning together], [Intend to experiment].**

Masterclass

Yvonne makes lots of notes from attending the masterclass, which she also reported doing whilst attending the creativity and conflict masterclasses **[Gain knowledge]**. However, she states that more of the content on employee voice and conflict "stuck"with her than the content on "getting the best out of your people". Her main learning is that "to get the best out of people, people need to feel empowered and things shouldn't feel top-down and imposed" **[Gain knowledge]**. The group activity makes her think about giving staff autonomy, asking what they want to improve to enable motivation and retention, even though the manager "does need to be ultimately in control [...] for all the policy and procedure stuff" **[Reflect]**. She reported that this was illustrative of her own current situation **[Reflect], [Make sense]**. She found the group work in this masterclass to be "fine", and that the group worked together well but "nobody really stood out" in her group, and the other participants were more vibrant in the conflict and creativity masterclasses she'd previously attended **[Learning together]**. She also had a technical issue at this masterclass and could not see the slides, which impacted on her overall experience. The masterclass "wasn't a standout memory for me".

Peer Learning

In contrast to the masterclass, Yvonne describes having "powerful" and "many rich discussions" in peer learning. She is familiar with and enjoys peer reflection sessions in her work and finds it suits her learning style where she prefers to learn though group conversations **[Learning together]**. She attends with two other managers from the adult social care sector who also work in large organisations and are not social workers. She describes there to be "great value" to sharing experience with people in the same sector but outside her organisation **[Learning together]**. She also likes that it is a small group, smaller than the previous peer learning sessions she had on creativity in a group of five, as she was "more able to connect with the people and bond with them" where "we did deeper explorations" **[Learning together]**.

Yvonne joins peer learning aiming to learn from experienced managers how they motivate their teams and to get advice on whether to seek promotion to manager. She brings challenges to the sessions relating to her career decision and an historical challenge concerning supervising a student during Covid and having to take a risk to complete her training. Yvonne reports learning from the facilitator who shares input such as a Halo and Horns model of impression bias **[Gain knowledge]** and from them asking thought provoking questions that "cut straight to the heart of things" **[Reflect]**. She also learns from other participants' challenges on resolving conflict, models of advocacy,

and promoting a buddy system for an underperforming colleague **[Gain knowledge], [Learning together]**. She reports developing skills in "deep reflection, listening, reflecting and advising" **[Gain knowledge]** and finds the discussion about her personal career challenge "very empowering" as it helps her to think more deeply about the type of workplace she can thrive in **[Reflect]** and the negative impact of the new senior managers on her **[Make sense]**. During her final session, after listening to her peers' advice, she concludes she needs to move organisation and no longer seeks internal promotion, something she reports felt "very radical to say out loud but the group were extremely supportive" **[Make sense]**.

Yvonne stated this was enabled by the sessions being a psychologically safe space to learn where she could be honest, and others were supportive and non-judgmental **[Learning together]**. She commits to experiment with empowering team members to represent themselves but to remain a sounding board for them, and to not act in the heat of the moment but take time to come to decisions **[Intend to experiment]**.

Outcomes

Masterclass
Yvonne did not put anything into practice after attending the masterclass. However, she reports using her masterclass notes to support her preparation when applying for new job roles. She also noted that the period after the masterclass was the time when she was no longer supervising anyone, due to the change in her responsibilities, so she did not have the opportunity to put the learning into practice.

Peer Learning
As a result of peer learning, Yvonne wrote a short paper for her organisation on introducing the peer learning model into small groups of social workers to discuss and work through blockages on complex cases **[Experiment]**. However, her proposal was declined with the rationale that mandatory training was more of a team priority. She reported that the peer learning helped her appreciate the "need to be working to your value and feeling like an authentic practitioner" because that motivates her at work **[Improved manager practice]**. Her summary of the peer learning sessions was that they "crystalised my thinking about my personal career direction. The importance of my values, what I am not prepared to compromise". Since the peer learning sessions ended she has stayed in touch with the two participants and has sought mentoring from more senior colleagues in her organisation.

Yvonne described her overall GELL experience as "the most important course I've done in a couple of years" and that it has "changed my life". The peer learning group sessions relating to her personal career challenge with the input of the facilitator were "really powerful" in the context of the changing management culture in her organisation. She explained that she has done other courses but "I haven't really applied [it] to myself", unlike in this case **[Improved manager practice]**.

8.4 Case Study 25:
YVONNE
(Participant number 606, Adult social care)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge**

Reflect**

Make sense**

Learning together***

Intend to experiment*

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Outcome

Experiment/Improved manager** practice

Improved organisational practice

Positive impact on staff

Improvement to good and/or productive work
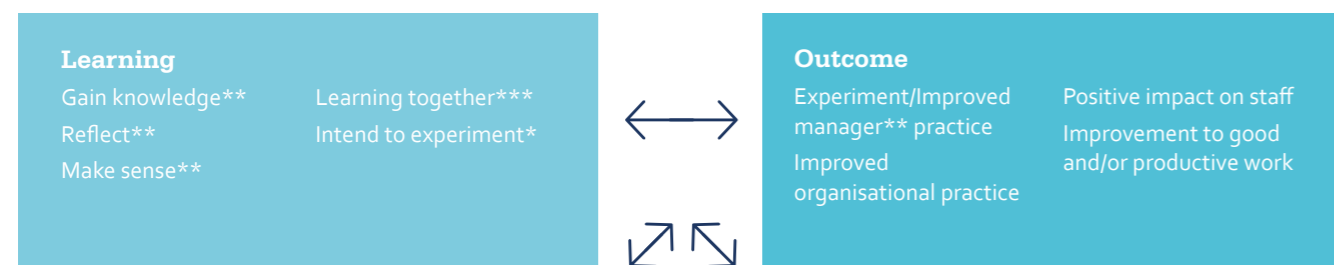
Context

+ Manager familiar with peer learning and reflective practice in her day job is ready to learn in this process

+ The safe space in peer learning enabled making sense of blockages in the organization with supportive peers and facilitators, ultimately leaving to a decision that she needs to change organization to manage in a way congruent with her values

+ An inexperienced manager learns from more experienced peers

- Manager context has negative impact on line management development, actively disengaging participant from becoming a formal line manager in that organization

- An attempt at using the learning to create organizational change by introducing peer learning sets for social worker reflection is rejected by the organization on the grounds of inadequate resources

- Changes to manager role during training removed supervision responsibilities, giving no opportunity to put learning into practice or experiment- Relevance of topic is important to manager but not to the organisational context – learning does not stick

- Manager rules herself out of coaching as she perceives that supervision is not a formal management role that would warrant this resource investment

- Masterclass learning is impacted by technical issues relating to participants' technology

- Masterclass learning is impacted by 'less memorable' group members, in comparison to previous masterclasses in previous challenge with a different group dynamic.

8.4 Case Study 26: HALEMA
(Participant number 750, Adult social care)

Context

Halema is a project lead in the third sector in a small community interest organisation where she's worked for around a year. She has worked in her sector for 20 years but only been a line manager since joining her current organisation where she manages two staff members. Halema has a degree in social work but has not had any management training. She explains that she learns on the job and from two previous "amazing" line managers whose behaviour she role models.

The project Halema works on allows her a good deal of autonomy and she has set up much of the project from scratch. There is little structure or formal processes in place in her organisation, though she explains that a recent organisational review highlighted the need for continuous professional development policies and training. Though personal development is generally welcomed there is limited budget for training. There is no in-house HR support, with HR activities contracted out.

Halema enjoys working with diverse communities and constantly having to adapt. However, the constant change is not something others in her team enjoy as much. She is time poor and finds herself "consumed in the work" struggling to find time to reflect on her line management practice. She describes herself as "sandwiched in (as a middle manager) between your CEO and the workforce" which she finds a very difficult position as "you get it from the top end, and you get it from the bottom end" as she tries to meet both individual staff needs and organisational policies and context.

Halema joins GELL to develop confidence in her decision-making and with the "trickier parts" of people management. For example, she finds it difficult to have a conversation with a team member who does not recognize they have a development need. She chose to do coaching and a masterclass because of live issues she faced with her team at the time of the training. She couldn't find the time to join peer learning as well, though she would have liked to.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference (in brackets) to the relevant learning pillars. **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]**, **[Intend to experiment]**.

Masterclass

Halema described the masterclass as "a real eye-opener". She found there to be a lot of content covered in a short timeframe on the day. She recalls learning about job descriptions, how to do a PESTLE analysis (an external environment scanning tool), hard and soft skills, how to address skills gaps, strengths spotting and other frameworks that she can't recall by name **[Gain knowledge]**. Halema also found the Masterclass to be a reminder to step back and look at what has gone well, rather than focus on tasks and deadlines **[Reflect]**. She enjoyed having the opportunity to discuss and share ideas with managers from a wide variety of organisations and found it reassuring to know that other managers had similar issues **[Learning together]**. The masterclass encouraged Halema to think about the developmental conversations she has with team members and supporting them to identify opportunities to gain more experience and keep them motivated **[Make sense]**. We did not observe anything that Halema consciously intended to experiment with after the masterclass although she did, in fact, make some positive changes.

Coaching

Halema describes her coaching experience at GELL as "somebody who is outside, listening to you, just provides a whole different way and perspective on managing things" Coaching also gave her the time she needed to reflect on her current challenges and management practice **[Reflect]**. Halema brings challenges to the sessions that include addressing development needs in supervisions without demotivating staff and managing a challenging team member with a clinical background when her own is in social work. Her coach observed Halema building confidence during the second session as she began answering her own reflective questions, and synthesizing her learning from session one **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**. She also noted that Halema had been using the Wakelet Resourcebank and accessing relevant self-development resources **[Gain knowledge]**.

Halema committed to experiment with various practices such as setting clear expectations with staff, recognising other teams for their contributions to the project, framing a staff conversation in positive way, and prioritizing her own development to discuss with her manager **[Intend to experiment]**. The coaching also helped Halema to recognize that she could ask for advice on HR issues when she did not have the answers, and working within the parameters of organisational policies **[Gain knowledge]** **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**. The coach observed Halema having "lightbulb moments" when she challenged her assumptions about an underperforming team member, and that she was very receptive to new ideas **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Make sense]**.

Outcomes

Masterclass
Halema introduced a new practice to her team meetings called "care to share" where team members share something they've noticed team members deal with well over the last month **[Improved organisational practice]**. She also recognised her need to focus on things that go well and reflect on positive outcomes **[Improved manager practice]**. She attributes this to the strengths spotting activity in the masterclass which encouraged her to be more authentic and be even better at her own strengths. However, she was unable to evidence a positive impact on her staff due to an unstable and changing organizational environment that, she said, demotivated staff and made it difficult to effect improvements in working lives.

Coaching
Halema reported that coaching gave her more confidence in delaying decisions until she had sought advice, particularly in relation to HR issues **[Improved manager practice]**. She reported, however, that this resulted in some negative responses from staff and resulted in "passing conversations and micro-aggressions". Halema then responded by formalizing communication in an email "so we know where we both stand". Further down the line, two staff members resigned and she learned that some things about their working lives are out of her control (e.g. the issues service users bring to sessions), but that she could help her team be more prepared. Halema was only able to influence in this way after these team members left, when she felt she "had more decision-making powers" **[Improved manager practice]**, demonstrating the importance of positional power to improving management practice. She has since recruited two new team members and her confidence is enabling her to support them in better ways, also influenced by the project being in a more stable position, with more structure and guidance in place **[Improved organisational practice]**. Another colleague has commented on her increased confidence in a peer mentoring meeting where she had prepared well and "knew her stuff" **[Improved manager practice]**.

8.4 Case Study 26: HALEMA
(Participant number 750, Adult social care)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning
Gain knowledge*   Make sense
Intend to experiment*   Learning together**
Reflect*

Outcome
Experiment/Improved manager practice**

Improved organisational practice**

Positive impact on staff

Improvement to good and/or productive work
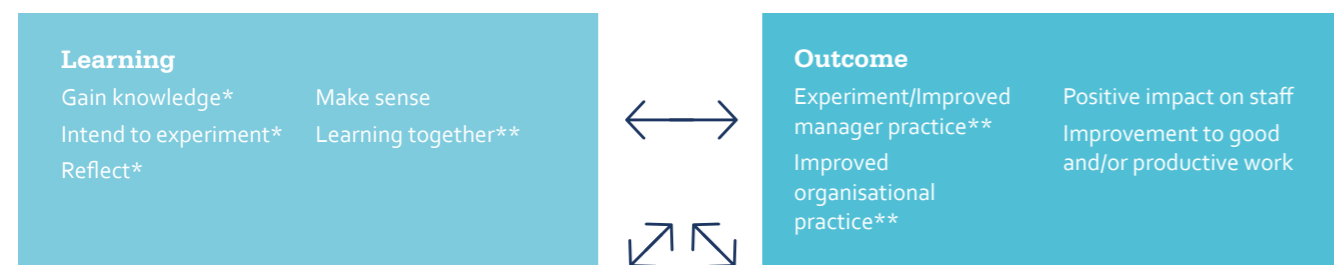
Context

+ A new line manager who is keen to learn because she is motivated by the need to address live people management challenges but works in a small organisation with little formal support.

+ Coaching develops skills in reflection that enable manager to reflect in new ways about her everyday practice and to grow in confidence.

+ This time poor manager benefits from the structured time the GELL sessions create for her to reflect and learn.

+ While the manager is frustrated by her organizational context and learns that some factors are out of her control, she does identify a way of preparing her staff to cope with service user complaints about flaws in the system

- This line manager benefited from working with peers in masterclass session but could not take this further in peer learning due to a lack of time.

- Impact on the working lives of staff of the experimentation is offset by the mediating effect of broader organisational issues, out of the manager's control and this leads to staff resignations.

- Support for this line manager within the organisation seems limited and she lacks a current role model to develop her practice, once the GELL programme ends.

8.4 Case Study 27:
CARRIE
(Participant number 65, GM)

Context

Carrie works in the third sector for an organisation with around 500 staff. She is the manager of an HR team with three staff, a role she's held for five years. Carrie holds a Masters' degree and enjoys academic study; joining a university delivered programme attracted her to GELL. Carrie attended a GELL secure and agile masterclass in management challenge one. She has not participated in any other interventions until this challenge, when she joins another masterclass. Carrie reported that she liked gaining academic knowledge and hearing about the latest research in the first masterclass and re-joins as she hasn't had much time to do any professional development since.

Carrie explains that people management in her organisation is largely informal, and that staff development is a focus, where conversations take place between line managers and staff, ensuring their development needs and values are being met. She reports her line management challenges to include staff retention and managing staff confidence due to mental health issues.

When we interview Carrie a second time, after attending the "getting the best out of your people" masterclass, her organisation is going through a restructuring programme which is generating "a lot of upset" for staff. She has taken voluntary redundancy, though at the time of her interview is still employed and is applying for new posts. In addition to the unsettling nature of the restructure and impending job losses, she explains this time is particularly difficult as staff tended to view the organisation as "feeling quite like a family". Because of these changes, the usual activities Carrie leads with her team have paused. She reports that lots of staff listening is taking place, as a way of trying to "smooth it (the restructure) over as much as possible" and help employees understand the rationale for the changes. Furthermore, she reports that the context of coming out of Covid has left employees feeling disconnected from the organisation and has created divisions between front line and homeworking staff. Though her organisation is working to "break down those barriers", Carrie's perception is that staff no longer feel valued.

Carrie states that she attended the masterclass rather than the other interventions as she wanted to stay in her "comfort zone" and is "happy to just be the sponge". Moreover, because she is in a period of personal flux about her career aims, she felt it was not the right time to join a peer learning group or coaching session.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference (in brackets) to the relevant learning pillars. **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]**, **[Intend to experiment]**.

Masterclass

Carrie reports she did not gain any new knowledge from the masterclass, but it reinforced existing learning and things she had forgotten about or did not often put into practice, such as concepts she had previously learned in her CIPD qualification **[Gain knowledge]**. She reflected that much of the masterclass content was "just the nature of my role", encompassing progression pathways, career conversations and strengths, where "I had done all that before, but it was still nice to go over again". However, she "loved" learning the theories and "actual names" for practices she already uses or knows about from her degree and found it "thought provoking" **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**. She states that "I'm not looking for anything more than that".

During her masterclass, the breakout functionality did not work, so rather than discussing some of the topics in small groups, the activities were done in one group. Carrie reported that she prefers this way of learning because "I don't come on those programmes for a networking thing. I'm quite an introverted person".

A particular masterclass activity that resonated with Carrie was thinking about who is a "flight risk" in her team and how to redesign their job to make it more appealing. This made her conscious that she hadn't previously thought like this **[Reflect]** but explained that, because of the pandemic, she was in a "weird situation" where practices that were "normal" are no longer done **[Make sense]**. It made her think that "yes, as a leader of this team, I'm not doing any of this activity at all really" **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**. In addition, her awareness of an impending restructure meant she recognised the relevance of some of the masterclass topics to her context and she noted these down **[Reflect]**. However, Carrie reported that it would have been more beneficial had she attended this masterclass earlier, as she had previously been "re-looking at roles" in her team, and it would have helped her "to have that academic theory to hand and know that you've properly covered off all the bases". This reminds us of the importance of timeliness. Overall, she reported that the masterclass "opened my eyes that I should have been... there was opportunity to think more broadly about these things all the time, that I just wasn't using" **[Reflect]**.

Outcomes

Masterclass

Since Carrie joined us in management challenge one, her organisation had begun a significant restructuring process. She did not put anything into practice after the masterclass due to timing of the restructure. She reported that it is the responsibility of HR colleagues, rather than herself as line manager, to do job design work and she is not required to input into that process. Because of the restructure, much of her usual day-to-day work has stopped, and she did not have a departmental head for some time, meaning there was no leadership in place to sign off any changes to practice. The team member that she had considered as a flight risk in the masterclass activity had since chosen to apply for a new role in the restructure, whereas her other team members had decided not to apply and to leave the organisation. She added that her practice as a manager had not changed and that it "wasn't really the fault of the masterclass, it's just the bigger changes that are going on". However, she did articulate a commitment to experiment in a future role, where she would like to think about job design and how to make administrative jobs more interesting, as she has experienced a high turnover of staff in that role **[Intend to experiment]**.

8.4 Case Study 27: CARRIE
(Participant number 65, GM)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge*   Make sense

Intend to experiment*   Learning together**

Reflect*

Outcome

Experiment/Improved manager practice

Improved organisational practice

Positive impact on staff

Improvement to good and/or productive work
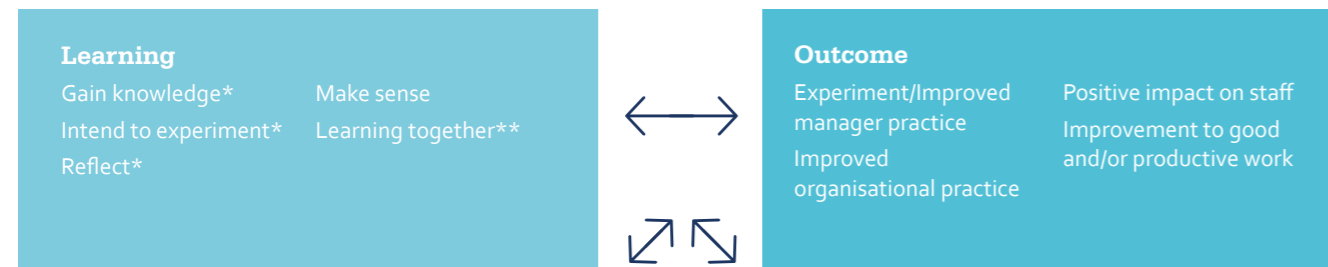
Context

+ Experienced and degree-level qualified manager who enjoys academic study, motivated by learning about latest research and academic theory in a university programme.

+ Masterclass content refreshes and reinforces existing knowledge, encouraging reflection on what the manager perceives she 'should' be doing (ie. applying theory to practice).

- The training is of limited immediate value as the manager has no opportunity to put learning into practice due to the organisational context of restructuring.

- The timing of the learning intervention is somewhat out of synch (she would have benefited from job design training during an earlier project) and this inhibits the achievement of outcomes.

- The manager chooses not to engage in social learning opportunities due to personal learning preference and because she is undecided about whether to leave the organization and so is not focused on applying learning to her current role.

- This professional has existing high knowledge base of masterclass content, resulting in less "new" ideas to experiment with (although she does benefit from reminders and this does lead to a realisation that she is not applying all her existing learning well).

8.4 Case Study 28: CHRIS
(Participant number 747, GM)

Context

Chris works as a team manager for a programme project team in a local authority. He line manages two senior officers who have four direct reports, and a team of consultants whose work he is responsible for but does not line manage. He's held this role and been a line manager for nine months. Prior to that, he worked in a matrix management structure with no direct reports. He's not received any line management training, but is a trained project manager and degree-level educated. Chris reports that most of the management training in his organisation tends to be on-the-job, or occasional webinars. There is a formalised culture of performance management, of 12 and six month reviews, and regular conversations to identify training needs between staff and managers are encouraged. He joins GELL as he's looking for support to "try and become a manager and move away from just a doer".

Chris enjoys leading by example and creating a team culture where he supports his team with their diverse needs. This is something that has been made more difficult as the team worked entirely remotely during the pandemic. Conversely, it is also something he finds challenging. For example, he manages a team supervisor who is older than him and "very traditional" in how he manages. The team apprentices are overly dependent on Chris, rather than their senior officers (their team leaders) for instruction.

Chris signs up for a masterclass and coaching. He attends the masterclass just before his third and final coaching session. He was interested in joining peer learning but could not make the dates.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference (in brackets) to the relevant learning pillars. **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]**, **[Intend to experiment]**.

Masterclass

Chris found that the masterclass gave him a "different way of thinking" about his challenges to the coaching. His key learnings are to review job roles and descriptions to ensure work is engaging and reflect on how he can make work better **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Intend to experiment]**. This was triggered by doing the group "pizza person" activity that helped him think how to "flip things around a bit" and consider how roles are designed rather than thinking about the individual in post **[Reflect]**, **[Learning together]**.

The content on career pathways also resonates strongly with him as within his team there is no formal pathway, and he struggles with retention and skills gaps, so finds this content timely **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**. He recognises that he currently fills skill gaps with external hires and the masterclass makes him think about developing skills, ensuring responsibilities and required competencies for roles in his team are clear, and implementing internal succession planning processes **[Make sense]**.

Coaching

Chris rates his skills/knowledge as five out of ten, and confidence as three out of ten before starting the sessions. He has some awareness of coaching before joining GELL but has never been coached and sees it as outside his comfort zone to talk about himself one-to-one. However, he wants to challenge himself. Chris is aware how much external coaching can cost so thinks the GELL coaching is a good way to try it out for free to help him get to the root cause of his challenges. He describes his coaching experience as "inquisitive" and found it "really useful to dig deeper" to explore his problems, to be asked more questions by the coach and let him fill the silence by "just talking" **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**. His coach also observes Chris reflecting during the sessions **[Reflect]**.

Chris brings challenges to discuss with the coach that include developing his two senior officers who have different needs, reducing the reliance of the apprentices on him, holding his two senior officers to account for their team development, and how to create new role profiles and competency matrices aligned to project management professional body requirements. The coach provides tailored resources that align to their conversations such as a TedX talk on coaching style which he describes an "absolute eye-opener", a coaching model that he can adopt with his team, and other development tools **[Gain knowledge]**. He also accesses the Wakelet Resource bank after the first session **[Gain knowledge]**. His coach notes that he has "lightbulb moments" when he realises he is part of the issue and needs to adopt a coaching style with his apprentices

and delegate more, stating that his "top reflection" is spending too much time training his apprentices rather than holding his senior officers responsible for their team development **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense].** He commits to experiment by changing his style to delegate more, use coaching questions, and creating safe spaces for learning to build one of the senior officer's confidence **[Intend to experiment]**.

Experimentation is evident during the coaching series as he attends a meeting one morning before coaching where he changes his approach to a meeting with his apprentices, and instead of instructing asks them to do a "train the trainer" with other apprentices **[Experiment]**. He also plans to do longer term work on competency matrices **[Intend to experiment]**. Chris summarises his learning at the end of coaching session two stating "I've learned more about myself from these two sessions than I've learned in the last five years". He relates this to how he is changing his management style.

Outcomes

Masterclass

Chris struggles to attribute which changes to his practice come from the coaching or the masterclass, except for his action to review skills gaps and career progression pathways which arose from the masterclass. He reviews the team structure and skills gap between his role and his senior officers and creates a new role of project manager to which he then begins recruitment. This creates a more clear promotional route **[Improved organisational practice]**, **[Improvement to good and productive work]**. Chris hopes this will be seen positively across the team but he has no evidence of this yet. His intended longer-term work on aligning competencies to the project management professional standards is ongoing and planned over the next 12 months.

Coaching

Chris develops confidence in his management style following the coaching and his self-rating shifts from a three out of ten to an eight. He reports his biggest learning as holding back more on giving solutions and using a coaching style to enable his team to learn for themselves, something he has changed in one-to-one's and with other teams **[Improved manager practice]**, **[Improved organisational practice]**. Chris sets up a knowledge sharing agenda item in team meetings where team members share their learnings with each other on project issues **[Improved organisational practice]**. He also implements a mentoring trial when the coaching sessions finish – where contract staff are mentored by permanent staff and have fortnightly coaching conversations to help them solve team problems and develop actions **[Improved organisational practice]**. Though these are informal and not documented, Chris has received positive feedback that the consultants are more visible across the organisation and seem happier **[Positive impact on staff]**. He acknowledges it has created more work for the team but that this work is addressing issues productively **[Improvement to good and productive work]**.

8.4 Case Study 28: CHRIS
(Participant number 747, GM)

Chris also reports spending more time thinking about "management as a discipline rather than something that just happens" and actively focusing on his development, reading textbooks, internet sources and exploring opportunities for further training. Chris believes he is more reflective in his everyday practice, thinking through conversations beforehand, and afterwards considering how they went, whether he can do things even better **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**. In his coaching portfolio he states that:

"Taking a more strategic view of team development has allowed me to propose ways to restructure the team to address the skills gaps in the structure. The coaching gave me the opportunity to identify the root cause of the problem, identify a solution and then the confidence to take this forward with my senior management. Without this, I don't think I would be now restructuring the team to hopefully provide a more efficient service." **[Improved organisational practice]**, **[Improvement to good and/or productive work]**.

Context + Mechanism = Outcome

Learning
Gain knowledge*   Make sense
Intend to experiment*   Learning together**
Reflect*

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Outcome
Experiment/Improved manager practice***   Positive impact on staff*

Improved organisational practice**   Improvement to good and/or productive work*

Context

+ A technical specialist with new line management responsibilities motivated to learn and develop people management skills.

+ Coaching with tailored input from the coach provides space for the line manager to explore root cause of issues and to identify new management practices for experimentation.

+ Participating in a masterclass alongside, rather than ahead of, the coaching provides new knowledge that encourages the manager to think in different ways and to relate this to the challenges being discussed in coaching.

+ Improvement in manager confidence enables broader structural team changes that are supported by senior management.

- Evidence of learning together is limited as the line manager does not participate in peer learning due to time scarcity; this is a missed opportunity for a manager who would benefit from learning from more experience managers and those in other sectors.

- The large organisational context means that the line manager does not have power to change wider organisational processes and outcomes are limited to the manager's direct remit and team.

8.4 Case Study 29:
TODD
(Participant number 804, GM)

Context

Todd works in a small organisation in the charity sector and is new to line management. He has been the line manager of a small group of trainees for a short period at the time of joining GELL. In this role, he enjoyed "seeing people grow" and liked to emulate how he was managed himself, by adopting "hands-off management styles" and trusting team members to work independently. Todd acknowledged that he had the autonomy to make changes to his team practice that he may not have in a different organisation. He describes people management in his organisation as quite informal. Practices such as one-to-ones and regular team meetings take place where "everybody has an equal part". The company holds regular social and wellbeing events and reward encompasses fair pay scales and payment of the living wage. He attributes these practices to working in a "socially minded organisation".

The trainees Todd manages are not only new to role but are in full time employment for the first time in their careers. One of his line management challenges is adopting more direct styles of managing when required, because he hasn't observed this from any of his own line managers. He reports that his entire work experience is in the voluntary sector, where line managers care and can "take on stuff" from staff by having conversations where it feels like 'being someone's counsellor' rather than their line manager, which Todd describes as "walking a fine line".

Todd joined GELL because he has not previously sought any advice or had any line management training and so he wants additional support to help him develop into his new role. He reports that his learning as a line manager to date is through observing other line managers. He signs up for a masterclass, which he attends first, before joining a series of peer learning sessions. Todd has taken part in action learning previously and signs up for peer learning because of his familiarity with the method and because he likes talking through experiences with others. Todd hopes to learn from other managers and "share and compare" his own practices with them.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference (in brackets) to the relevant learning pillars. [Gain knowledge], [Reflect], [Make sense], [Learning together], [Intend to experiment].

Masterclass

In his masterclass survey, Todd rates his skills/knowledge and confidence levels before attending the masterclass as five and seven out of ten, respectively. He aims to gain "increased confidence and new ideas for getting the best from the team". During the masterclass he enjoys learning with other line managers, though his experience is limited as his microphone doesn't work , but he still values hearing other managers' experiences and sharing his own through the "chat" function [Learning together]. He reports learning about "methods" such as skills frameworks, job design and involving staff in those processes [Gain knowledge]. At the end of the session, he commits to experiment with job design [Intend to experiment].

After the masterclass, Todd discusses the content with his line manager and they talk about implementing new processes for one-to-ones and team meetings that are more inclusive [Learning together], [Reflect], [Make sense], [Intend to experiment]. He also independently explores skills and behaviour frameworks and reflects on, discusses and shares the resources and tips learned in the masterclass with other managers in his organisation, creating a summarised version of his notes that he circulates with them [Gain knowledge], [Reflect], [Learning together].

In his post session survey, Todd rates himself as eight out of ten in both skills and confidence because the masterclass "improved my knowledge a lot around what to look at and for in terms of job satisfaction and supporting staff" [Gain knowledge].

Peer Learning

Todd planned to attend all three sessions but sent apologies for the final session due to an urgent work issue. He brings challenges to the first two sessions about motivating young, new staff and how to introduce career conversations. He reports his experience of peer learning overall as positive as he was able to hear and learn from the three other participants who held different roles to his own and were from different organisations and sectors [Learning together]. In particular, he found it helpful to learn from group members who were experienced line managers [Gain knowledge]. In-between sessions he also shared his experiences and reflections with two peers in his own organisation who work at the same level [Learning together], [Reflect].

Todd valued the time to reflect during and in-between sessions, something that he found came naturally to him, as reflection is an important practice in his field of community organizing, whether that is individual reflection or reflecting with others [Reflect]. He also liked having structured

sessions where there "doesn't feel like there was an agenda" in terms of what would be discussed and enjoyed the "turning cameras on and off" part of the process.

The facilitator observed that Todd engaged well with the peer learning process and referenced masterclass content on career conversations, demonstrating the scaffolding of his learning as he states, "the workshop [masterclass] sparked it, my thinking on career conversations" [Reflect] [Make sense]. The facilitator also reported that Todd seemed to have a "lightbulb moment" whilst listening to other participants' challenges about the timing of a role profile change in his own organisation [Reflect], [Make sense], [Learning together]. Her perception was that he gained valuable advice from other participants on his challenge and recorded in her observational notes that he "apologized for not coming back on camera soon enough as he was 'furiously scribbling', making notes of their ideas" [Gain knowledge], [Learning together].

Todd committed to "review and set boundaries as needed for all staff, individually and collectively", through one-to-ones, establishing new contracts, designing new role profiles with staff and building career discussions into regular team one-to-ones [Intend to experiment]. He reported learning ways of addressing these challenges from listening to others in the group, and also learned from hearing other participants' dilemmas which helped him anticipate and learn about challenges he might face in the future [Gain knowledge], [Learning together].

In addition to peer learning and the masterclass, Todd used the Wakelet Resourcebank which he "really liked" and has "been using the links from it to find out more (e.g. TedX talks)" supplementing his learning independently.

Outcomes

Masterclass

When we spoke to Todd some months after attending the masterclass he stated that one of the main learnings that had "stuck" with him was the importance of involving staff in job design, something that he had put into practice [Improved organisational practice]. Until the masterclass "it hadn't really crossed my mind to take it a step further and do kind of involvement in job design [...] so the input was really useful". He also reported that the value of having trust underpinning your management style resonated with him, validating confidence in his own practice [Improved manager practice]. However, he struggled to identify any further new practices or outcomes that resulted from the masterclass, which he attended before Christmas, and stated that "timing played a part". He attended the peer learning sessions the following January.

Peer Learning

Todd reported making more changes from peer learning because "partly that's the way the sessions are designed", whereby participants identify an action to take forward and report back progress next session. All his team have since been employed on permanent, full-time contracts improving job security and have re-designed role profiles that "match interests with organisational intentions and needs" [Positive impact on staff], [Improvement to good

8.4 Case Study 29: TODD
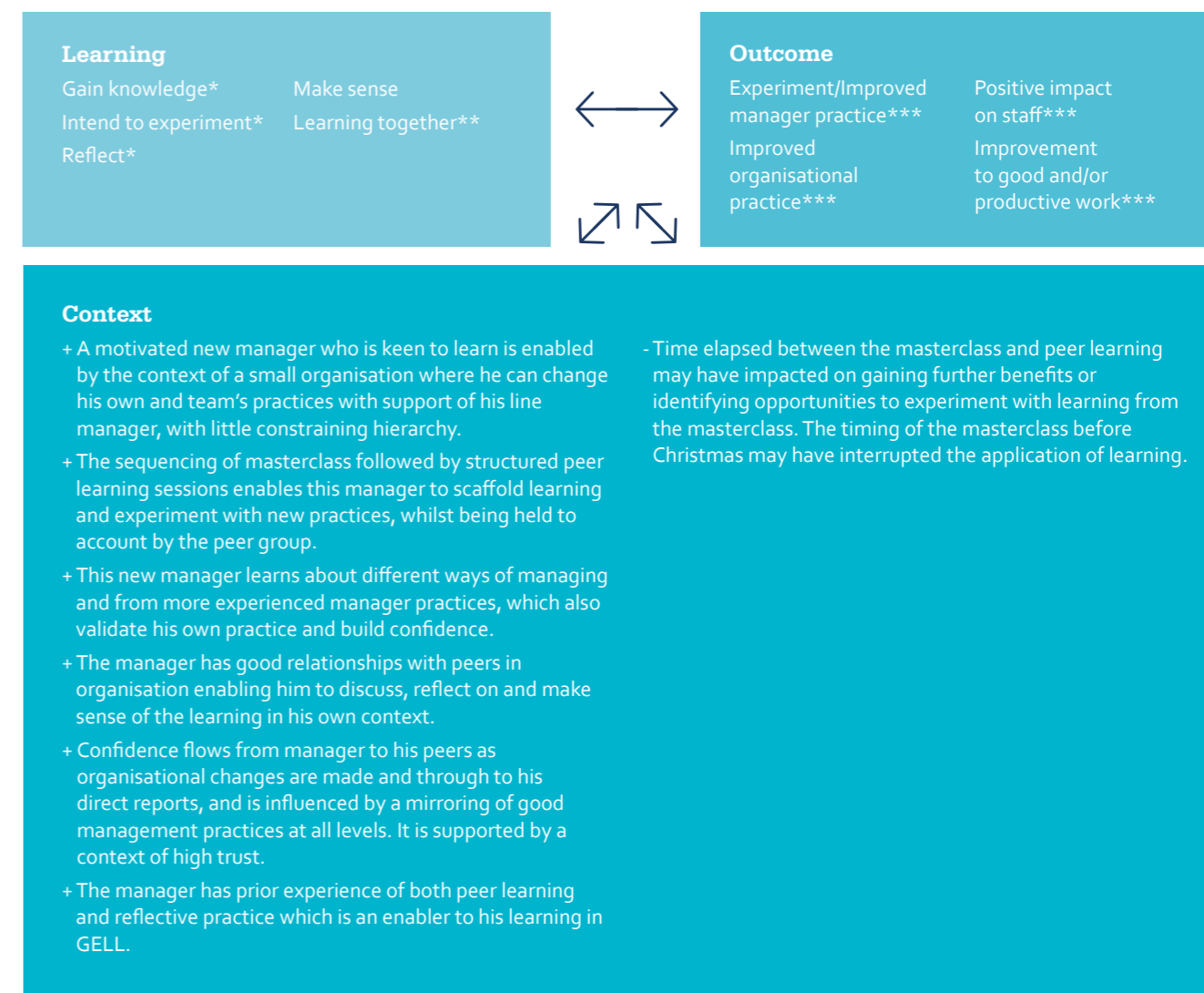## (Participant number 804, GM)

and/or productive work]. He also reported that he now sets clear boundaries and ownership of roles and tasks of team members and that the peer learning has validated that his "hands off" coaching style of management is effective **[Improved manager practice]**. A suggestion from the peer learning group was to review and set his own goals before those of his team, which he did by taking some time to stop and reflect instead of "just getting locked in work" **[Improved manager practice]**.

A key practice outcome of the peer learning sessions was "involving people more" by delegating and trusting his team more in things like running programmes with external partners and getting staff ideas incorporated in design work **[Improved manager practice], [Improved organisational practice]**. This has improved staff confidence in their abilities **[Positive impact on staff].** Todd also reported improving one-to-ones and team meetings to be more focused and structured, incorporating reflective activities to review team progress **[Improved manager practice]**. After trialling these changes with his team, they have since been adopted by other managers in his organisation and include a wellbeing focus. Todd reported having gained confidence as a result of making these changes and his perception is that other managers in his organisation have also gained confidence **[Improved organisational practice], [Positive impact on staff], [Improvement to good and/or productive work]**.

More broadly, Todd attributes his participation in the GELL training as a boost to overall organisational inclusivity, as he started making changes in his own team which have acted as a catalyst and spread across a small organisation. For example, recognizing the need to formalize some of the informal practices adding structure, introducing career conversations, and involving staff which has led to organisational changes such as the implementation of a menopause policy that was managed by a staff team member **[Improved organisational practice], [Improvement on good and/or productive work]**. As a line manager he reported developing his skills over the course of his involvement in GELL and beyond and learning about direct line management styles that were "quite alien to me" having not experienced them personally. He summarises his experience as:

"It's (the training) just been genuinely useful. I don't think I'd be in as good of a position now if I hadn't had it. Because I think I'd probably doubt myself a bit more, a lot more along the way. Probably what it's done it's just made me a bit more confident in applying some of those (ideas) and knowing that it's not weird to involve people in the process".

Context + Mechanism = Outcome

Learning
Gain knowledge*	Make sense
Intend to experiment*	Learning together**
Reflect*	

Outcome
Experiment/Improved manager practice***	Positive impact on staff***
Improved organisational practice***	Improvement to good and/or productive work***

Context
+ A motivated new manager who is keen to learn is enabled by the context of a small organisation where he can change his own and team's practices with support of his line manager, with little constraining hierarchy.
+ The sequencing of masterclass followed by structured peer learning sessions enables this manager to scaffold learning and experiment with new practices, whilst being held to account by the peer group.
+ This new manager learns about different ways of managing and from more experienced manager practices, which also validate his own practice and build confidence.
+ The manager has good relationships with peers in organisation enabling him to discuss, reflect on and make sense of the learning in his own context.
+ Confidence flows from manager to his peers as organisational changes are made and through to his direct reports, and is influenced by a mirroring of good management practices at all levels. It is supported by a context of high trust.
+ The manager has prior experience of both peer learning and reflective practice which is an enabler to his learning in GELL.

- Time elapsed between the masterclass and peer learning may have impacted on gaining further benefits or identifying opportunities to experiment with learning from the masterclass. The timing of the masterclass before Christmas may have interrupted the application of learning.

8.4 Case Study 30: ROSE

(Participant number 339, Adult Social Care)

Context

Rose is a well-established senior manager in a charity providing adult social care services. She joined the Good Employment Learning Lab for Management Challenge (MC) 2, where she completed two masterclasses, coaching and peer learning. She re-joined us for a masterclass in MC3. This case study relates to both Rose's experience on the MC3 masterclass, and the continuation of her learning from MC2.

Rose is a confident manager and wants to encourage her teams to be more empowered and innovative as they can be dependent on her for answers to routine questions. She wants her team to get to know each other and their skillsets better, rather than defaulting to asking her. Rose describes her management style as task-orientated rather than time-driven. This is important to her individually as it affords her flexibility around her home responsibilities, and it is also how she manages her team.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference **[in brackets]** to the relevant learning pillars. **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]**, **[Intend to experiment]**.

Masterclass

As Rose has been on three masterclasses with GELL, she occasionally struggled to identify which learning came from which masterclass. She described this masterclass as "going back to basics", and some of the content was very timely for her. She enjoyed speaking to other participants from different organisations **[Learning together]**, although she would have liked to speak to more experienced managers like her.

Rose has a current challenge with succession planning, and needs someone to "take a bit of weight off me". The organisation is moving to a pay competency model, and some of the masterclass content such as Hackman and Oldman's job characteristics model **[gain knowledge]** chimed with this **[Make sense]**. She also wants to incorporate conversations about strengths **[gain knowledge]** into future conversations **[Intend to experiment]**.

Peer Learing

Rose described the other participants as "a well-informed group who were all happy to contribute". She learnt about one-page profiles from another participant **[Learning together]**, which are a tool to help share preferences amongst teams and Rose intends to adopt this **[Intend to experiment]**.

Rose's team was split in different directions during the pandemic, and Rose had to work hard to keep morale up, especially with newer team members. During the masterclass, Rose reflects that she can sometimes miss cues around wellbeing due to the remote nature of their work, and this is something she works hard to keep at the forefront of her mind **[Reflect]**. During her interview, Rose observed that she would have liked more information on addressing skills gaps, as she's not clear on whether this is something that can be solved internally or requires external input **[Reflect]**.

Outcomes

Following the masterclass, Rose says that her current career conversations are going "ok" **[Reflect]**, but she's trying to have more challenging conversations which will get to the root of the problem **[Improved manager practice]**. Due to increased funding, Rose's team will grow in the next few months, and so she has consciously decided to "park" some of the ideas from the masterclass until the new team is more established **[Make sense]**. Because of this, she has made limited progress so far but she has a clear plan to build discussions about capabilities into PDRs **[Intend to experiment]**. She recognises that her one-to-ones can be quite task-focussed **[Reflect]**. She has several other things that she wants to develop following the masterclass, including working on succession plans and strengths conversations **[Intend to experiment]**.

She's also continuing to develop a coaching approach, which she began during Management Challenge 2 **[Improved manager practice]**. Although Rose didn't have coaching sessions this time, she believes that this learning intervention is the most useful for her. She says it's where "my heart lies, both in receiving it and actually giving it as well".

Hearing from team members

We were able to interview two of Rose's team members, Carly and Olivia, as part of our research.

Olivia considers Rose to have a coaching management style. Although she hasn't noticed a "massive difference" in Rose's style since her involvement in GELL, she does believe that Rose has "come to me quite a bit more than usual" to bounce ideas around **[Improved manager practice]**. This has made Olivia feel more included and more valued **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvement to good and/or productive work]**. "I suppose it's made me feel a bit better about myself and then I have got contributions to make, and my experience does mean something."

Rose implemented a variation of peer learning following her experience in Management Challenge 2. Olivia describes this as "really good" **[Improved organisational practice]**, and believes it's responsible for increasing the team's bond **[Positive impact on staff]**. "So actually, it's helped us to feel a bit more together even though we work technically apart".

Olivia describes how important it is that Rose treats them like an adult, and will "back us up [...] and actually think outside the box". "...it gives me confidence in her and what we are doing is the right thing and actually gives us confidence to actually work with our colleagues outside our team in other teams as well." **[Positive impact on staff]**, **[Improvement to good and/or productive work]**.

Carly echoes a lot of Olivia's sentiments. She has found Rose's implementation of peer learning really valuable, and it enabled her to get useful feedback about a project design, which the team felt was "too busy", and Carly has been able to streamline **[Improvement to practice]**. This, in turn, will make the end result more enjoyable and straightforward for other staff members **[Positive impact on staff]**. "... just allowing an open space for people to have these ideas and bounce them around the team, it has been really, really beneficial to us all".

Carly also agrees that Rose empowers her team, but can be relied on for support whenever it's needed. She describes a situation where Rose coached her in advance of an important presentation, which has increased her confidence **[Positive impact on staff]**. Carly also reports an increase in appetite to experiment. "There's a lot more, Let's try it. Let's try it. If it doesn't work, we won't do it again, or we'll look at it and see how we can tweak it and make it work again" **[Improvement to good and/or productive work]**.

Carly feels that Rose's experience of being in GELL has strengthened the team as a whole. "It has allowed freedom of ideas and expression. It has given us the autonomy to make our own decisions, actually, and just actually go to

8.4 Case Study 30: ROSE
(Participant number 339, Adult Social Care)

Rose and say, 'This is what we think' and talk about it rather than it having to come from higher above." **[Improvement to good and/or productive work]**. Carly acknowledges that the organisation itself is quite forward-thinking, which is an important contextual factor, although financial constraints continue to slow progress.

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge*	Make sense
Intend to experiment*	Learning together**
Reflect*	

Outcome

Experiment/Improved manager practice	Positive impact on staff
Improved organisational practice	Improvement to good and/or productive work
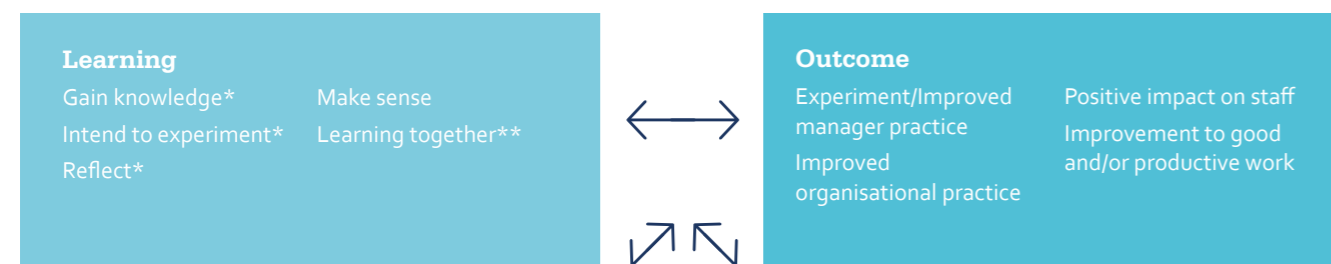
Context

+ Rose's appetite to learn, to evaluate content, experiment, and apply what is relevant to her context positively drives engagement with learning and experimentation.
+ Rose is a well-established, confident and experienced manager who feels able to make changes.
+ Rose's willingness to adopt a coaching approach, to enable and empower her team, enable her to experiment
+ The buy-in that Rose has from her team members means they're willing to experiment with her, e.g. by trying peer learning sets.

- Remote working / disparate workstreams during the pandemic created a barrier to knowledge and experimentation.
- Engagement and culture of the wider organisation is not quite as positive as within Rose's team, inhibiting further spillover.
- Rose would have preferred learning with similarly experienced leaders from different organisations.
- Upcoming team expansion has delayed Rose experimenting with some of her learning.

8.4 Case Study 31: ELLIOT
(Participant number 891, GM)

Context

Elliot is a production manager in a small, family-run manufacturing business alongside circa 250 staff. He has ten years' line management experience and manages a team of 15 technical staff. He is responsible for quality and the operational flow of packaged goods. Elliot's organisation has a new CEO and Operations Director and they have recently employed an HR advisor for the first time. The organisation is mid-way through a pay and progression project when Elliot joins GELL, in which they are formalising and aligning roles, skills and reward with a focus on embedding organisational values and improving staff wellbeing.

Elliot has not had any formal management training and describes himself as a technical manager who has recently got a thirst for self-development and learning about management. He enjoys reading various management books. As an undergraduate he covered some ideas on leadership in his business degree but states that this "doesn't train you to be a manager" . Elliot describes learning through his career as "osmosis learning" a term he learns of from the GELL resource bank. He became a manager by accident when covering for two managers on leave and the staff reported that he did a better job than them of allocating work. He was subsequently appointed to a management role.

Elliot's current management challenges involve keeping staff motivated, as they don't think they are paid enough, and keeping up with weekly meetings and general staff communication. Elliot reports the underlying issue as the lack of business or pay progression structure where there are "no job descriptions, detailed skilled matrices or structured appraisals" and few written staff contracts. This is a recognised organisational challenge and Elliot sits on various working groups with other managers to resolve them.

Elliot signs up for all three interventions as he wants to "supplement my learning". He is self-motivated to learn and supported by his manager. He completes peer learning first, then attends a masterclass, followed by three coaching sessions. The following section takes each in the same order.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference (in brackets) to the relevant learning pillars. **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]**, **[Intend to experiment]**.

Peer Learning

Elliot reports that, of the three interventions, peer learning has the biggest impact on him. He finds the method of peer learning "really good", the turning cameras on/off, and is "a new way of doing things". He likes giving advice on other managers' challenges and hearing their opinions on his challenges **[Learning together]**, **[Reflect]**. His peer group comprises three managers who work in large public sector organisations who Elliot describes as "highly skilled with many years of training in their field" and who take the process seriously. He reports feeling "a bit of an outsider" and at times "out of his depth" in the group, as he is the only one from his sector and on other courses usually learns alongside manufacturing colleagues where he feels more comfortable talking about manufacturing processes **[Reflect]**, **[Learning together]**. The facilitator observes Elliot state to the group that he feels he has less to contribute to their challenges because he is from an SME which is less bureaucratic than their organisations. However, the group reassure Elliot that they value his input and like learning about how things get done in his organization, in contrast to their own. He shares challenges around how to establish a skills framework and progression pathways aligned to pay and reward, and how to ensure that two-way communication keeps staff engaged.

Through the course of the sessions, Elliot learns that his organisation is "a bit management down rather than inclusive" and that their management culture needs to change **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**. He also learns from other participants about 360 feedback processes, gets ideas on how to encourage staff feedback and reflects on the lack of interpersonal skills among the other managers in his organisation **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Learning together]**, **[Reflect]**. He commits to experiment by giving other managers honest feedback on their behaviours, involving staff in the design of a new skills framework and having more informal coffee chats with staff, rather than relying on formal surveys which get low responses **[Intend to experiment]**. The facilitator also observes Elliot learning from listening to other participants discuss his challenges as he reports their comments are "fascinating" in relation to needing to be more explicit with staff about the purpose of asking for feedback. This leads to him generating new ideas to put into practice **[Learning together]**, **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Intend to experiment]**. Elliot reports making "copious notes" in the sessions and being very conscious of the point in the process where he has to articulate what he will do after each session. This encourages him to "star" (highlight) the things in his notes he wants to experiment with **[Intend to experiment]**.

Masterclass

 Elliot joins the masterclass to gain more ideas on how to motivate staff to be better contributors. He self-rates his skills, knowledge and confidence as seven out of ten before attending the masterclass. This rating improves to eight afterwards as he reports feeling more confident and able to "get a bit more out of staff". He gains knowledge in 'new tricks and ideas' to help him manage more effectively, such as strengths-based content about working in "flow" and from the group task where participants work through case studies of how to manage staff performing at different levels **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Learning together]**. During the masterclass he reflects on needing to be more organized in the ways he manages, which he usually does informally, and thinks about introducing scored appraisals and 360 feedback exercises **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**. He commits to experiment by facilitating CAD team meetings in a forum where staff can share their concerns **[Intend to experiment]**. Afterwards he reports gaining knowledge in the need to have "proper structures in place" to get the best out of staff and encouraging them to engage in self-development activities **[Gain knowledge]**.

Coaching

Elliot works with the same coach who facilitated his peer learning group and describes the experience as "brilliant". He enjoys the sessions and wants to learn how to design an appraisal system so he can take a proposal back to his management team. At the time of the coaching, the pay and progression project has been implemented, and performance management is the next phase of the organisational change. The coach introduces him to new ideas such as SMART objective setting, rating schemes, creating visual progress checks of team objectives, and incorporating both "what" staff do and "how" they approach work into appraisals **[Gain knowledge]**. Elliot also shares appraisal forms he has researched from other organisations and, together with his coach, they discuss the pros and cons of how they might work in his organisation **[Learning together]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**. Elliot describes the process as "getting down to the nitty gritty of what should go on the appraisal form" **[Make sense]**, **[Intend to experiment]**.

After the sessions, Elliot commits to experiment by sharing and testing his new ideas with his line manager and the management team **[Intend to experiment]**. He creates a file of the resources the coach gives him, alongside his notes. He reports that he recounted his conversations with his coach with colleagues and how he drew on this to create legitimacy so that his opinions were listened to and supported **[Make sense]**. In between coaching sessions, he made good progress. Through discussion with his manager, he identified which ideas she would support and take forwards, such as SMART objective setting **[Learning together]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Experiment]**. He also discussed the ideas with the new HR advisor **[Learning together]**, **[Make sense]**. Elliot's coach observed him reflecting on his practice during the sessions **[Reflect]** and using terms shared in the masterclass - such as when he refers to a "flight risk" in his team – to make sense of his team **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Make sense]**. In the final coaching session, he

8.4 Case Study 31:
ELLIOT
(Participant number 891, GM)

states he has all the information he now needs to "visualise the painting coming together" **[Make sense]**.

Outcomes

When we spoke to Elliot some months after his training, he found it difficult to articulate which outcomes came from which intervention. However, he stated that every time he did a peer learning or coaching session "something goes in to help me…I couldn't possibly say exactly what it was". The pay and progression project has been implemented in his organisation, though it is not possible to say what influenced Elliot's participation at the GELL interventions had on this organisational change. However, Elliot does attribute a shared interest between him and his organisational peers in doing research on pay and progression, going on courses (such as the GELL programme) and reading books as a collaborative management team effort to make the implementation a success. Therefore, we can suggest that the timing of his involvement in GELL contributed to that success.

Peer Learning

As a result of peer learning, Elliot influenced his organisation to hold briefing sessions with 80 staff in small groups as part of the consultation process about the pay and progression changes [Improved organisational practice]. He remains focused on improving communication across his organisation as:

"the sessions really brought out of me some of the elephants in the room we have in my organisation, the main one being a perception that some managers and possibly team leaders don't communicate as effectively."

One of Elliot's staff members had left the organisation citing "poor communication" as a reason, something that had been a wake-up call to the rest of the management team who were surprised by the feedback, thinking they were communicating well. He reflected that his learning was "not to assume that our way of communicating is the best way" **[Improved manager practice]**. Elliot

reported being "much more involved in quality meetings, continuous improvement projects, appraising staff, and helping develop a company structure we can be proud of". He continues to be a mediator between staff and management, stretching his strength in that skillset which enables him to find out what is going on "on the ground" in his department [Improved manager practice]. He also now leads a weekly meeting with all staff which seeks to improve communication with them and provides a forum to talk about projects, issues, production and KPIs **[Improved organisational practice], [Improvement to good and/or productive work]**. He's been supported by the new senior management team to do this.

Masterclass

Since the masterclass Elliot reported doing more informal listening with staff. He has taken the role of mediator to help resolve friction between team members through collaborative discussion **[Improved manager practice], [Improved organisational practice]**.

Coaching

Elliot reported that his coach "made me feel much more confident in the way I think and approach management" **[Improved manager practice]** and that he now has formal staff meetings to assign tasks and develops projects with other managers through a daily process review meeting rather than "managing by email" and "just chatting to staff" **[Improved organisational practice], [Improved good and/ or productive work]**. His perception is that "staff realise that management is changing things for the better and can see this" **[Positive impact on staff]**. At our interview, he explains that the appraisal project is ongoing and not yet implemented but, once in place, he anticipates it will have a positive effect across the organization, beyond his team. The new HR advisor is taking the lead with Elliot now "on the periphery" but able to share opinions on it. The visual communication he suggested is starting to be implemented, to show staff progress against weekly targets **[Improved organisational practice], [Improvement to good and/or productive work]**.

Context + Mechanism = Outcome

Learning
Gain knowledge*   Make sense
Intend to experiment*   Learning together**
Reflect*

Outcome
Experiment/Improved manager practice***   Positive impact on staff*

Improved organisational practice***   Improvement to good and/or productive work**
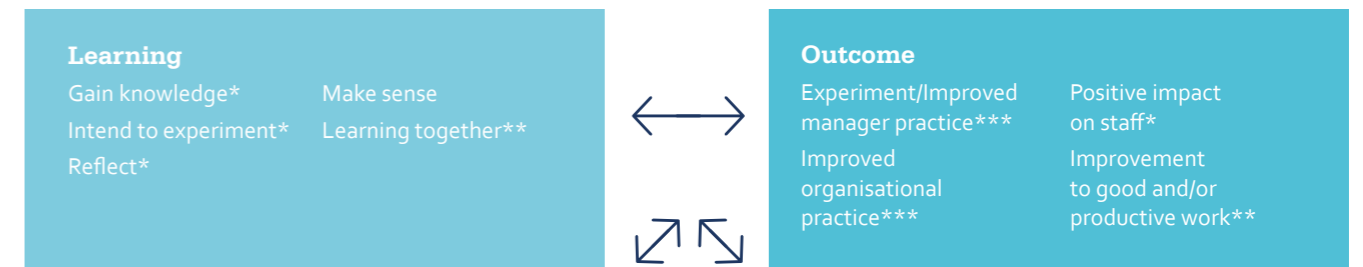
Context
+ Manager engaged in a learning journey prior to participation in GELL, which sparks his curiosity further via the introduction of new ideas and hearing practices of managers in different sectors.
+ Manager has a supportive line manager and good relationships with peers enabling him to talk through ideas learned in the training sessions afterwards, to make sense of them in context.
+ Good timing organizationally as ideas from this new member to the senior team, supported by the appointment of a first HR advisor, can gain traction in the context of a supportive SME leadership group.
+ The timing of pre-planned organisational change enables the manager to bring different/relevant challenges to different interventions and gain support over an extended three month period.
+ Accountability of a peer learning process encourages experimentation with live organisational issues.
+ Working one-to-one with a coach providing tailored input sparks the generation of new ideas and referring to an 'expert coach' is a way of influencing concurrent organisational change.
+ Coaching takes learning to a deeper level after attending peer learning and a masterclass, working through a practical challenge in detail.

- Manager contribution to peer learning is limited due to learning with peers from a different sector that manager perceives are better qualified and experienced, resulting in a negative impact on his confidence within the sessions.
- Little evidence observed of positive impact on staff, potentially due to unsettling nature of organisational change in flow.
- Masterclass has least impact possibly due to timing in-between peer learning and coaching .

8.4 Case Study 32:
FRAN
(Participant number 645, GM)

Context

This participant is a social worker who manages a team of child protection frontline social workers. Fran explains that her role is very busy and isn't the typical 9-5 role. She likens her team to her caseload, noting that she is required to help them through a variety of issues that might arise. She finds every day different in this role, with no two situations being the same. Fran describes the work as very challenging, as they often have to impose safeguarding situations on families. There is also a lot of conflict to deal with in her role and she is frequently faced with conflicting views, values, processes and ideas. Fran explains that working through the pandemic has been very challenging and they have had to work in quite different ways, something the families they work with don't always understand. During the pandemic, staff had to wear PPE and just go and "get the job done". Fran found this hard to manage as the team had their own health issues to deal with. Part of her role was to help her team to lower their expectations at times and realise it was ok to sometimes work in an adapted way.

Fran has been a team leader for about four years. Prior to that she worked as a senior practitioner. She has undertaken some elements of management training. For example, a level four management training course. Fran enjoys working with her current team and finds them to be a "great bunch". Her team consists of 7 social workers, of which 4 are newly qualified. The newly qualified group require a lot more input due to the complex and diverse nature of the role. A dominant challenge during the training for Fran relates to how new trainees are managed through their foundational year in the changing pandemic context, where close in-person supervision has been reduced/minimised, and the usual level of in-person support has dropped from what it would normally be. Institutionally the central development team seem to be trying to work through what this now looks like, but it seems ineffective for underperforming/struggling trainees.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference (in brackets) to the relevant learning pillars. **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]**, **[Intend to experiment]**.

Peer Learning

Fran talks firstly about her experiences with peer learning. Fran joined peer learning because she had a really difficult situation with a poor outcome for a client at work that she found difficult to manage. Fran found that the peer learning helped her personally, but she also wanted to learn how best to support her team. She was sceptical about the peer learning at first given that the participants were all from different backgrounds and she wasn't sure how it would work. She found it helpful that the other peers validated all of the things that she had to deal with in her work and it helped her to **[Reflect]** on what she actually does every day. She also **[Reflected]** on the fact that her organisation is very "process led", something she knew already but wasn't "really conscious of" until it was discussed in the peer learning. She valued the advice that she was given when **[Learning together]** and found it interesting to hear the perspectives of those who were from quite different organisations to hers. She also **[Gained new knowledge]** in relation to a particular individual who was not performing well and how she could more effectively deliver messages to team members so they receive them differently. The peers suggested that Fran carry out a SWOT analysis with the worker mentioned above so that the worker could present what she felt were her strengths and weaknesses and then how these could be dealt with. Through the conversations with the peers Fran also came to realise **[Gain knowledge]** that what she had in her mind already was the right approach for dealing with this issue. Fran also learnt that she was running around too much for the individual and that she needed to stop and let the person do some of those things themselves. She reached the conclusion that she needed to enable the person to be proactive **[Reflect]**. During the peer learning, Fran committed to experiment with having discussions with staff around priorities and using a SWOT analysis with a member of the team **[Intend to experiment]**. Overall, the peer learning made Fran think much more deeply and clearly around what she does as well as the importance of having a clear list of objectives, testing those out and putting the onus back on others.
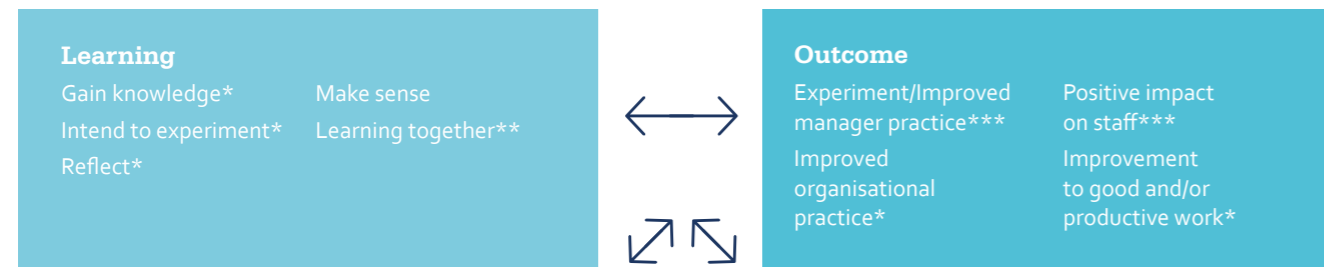
Coaching

Fran also talked about her experiences of being part of the skills coaching sessions. Fran took different elements of the same challenges that she took to the peer learning to the coaching. She found the coaching very helpful, in particular when the coach re-framed issues back to her **[Make sense]**. In the coaching she also learnt **[Gain knowledge]** that she was doing too much and she needed to stop and step back. Fran also reflected on the fact that as a manager she needed to delegate more **[Reflect]**. Fran found It helpful that the coach had an HR background as this helped her to gain knowledge about specific HR processes. When working with the coach to reflect on a tricky issue with a particular trainee, Fran gained insights into some of the reasons that might be driving the trainee's behaviour- she began to wonder if the trainee didn't like being managed because she had only ever worked for herself. In the coaching, Fran committed to experiment with various practices such as using a SWOT analysis with individuals as well as using a peer supervision process. She also committed to taking on board the perspective that her team are responsible for their own learning, she needs to adapt her style to different people's needs and to having career conversations with trainees about skills, motivation and responsibility **[Intend to experiment]**.

Outcomes

Fran went on to make a number of changes to her practice following her involvement in the training. From both the peer learning and the coaching, Fran experimented with using the SWOT approach with a team member to explore their strengths and weaknesses **[Improved manager practice]**. Fran also encouraged the senior practitioners to "peer coach" other members of the team **[Experimenting]**. Here, she asked the senior practitioners to bring examples from practice, using theory and research to support junior colleagues and help them to learn. This had the result of fostering peer learning in the team **[Positive impact on staff]**. Fran noted that she was planning to do this before the peer learning, but the peer learning highlighted the need to have more specific, clear guidelines and a clarity over what they want to achieve. Fran feels that this change to practice has had a flow through effect by bringing the senior practitioner team together to enable them to mentor the others in a more planned way, as well as making it a more integral part of their role. Fran mentions that for one of the senior practitioners it has boosted her confidence and given her clarity and a clear sense of what is expected **[Positive impact on staff]**. Fran goes on to add that the new mentoring approach that she set up has enabled the team to be what she describes as "more rounded". From the coaching specifically, Fran had a career conversation with a particular employee to ask her what her wants, needs and goals are **[Improved manager practice]**. In relation to the challenging situation with the trainee (alluded to above), Fran delivered the message that she was not ready to progress her training year and set her some further actions. Fran also escalated this challenge and the impact of it to her own manager who has supported her in engaging and getting support from the workforce development team.

8.4 Case Study 32:
FRAN
(Participant number 645, GM)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge*   Make sense

Intend to experiment*   Learning together**

Reflect*

Outcome

Experiment/Improved   Positive impact
manager practice***   on staff***

Improved   Improvement
organisational   to good and/or
practice*   productive work*

Context

+ The manager has a complex and busy role that often involves reconciling conflict and so needs support to manage a challenging situation.

+ The manager is relatively new to management (within four years) and has undertaken some management training but seeking new knowledge.

+ The manager finds newly qualified members of the team the most challenging group, especially given the lack of every day support they received from the team during covid; this placed increased pressure on the manager that she needs help to manage.

+ The manager also motivated to join peer learning due to a very challenging situation relating to a poor outcome for a client and, in particular, to validate her feelings and her approach.

+ Through working with others in peer learning, the Manager gained new ideas for how to manage a challenging situation with a trainee, resulting in experimentation with new approaches. The manager also learnt about peer learning as an approach she can set up in her own team, having positive effects on staff.

+ Reflecting with the Coach helped her to gain knowledge that she was doing too much and needed to stop and step back. Coaching also helped her to understand the underlying reasons for the challenging situation with the trainee and take a more proactive approach to dealing with this issue.

8.4 Case Study 33: SAMANTHA

(Participant number 645, Adult social care)

Context

Samantha works as a children's manager for a medium- sized charity. The organization has developed and grown a significant amount since Samantha joined. In her current role, she manages a number of different services that are specific to children and young people. She is responsible for quite a large team of people; from counsellors to admin staff to non-clinical roles. In terms of previous training, Samantha has completed a Level 5 operational management ILM qualification. Samantha joined the GELL training to see if there is anything more that her organisation could be doing to get the best out of people.

Samantha describes the culture of her organisation as "unique" and that the purpose and values of the organisation are embedded in everything that the organisation does. Samantha mentions that the organisation is quite diverse in that there are many different groups and personalities. Covid has had a massive impact on the organisation. Specifically, the nature of the work shifted considerably from face-to-face to remote delivery. This has had a positive impact in terms of client attendance at sessions, especially with certain groups of clients. However, Samantha recognises that post-pandemic, people within her team have different preferences in terms of how they work and managing this is "tricky". She goes on to explain that her team have also felt disconnected in recent times and value face-to-face contact. One of the challenges Samantha has faced, however, is how to get people to meet in person. She has found that people do not want to travel into the office for meetings.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference (in brackets) to the relevant learning pillars. **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]** **[Intend to experiment]**.

Masterclass

Samantha found the masterclass to be "really informative" and there was a couple of things that she **[Gained knowledge]** on from the masterclass. Samantha recalls a discussion in the masterclass about having people involved in creating their job description. When asked how her understanding of how to get the best out of people changed from going on the masterclass, Samantha did not feel her understanding had changed but she did find the masterclass "reassuring" explaining that everything that was talked about she is already trying to put into practice. When asked what she reflected on, Samantha felt that horizon scanning was something that they need to do more of in her organization **[Reflect]** commenting that they are very reactive to situations. She felt that the horizon scanning and PESTLE model was something that her organization could use in the future to inform decisions more **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**. Samantha did not remember the opportunities that she had to learn together with others in the masterclass.

Outcomes

Since the masterclass, Samantha has made some changes to her practice **[Improved manager practice]**. Firstly, Samantha worked with her team on an activity where she got them to look at their job description and then think about whether that was an accurate reflection of their role. After this, she supported them with job design. Before the masterclass, this process was being conducted "slightly" but more in a reactive way rather than as a proactive practice. Samantha has incorporated this change into team meetings and one-to-ones. Samantha reports that this worked well and it was useful. Samantha found that the masterclass gave her the "push she needed" to keep going with this practice change **[Experimenting]**. The masterclass also planted the seed for her to develop a mentor programme **[Experimenting]** to empower current service providers to support new members. When asked if these changes had had any knock-on effect on her team, Samantha felt that her team are more empowered and confident that they have a supportive and transparent manager they can trust. Samantha also felt that her team feel more heard and involved in developing organisational processes **[Positive impact on staff]**.

8.4 Case Study 33: SAMANTHA
(Participant number 645, Adult social care)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge*	Make sense
Intend to experiment*	Learning together**
Reflect*	

Outcome

Experiment/Improved manager practice**	Positive impact on staff**
Improved organisational practice*	Improvement to good and/or productive work*

Context

+ The manager has some managerial experience and has undertaken some management training but is motivated to find out from the GELL training if her organization can do more to get the best out of people.

+ Changes to working practices following Covid have created new managerial challenges- for example team reluctance to attends face-to-face meetings and so the manager is seeking solutions to new problems.

- The Manager did not remember opportunities to learn with others in the masterclass and this did not seem to contribute to learning.

- The manager gained new knowledge in the masterclass about a particular practice (getting team involved in creating job descriptions) and she was motivated to implement this, improving her practice. It is unclear if other areas of knowledge she intended to experiment with (horizon scanning and PESTLE) will be deployed later.

- The masterclass resulted in the manager developing a mentoring programme resulting in her team feeling more empowered and listened to.

8.4 Case Study 34:
JEN
(Participant number 266, Adult social care)

Context

Jen has held three different management roles in social care in the last 12 months. She currently manages three practice managers as well as the people who fall under those managers, in total approx. 40 people. In terms of previous management training, Jen has undertaken impact training which was a four-day training course. She has also undertaken small amounts of training in flexible and agile working. There is some training available in her current organization but this, according to Jen is rather "hit and miss". Her organization is currently trying to improve on this. Jen enjoys people management, specifically, getting to know people and learning what their strengths are as well as the areas they feel less confident. She recognizes that managing people is very challenging as people don't always react in the way that one would expect them to. Accordingly, she is constantly adapting her style to get the best out of a situation. Jen joined the GELL training because it was passed on to her by senior management. Jen thought that it sounded like an interesting opportunity and something that was "a bit different" to the normal offer.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference **[in brackets]** to the relevant learning pillars. **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]**, **[Intend to experiment]**.

Masterclass
Jen described the masterclass as being very inclusive and informative, prompting her to **[Reflect]** on what she had done in the past and what she might do to take things forward. She also found that the masterclass helped to provide reassurance in relation to some of her current managerial practices. Jen valued the connection with other managers in the session. The masterclass gave her the confidence to recognise that she is on the "right lines" with some of the things that she was doing in practice. As follows, she planned to continue with these but push some aspects further, for example getting to know the team better **[Intend to experiment]**. Jen feels that the masterclass pushed her to get to know people in her organisation a bit more, something she had struggled with due to the size of the team. She also valued listening to some of the strategies that other managers used in their practice. When asked if anything in the masterclass particularly resonated with her, Jen referred to a part of the masterclass where there was an analogy introduced about strengths and overdrive. This she felt really "stuck with her" **[Gain knowledge]**. From this part of the masterclass, she came to realise **[Reflect]** the importance of not giving people the same tasks just because its one of their strengths as this can result in that individual shying away from the things that they don't know. Jen talked about the opportunities to work with others in the masterclass. She valued **[Learning together]** with other managers and found it interesting to hear about their different approaches. She thought about whether she could adapt their approach to her work **[Reflect]**, **[Making sense]**.
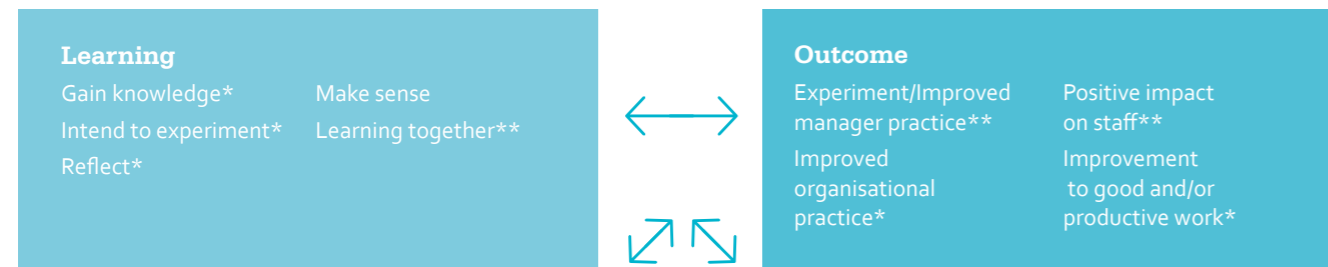
Outcomes

Masterclass
When asked if she had gone on to do anything differently following the masterclass, Jen commented that the biggest change related to how she worked a specific colleagues whom she felt was "failing" but had turned a corner **[Improved manager practice]**. The colleague struggled to work with technology and hadn't acquired relevant computer skills. Jen tried to help her with this in a very "slowly, slowly" approach, also motivating and encouraging her to support the colleague's sense of overwhelm. As part of her approach, Jen also organized more supervisions with her, often several times a day until she felt more confident **[Improved manager practice]**. Jen went on to describe how this colleague's confidence had grown and she was now managing to complete new tasks **[Positive impact on staff]**. The masterclass (in particular the analogy of the boat with holes in it) helped Jen to focus on this individual's strengths during this process, also helping her to unearth why she entered social work in the first place **[Experimenting]**. These kinds of strengths focused conversations helped to re-energize the colleague and encouraged her to reflect on the fact that she used to be good at her job and she was "going to get back there". Another area of practice Jen has experimented with relates to worker progression. Specifically, in one-to-one supervisions or appraisals, Jen began having conversations with her team about the kinds of experiences they would like to have, rather than the next level they could aspire to in terms of career development **[Experimenting]**. The above changes had a positive impact on staff. Jen explained that staff feel more confident and clearer about what their role is. When asked what she would like to do in the future in terms of getting the best out of the team, Jen mentions that the structure around management training could be improved, and she would like to strengthen the existing management training **[Intend to experiment]**.

8.4 Case Study 34:
JEN
(Participant number 266, Adult social care)

Context+Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge*   Make sense

Intend to experiment*   Learning together**

Reflect*

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↗ ↘

Outcome

Experiment/Improved   Positive impact
manager practice**   on staff**

Improved   Improvement
organisational   to good and/or
practice*   productive work*

Context

+ A manager relatively new to role and who has undertaken a small amount of prior management training, currently managers a large team of people and so recognises that she needs further people management training.

+ The manager was interested in the GELL training as it was different to the kind of training "normally available"

+ The Manager was able to apply the training to a live task – addressing under performance – and this improved both her own and the staff member's confidence.

+ The masterclass helped to improve confidence in current practice as well as providing ideas to push practice a bit further.

+ The manager valued listening to other manager's strategies in masterclass and hearing about their approaches.

+ The manager had the power to change her approach to one-to-ones and other management routines and this enabled her to experiment.

8.4 Case Study 35: ADELE
(Participant number 673, Adult social care)

Context

Adele works for an organisation offering wellbeing and employment services. Before starting in this role, she was promoted to a team leader post. Previously, she was a coach working one-to-one with clients in the service. At present she manages a team of five people. Her role involves case load management, individual supervisions, networking and building relationships. Adele is half way through an in-house management training programme but has not previously received any management training. When managing her team, Adele values being able to work in a different way with different people. However, she often finds the different needs people have challenging to manage. She also enjoys the in-depth discussions she has with the team when working one-to-one with them about quality of work and what they are experiencing in terms of wellbeing or barriers to working more effectively. Adele also enjoys being able to influence what's going on within a service by putting forward her opinions. In her current organisation, she feels her opinion is heard and taken on board when the organisation are making decisions. She doesn't enjoy having the same repetitive conversations with her team and when she has to chase people to do their job. In interview one, Adele mentioned that she found her organisation to be very encouraging and supportive, noting that it tries to facilitate opportunities for people to grow and expand on what they are interested in and passionate about. Notably, in a later follow up interview, Adele reported that the culture had declined. Adele came to hear about the GELL project through her manager and it appealed to her because she felt like it would be a good opportunity to discuss some of the challenges she was experiencing. Adele describes herself as someone that looks around for resources and things that can help her when she feels a bit out of her depth.

Learning Interventions

In this section, we record participant learning with reference **[in brackets]** to the relevant learning pillars. **[Gain knowledge]**, **[Reflect]**, **[Make sense]**, **[Learning together]** **[Intend to experiment]**.

Masterclass

Adele found the masterclass informative and she liked how the facilitators brought the material to life with examples. Reflecting on masterclass content, Adele learnt the importance of making sure that people are really aware of what the expectations are in terms of their work role and communicating things in a way that makes sense to them. She also learnt about the importance of having timely conversations with people that are uncomfortable rather than waiting for the team member to raise it much later. When asked if there was anything in the masterclass that resonated with her, she remembered an image with a wheel or tail that related to people's strengths and what they are interested in and how to explore that with the team **[Gain knowledge]**. Adele went on to add that she had not considered this in that way before. Adele recalled opportunities to work with others during the masterclass **[Learning together]** and she found it interesting to see how people already applied things or how people already worked. She found this especially helpful given her lack of experience in her current role. When asked if the masterclass changed her practice as a manager Adele noted that the it made her realise that there are a lot of different ways of managing people **[Gain knowledge]**. From this she **[Reflected]** that she can afford to be a bit less critical of herself.

Coaching

Adele did not attend the peer learning as she felt that she "wouldn't have enough to say" because she was quite early in her management career. She was drawn to coaching because she was familiar with it as a learning approach and she thought it would be helpful to talk about the challenges she was experiencing and find ways forward. Adele found the coaching process very helpful and that the coach really listened and took on board what she was saying. She reported that the coaching helped her to respond in different ways and approach situations from alternative standpoints **[Gain knowledge]**. She learnt to reflect on her own approach as a manager and gained new knowledge that "changing her mind" (something that she saw as a negative trait) was actually a useful skill to have **[Reflect]**, **[Gain knowledge]**. Adele learnt how to have difficult conversations through the coaching, describing a situation with a team member with whom she needed to create better boundaries with in meetings **[Gain knowledge]**. Through the coaching she also learnt how to approach meetings differently. Adele felt that her meetings following the coaching were more structured. She also reflected that you don't need to suddenly change because you are in a new role and that it is acceptable to draw on past practices that have worked well **[Gain knowledge]**. During the coaching, Adele committed to experimenting with various new practices such as: booking in meetings

with the team and recording notes which she would send to them with actions to be taken; creating an affirmation to trust her decisions and choices, and; looking at resources around communication and conflict by using "learn well" coaching books and resources in the GELL project **[Intend to experiment]**.

Outcomes

Masterclass
 After the masterclass, Adele used the strengths and weaknesses activity with her team **[Experiment]**. In her appraisals with staff members, she also began asking more questions about their future direction and goals **[Improved manager practice]**.

Coaching
Since the coaching, Adele has **[experimented]** with a range of new practices such as booking in team meetings with each team member for the quarter ahead, creating an affirmation to trust her decisions, structuring one-to-ones differently and looking into resources around communication and conflict using "learn well" coaching books and GELL resources. She has also changed the structure of weekly reporting within the team and stream-lined her emailing system. Adele has come to realise that she is able to be a little bit more assertive and challenging in her managerial approach and she feels she is now more able to communicate what she needs or what needs to be done for the service. The coaches that she works with have responded well to this but management have not (she thinks they now think she is "bossy!"). Adele also feels that she is now clearer with her team when interacting with them and this has resulted in the team having a better idea of what is expected from them **[Improved manager practice]**. Adele feels that this was not the case before coaching.

The changes to Adele's practice have had a knock-on effect on the team's motivation and creativity **[Positive impact on staff]**. This may have come from the conversations she has been having with the team about personal development plans and the encouragement she has given them to think about what it is they want to be doing going forward. One of her team commented that such conversations had broadened their view and enabled them to think about what else might be going on that they might be interested in **[Positive impact on staff]**. Adele also feels that the team are generally more aware of what needs to be done and senses that the team are being more supportive.
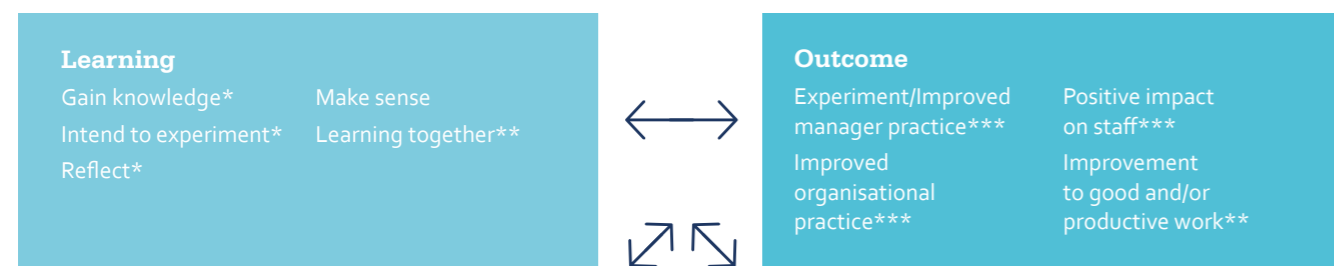
Since the coaching, Adele has also experimented with taking a different approach in one-to-one meetings. In her interview, she makes reference to the meetings she has had with one member of her team where this change has made meetings more productive **[Improved manager practice]**. Adele feels that she now has a clearer sense of what this individual's challenges are within the client work he is doing and she has been able to explore other issues with him, such as his wellbeing. Adele also feels that she has adopted a clearer approach with her own manager following the training. She explains how she has taken on an extra project and negotiated with her manager about

8.4 Case Study 35: ADELE
(Participant number 673, Adult social care)

getting overtime. This is something that she said she would not have done before the coaching **[improvement to good and productive work]**.

Context + Mechanism = Outcome

Learning

Gain knowledge*   Make sense

Intend to experiment*   Learning together**

Reflect*

Outcome

Experiment/Improved   Positive impact
manager practice***   on staff***

Improved   Improvement
organisational   to good and/or
practice***   productive work**

Context

+ The manager manages a range of different roles and individuals which she enjoys but finds challenging. She is keen to learn and to help her organization to learn.

+ The manager has not undertaken any prior management training but is currently enrolled on some in-house management training. She still feels a need to join the GELL training to gain support with challenges she is currently experiencing.

+ The manger reflected in the masterclass on a live issue and identified a potential solution (making her team clear on expectations and having timely conversations with her team to avoid issues escalating). This process of making sense of a live issue led to experimentation.

+ The manager valued being able to talk through issues and reflect with a coach, this helped her to reflect on her managerial style and begin to approach challenges differently and be more structured in her approach. Coaching led to clear intentions to experiment and actual experimentation. This could have been a good scaffold to have the confidence to engage in peer learning.

+ Experimentation following coaching led to number of concrete practice changes as well as a more assertive managerial stance. Practice changes have resulted in increased team motivation and creativity.

- The Manager is initially confident that her organization is supportive and somewhere she can create change but this declines over time as her growing confidence and new practices are not fully supported (she thinks that senior managers perceive her as 'bossy').

- The Manager is drawn to coaching rather than peer learning due to lack of confidence and experience as a manager and this means she loses out on learning from other managers and building her confidence by hearing about their problems and progress. However, she did enjoy learning together in the masterclass and may have just needed further encouragement to feel worthy of a place in a peer learning group.

8.5 Management Challenge 3: Cross Case Analysis - What Do Case Studies Tell Us About What Works For Whom And Why?

Case study managers were selected to cover a range of interventions and experiences, some having very positive learning journeys and outcomes and others less so. Of the 12, 11 attended a masterclass and a further seven also attended other interventions (three also did peer learning, three skills coaching and one both skills coaching and peer learning). Only one did not attend a masterclass, attending coaching and peer learning interventions.

There was a blend of experienced and less experienced managers, with varied reasons for attending the interventions. For some, it was part of a wider aspiration for self-development, while others attended to gain support for particular challenges they were facing. The wider context of the Covid 19 pandemic also led some to suggest that they needed some "head space" and time away from the workplace to think through their approach to management and to build networks with other managers. In a number of instances, work pressures created a (perceived) need for different ways to manage and be more efficient.

8.5.1 Masterclasses

This section reflects on both learning from masterclasses and how these were related to other interventions.

Masterclasses as self-contained learning experience

Gain Knowledge

Most managers reported gaining knowledge via the masterclasses with many reflecting on the models and frameworks covered. Job design was prominent amongst these, as were strengths-based approaches to development and how to offer autonomy. A number also used the PESTLE model covered. A few managers experienced technical difficulties during the masterclasses, which clearly detracted from learning, and one suggested that they struggled to remember what was covered in the masterclasses, raising questions over the longevity of the learning. Two managers suggested that they had not learned anything new, but that the masterclasses had been useful in reinforcing and refreshing existing knowledge. On the whole, the masterclasses were seen to be an effective mechanism for gaining new knowledge.

Learn Together

Masterclasses were participative and discussion-based, both in the main room and in breakout rooms, which was seen as positive. Managers welcomed the opportunity to share their challenges and realise that it was "not just them", but that all managers had challenges (even if these were different in nature). Less experienced managers enjoyed learning from more experienced managers, although one more experienced manager did note that they would have preferred to work with other experienced managers so that they too could learn. This might flag a need to balance masterclass participation so that all delegates gain from the experience. One manager also noted that they did not wish to join coaching and peer learning and they were somewhat introverted and so joined a masterclass. Even then, they preferred to sit back and listen rather than make an active contribution, again identifying a need to accommodate different personal styles within the interventions and, possibly, to build confidence to learn together.

Reflect

Some managers suggested that they were able to reflect during the masterclasses, and beyond, though this was to a lesser extent than gaining knowledge and learning together. One particular benefit that emerged from masterclasses was the building of confidence as managers came to understand that their approaches were effective, or they learned new approaches. Many were reassured to realise that all managers faced challenges of one type or another and this reflection helped to build confidence and the idea that people management can be learnt.

Make Sense

Managers made sense particularly in relation to using theory to understand their organisational challenges. Frameworks and models covered helped them to analyse their current situation and identify its origins plus thinking about how take necessary steps.

Experiment

Many managers experimented following the masterclasses, although given that all but one also did other interventions, it was not always easy to disentangle what experimentation flowed from which interventions. Nevertheless, various types of experimentation was reported, including having career conversations in different ways, engaging in job design and adopting strengths-based approaches to developing their teams.

Masterclasses as a Gateway and Foundation for Peer Learning and Coaching

Of the 11 case study managers who attended masterclasses, 6 attended one other intervention and one attended both other interventions. The logic for this was not always clear, though many seemed to have enjoyed the intervention and this encouraged them to continue their GELL learning journeys. For most though, the masterclass provided a foundation for later interventions and a knowledge base to work with. This was not, however, always the case. One manager did two coaching sessions, a masterclass and then the third coaching session, suggesting that it worked well to run them alongside each other. Another did the masterclass and peer learning some time apart and noted that, for the masterclass to provide the required scaffolding for learning, the interventions needed to be reasonably close together.

In relation to the five initial pillars, masterclasses seemed to be most effective for gaining knowledge.

8.5.2 Peer Learning

Five managers engaged in peer learning, all alongside another intervention (three with masterclasses, one with coaching and one with masterclass and coaching).

Gain Knowledge

Gaining knew knowledge was less evident than in the masterclasses, although the content covered appeared to be better remembered, presumably as a result of more personalised, in-depth discussions. Indeed, most managers reflected on the richness of discussion achieved in the peer learning sessions. One potential concern, however, was that managers brought their own challenges to the sessions and these were sometimes rather tangential to the focus of the intervention. While managers undoubtedly benefited from the intervention, this could be in different ways to the original intention. A number mentioned the value of having very knowledgeable facilitators, especially ones skilled in HR matters, who could flex the focus and drop-in knowledge relevant to their challenges.

Learn Together

All managers noted the strength of learning together in this intervention. They were able to bring their own challenges, but also learn from hearing about others challenges. Groups were planned to be six in size, but were often smaller and a few managers noted their preference for this. They suggested that they could bond more effectively in groups of, say three, and really benefit from working with other managers in this way. Again, they were reassured to hear of others' challenges, even if different to their own, and recognise the complexity of management for all in these roles.

Reflect

Reflection was also important in peer learning and came about through the challenges posed by fellow managers. Importantly, having three sessions with time between each also provided managers with time for reflection,

the opportunity to try things out and bring an updated challenge to the next sessions. Managers suggested that, in addition to gaining knowledge, they also gained skills in reflection and listening. For some, reflection was not limited to the challenge brought. For example, through reflection one manager realised that they were working in an organisation that did not reflect their own values and, consequently, decided to leave the organisation. Self-realisations could also result from reflection.

Make Sense

Sense making flowed from reflection, with managers developing understanding of their situations and how to address their challenges. At the extreme, as noted above, one came to realise that their position in their current organisation was untenable.

Experiment

Most managers committed to experimentation and having three sessions some weeks apart providing an ideal framework for this. While some did return to peer learning having not undertaken the experimentation, mainly as a result of time pressures, most did. They worked, for example, on matters related to development, careers or job design and returned to reflect further with their peers on the success (or otherwise) of this.

In relation to the five learning pillars underpinning the interventions, 'learning together' was the most prominent for peer learning.

8.5.3 Coaching

Five case study managers attended coaching interventions, three alongside masterclasses, one with peer learning and one with peer learning and a masterclass.

Gain Knowledge

This was not the primary pillar for coaching, although some managers noted that they were able to build on the knowledge gained in masterclasses in the coaching sessions. As also noted above, having specialist HR practitioners as coaches was also beneficial in that they were able to introduce models and frameworks relevant to the coachees' challenge or situation. This meant that more knowledge was gained than might have been expected.

Learn Together

The nature of the coaching intervention, working one to one with a coach, meant that this pillar was not especially prominent in the data. Clearly, the managers learnt with the coaches, and this was highly valued, but opportunities for wider peer learning were not available.

Reflect

Reflection was prominent in the coaching sessions and these were highly valued in creating space in managers' otherwise very busy schedules. Reflection is clearly the basis of effective coaching, and both facilitators and managers reported how it created "lightbulb moments"

in which managers developed new realisations and understanding around their own practice and management challenges.

Make Sense
Sensemaking was again prominent. Coaching created a safe space for discussion and, as above, reflection. This was coupled with various models and framework to generate new insights. While sensemaking often focussed on ideas regarding how to address challenges, there was also a self-development opportunity for a number of managers. They realised that their own practice was part of the challenge. Some, for example, noted how they had realised that they were "part of the problem", doing too much and needing to stand back and allow their team members more autonomy and space to learn rather than seeking to resolve all their problems.

Experiment
Experimentation was also a frequent outcome of coaching, again because of the one-to-one, reflective nature of the intervention and the opportunity to create action plans individualised to the managers' needs. The sequential nature of the intervention also meant that managers were accountable for their commitments in the second and third coaching sessions. While experimentation often focused on the specific content of the challenge (e.g. reflecting on team development or career conversations), it also frequently comprised a change to the manager's own style. A number sought to adopt a more coaching style with their teams, and some committed to using peer learning and mentoring in getting the best out of their team.

For coaching, learning in relation to the management learning pillars was particularly strong for "reflection" and "making sense".

8.5.4 Outcomes

Following the logic of the Theory of Change, we now consider the extent to which learning enabled change in practice and flowed through to benefits for employees and the wider organisation. Experimentation and change in practice were widely reported by case study managers (and by around three quarters of managers in the full rapid estimation data). Examples included creating new roles, enabling staff to use more initiative, establishing career conversations and reviewing career pathways, job redesign and holding more challenging conversations when needed. Smaller numbers reported positive impact on staff and to good and decent work (again in line with the rapid estimation data at 31% and 28% respectively), but there were several example of this. Staff who had been promoted felt happier and worked more productively, those whose jobs now offered more autonomy felt more valued and included and greater confidence levels for staff were widely reported. Some of these changes supported more productive working and a more inclusive workplace.

Context was central to the success, or otherwise, of these changes. One manager introduced changes that had positive benefits but felt that these were in due course stifled by an unsupportive management context. Another echoed this, having had their proposal to introduce peer learning rejected. The enabling (or not) role of support was evident in a number of the case studies. Other important contextual factors that emerged included the timing of the intervention, where for some the intervention was available at a point where the manager had a particular challenge to deal with. Manager engagement and motivation were also critical, coupled with capacity. Some, for example suggested that time pressures, particularly in the adult social care sector, meant they were unable to achieve the desired outcomes. Autonomy or lack of it emerged as an important factor, with those in larger organisations suggesting that a lack of autonomy beyond their team made change hard to engender, whereas those in smaller firms felt they had more autonomy to effect desired change. Organisational change could also enable or inhibit the changes managers wished to make, as could buy-in from team members. Finally, other managers in the masterclasses and peer learning sessions were important in enabling change. It is evident that context has an important role to play and can effect outcomes in numerous and varied ways.

8.6 Conclusions From Research Findings And Analysis (3)

The Good Employment Learning Lab is seeking to learn "what works for whom, and why" to develop the people management skills of line managers and, so, to improve good work and productivity. In management challenge 3, we have analysed a rich dataset about the learning experiences of managers undertaking training in getting the best out of your team. In this section, we provide a "take away" of our findings for commissioners of line management training, policy for good and productive work and management development practice. In this section we have built on findings from management challenges 1 and 2. Our core take-away points are outlined in the final section of this report and in our Executive Summary.

8.6.1 Who Learnt What, And How?

Rapid estimation data suggests that learning resulted from each of the interventions, and this is supported by qualitative and case study analysis. Across all the interventions, managers developed their understanding of developing skills, designing jobs that used these skills and offered variety, and holding career conversations to support career progression. The balance of learning across the five initial learning pillars did, however, vary by intervention.

Masterclasses were particularly effective for gaining knowledge, and, as interactively delivered, in stimulating learning with others. There was less, although still some, evidence of reflection and sensemaking. Commitment to and actual experimentation was less prevalent and this is perhaps because of their less intensive nature: peer learning and coaching were very personalised experiences that meant managers were more likely to make commitments to experiment and feel accountable for delivering against these. The lack of follow up in masterclasses created a different level of accountability in terms of experimentation.

Peer Learning was effective both in learning with others and in gaining knowledge, the latter from facilitators and peers in less structured ways than the formal masterclass inputs. Here, the emphasis was on learning from others' experiences. Managers also engaged in reflection and sensemaking, again promoted through interaction with peers and facilitators.

Coaching offered the opportunity for significant sense making and reflection, its strength being the opportunity for in-depth, personalised discussion with the coach. Having specialist HR coaches also meant that knowledge was, in some instances, gained in a timely way relative to live challenges. This one-to-one relationship also proved particularly effective in securing commitment to experiment, again as a result of the accountability noted earlier. Experimentation was also facilitated by their being a series of coaching sessions, across which the managers could try things out and then reflect on their success (or otherwise). Accountability to report back on experimenting emerged as an important factor to success.

8.6.2 Who Did What, And Why?

An important question for the evaluation is what resulted from the learning outlined above. Using the Theory of Change, we posited that manager learning and experimentation would lead to change in practice (individual and organisational), have a positive effect on staff, and lead to improvements in good and productive work. We have presented rapid estimation data that broadly supports this theorising although, as might be expected, the degree of change reduces as we progress across the Theory of Change. This is partly because our research methodology, which focused on managers and on relatively short-term reports, was less able to observe change to organisational practices, staff experience or good or productive work. We did try to speak to staff, but with limited success and it is more likely that evaluations conducted within organisations will gain this access.

Nevertheless, our data suggests that around three quarters of managers made changes to their practice as a result of their learning and we provide examples of this through both the general qualitative evaluation data and the in-depth manager case studies. Change was wide-ranging, and incorporated both management style and specific practice. Adopting coaching and peer learning techniques and having more challenging conversations were reported by many managers and these were felt to have positive outcomes. Changes to practices were also wide ranging. One manager redesigned roles and felt that staff were happier and more likely to be promoted as a result. Another reviewed career pathways and yet another worked with strengths-based

approaches to skills development. Around 20-30% of managers then reported changes to organisational practice, a positive impact on staff and improvements to good and productive work. A change to how appraisals were run, for example, was argued to make staff more motivated and better job design led to more productive work practices. The interventions helped managers to work with practices that did indeed help them to get the best out of their teams.

On one level, then, the Theory of Change holds good. We cannot, however, avoid noting that change was effected (or least we only managed to capture that it was effected) in the later stages of the Theory of Change for around a third of managers. The qualitative evaluation and case study data help us to understand why this might be and to explore the context+ mechanism = outcome model of realist evaluation that we have adopted. As in the earlier Management Challenges, we have categorised contextual factors into 1) participant factors 2) role/organisation factors 3) wider social/environmental factors, and examine each in turn below.

Participant Factors
Manager motivation to learn and effect change was an important contextual factor. While this was to an extent a pre-condition to change, the interventions also served to enable this. For example, a number of managers suggested that they lacked confidence in their management abilities, particularly newer managers or those who had little or no previous management training. The interventions built their confidence, thus increasing their motivation to enact change. Experience managers also tended to experiment more, again due to their confidence levels.

Role/Organisational Factors
Factors here fell largely into two categories; first, organisational support/culture and, second, degree of organisational change. Some managers noted the importance of themselves having supportive managers, who gave autonomy for experimentation and change. Many others told of the difficulties of bringing about change in the face of opposition from their managers or in wider organisational cultures that were change resistant, particularly larger organisations. A lack of leadership was also raised as a constraining contextual factor, with managers unable to encourage their own managers to work with potential new ways of operating. Organisational change also had significant impact. Uncertainty made change hard to implement and, for example, increased short term contracts made many of the principles discussed in the interventions hard to use. Rapid or relentless organisational change also increased pressures and inhibited receptiveness to change. A number of managers also mentioned lack of support from HR departments, with resistance to, for example, job design. Again more confident managers felt able to do this within the parameters of their own roles.

Wider Social and Environmental Factors
There was less evidence in relation to these, although workload and time pressures were frequently raised. This was particularly so in the ASCLL but also in the GMLL

where these were significant inhibitors to change, with the demands of the Covid 19 pandemic being significant factors within this.

9.

Overall Programme Outcomes

9. Overall Programme Outcomes

We were interested in exploring relationships between the level and nature of managers' engagement with the programme and the outcomes that were recorded. Specifically, whether managers showed evidence of workplace outcomes (i.e. improved their practice, had a positive impact on staff, made improvements to organisational practice, or recorded improvements to good and productive work). We were also interested in finding out whether different 'kinds' of manager (e.g. in terms of their gender, age, or ethnicity or the size of organization they worked in) demonstrated different outcomes.

In this section, we also report on uplifts to manager self-reports of the knowledge, skill and confidence before and after the GELL learning interventions.

9.1 The Impact Of Manager's Engagement With The Programme On Learning And Workplace Outcomes

Almost all (97.2%) of research participants showed evidence of learning ('gained knowledge'), 72.2% made an improvement to practice, 31.9% were recorded as having identified positive impact on staff, 29.4% recorded a positive change in organisational practice and 34.7% recorded an improvement to good and productive work. We found some statistically significant relationships between measures of the nature and extent of managers' engagement with the programme (within each of the management challenges) and evidence of workplace outcomes.

We found that the number of interventions (i.e. masterclass, peer learning, coaching) in each management challenge that a manager engaged with was associated with evidence of impact in the workplace. Table 9.1 shows that managers who did all three interventions are more likely to report and improvement to practice than those who did two interventions, and those who did one intervention only were least likely to report making an improvement.

Similar patterns are observed for the other outcome measures we recorded – positive impact on staff, improved organizational practice and improvements to good and productive work, however these do not reach statistical significance at the p<0.05 level[1]. For this reason, and reasons of space, we report primarily on improvements to management practice in the remainder of this section.

The evidence suggests that the more training managers received, within each of the management challenges, the better the outcomes for manager and organisational practice. We didn't find any robust evidence that attending more than one management challenge was associated with stronger practice outcomes, which suggests that any cumulative effects from learning apply 'within topic' rather than 'across topics'.

We then looked at which interventions and combinations of interventions were more closely associated with positive outcomes.

Figure 7: shows the proportion of research participants who reported an improvement to practice, broken down by the particular combination of interventions that they attended.

These data in general confirm the suggestion that doing more interventions is associated with a greater frequency of reports of practice improvements. The figures for 'coaching only' are an outlier but the number of participants who only attended coaching was small (n=6), so this figure needs to be treated with caution. The data in Figure 7 also suggest that combinations including coaching are more effective in generating management practice improvements than those including peer learning (with or without a masterclass) or a masterclass alone. This is borne out by figures for practice improvement by attendance at particular interventions: 90.9% of those who attended coaching (whether or not in combination with something else) reported a practice improvement, 81.8% of those who attended peer learning, and 70.7% of those who attended a masterclass.

Figure 7: Percentage of Improvements to Practice recorded by Intervention Pattern

Practice Improvement by Intervention Pattern

Figure 7: indicates that attending a masterclass only is the least effective intervention pattern. Table 9.2, below, confirms this, and shows that there is a statistically significant difference in outcome for those doing a masterclass only, and participants doing any other intervention pattern.

Table 9.1 Relationship between the number of interventions attended within a 'management challenge' and the recording of an Improvement in Manager Practice

Number of Interventions Attended		No Improved Practice	Improved Practice	Total
One	N	53	92	145
	%	36.6%	63.4%	100
Two	N	15	69	84
	%	20.2%	79.8%	100
Three	N	1	18	19
	%	5.3%	94.7%	100

Chi-sq 14.471, df=2, p< 0.001

Table 9.2 Relationship between attending a masterclass only (versus any other intervention/ combination of interventions) and the recording of an Improvement in Manager Practice

Attended a Masterclass only		No Improved Practice	Improved Practice	Total
Yes	Number	52	79	131
	%	39.7%	60.3%	100
No	Number	17	100	98
		14.5%	85.5%	100

Chi-sq 19.670, df=2, p<0.001

[1] This may be a function of the modest sample size and the small number of participants reporting improvements in these areas, rather than the absence of any relationship.

Table 9.3 confirms this and also shows that there is little difference in improvements to manager practice between managers who combine a masterclass with other interventions and those who do other interventions without a masterclass. However, we do note that our qualitative data suggested that masterclasses were valuable in creating a foundation and gateway to peer learning and coaching. It may be that the managers diving straight into peer learning and coaching without a masterclass were more confident and able and so we need to treat the quantitative evidence here with some caution.

Table 9.3 Relationship between different combinations of interventions attended and recording of an Improvement in Manager Practice.

Combination of Interventions Attended		No Improved Practice	Improved Practice	Total
Masterclass Only	N	52	79	131
	%	**39.7%**	**60.3%**	100
Masterclass and at least one other intervention	N	15	83	98
	%	**15.3%**	**84.7%**	100
Other intervention(s) without a masterclass	N	2	17	19
	%	**11.5%**	89.5%	100

Chi-sq 19.670, df=2, p<0.001

In relation to other outcomes, there are some interesting and contrasting, if not statistically significant, patterns. Thirty-nine percent of managers who did a masterclass and something else reported a positive impact on staff, compared with 21% of managers who did another intervention(s) without a masterclass. The figures were 37% to 26% in relation to improvements to organizational practice, and 41% to 21% in relation to improvements to good and productive work. So, it seems that masterclasses may be powerful in promoting wider spill over effects.

It should be noted that coaching is a more expensive intervention than peer learning or a masterclass. Coaching is a one-to-one activity for an hour, repeated over three sessions. Flash peer learning involves up to 6 managers per facilitator and lasts for 90 minutes, repeated over three sessions. Masterclasses reach around 15 managers in our model and lasted for two hours. Either one or two facilitators were involved. Commissioners may want to consider our effectiveness data alongside cost implications to decide on the best value for money learning interventions. This will, of course, depend on the quality of outcomes they seek.

To summarise this section, we found that the more training interventions that a manager undertook on any topic, the better the practice outcomes. Masterclasses were the least effective intervention for developing management practice but there was some indication that they were powerful in creating spill over effects. They also did generate improvements to management practice for over two-thirds of research participants. Coaching was the most effective intervention, both for the small number who took it on its own and in combination with other interventions. But flash peer learning may be a more cost effective intervention and it is still highly effective. So organisations may want to consider outcome effects alongside costs to decide on the best fit learning interventions for their programmes.

9.2 The Relationship Between Characteristics Of Managers And Learning/Workplace Outcomes

As noted above, we were also interested in finding out whether different 'kinds' of managers – in terms of their gender, ethnicity, experience, or organizational factors - recorded different outcomes from the training. In general we found very sparse evidence of differences of this kind. There were modest, but not statistically significant, differences between women and men in terms some of the practice outcomes that we recorded. For example, men were more likely (78.4% to 71.5%) to report an improvement to management practice, but women were more likely to report a positive impact on staff (34.7% to 21.6%) and improvement to good and productive work (38.2% to 27.0%) There were no discernible differences in outcomes by age of manager or by ethnicity.

There were no significant differences in workplace outcomes related to the size of organization the manager worked for or the size of team that they managed, though managers with teams smaller than 10 people were slightly more likely (74.8% to 68.3%) to report improvements in management practice. There were not notable... differences in outcomes depending on length of management experience, or on the amount of time the manager had been in their current role.

These data suggest that the training is, broadly speaking, equally effective across a range of different managers. This finding is also reflected in our qualitative findings.

9.3 Analysis Of Manager Self Ratings For Knowledge, Skill And Confidence Before And After Training

Managers were given portfolios and surveys to complete which consisted of a series of questions relating to their experiences of being part of the GELL project. Managers who participated in masterclasses were given a survey and those who were involved in coaching and peer learning were given a portfolio to complete. In both the survey and portfolio we asked managers to rate themselves on two scales. Firstly, managers were asked to rate their knowledge and skill (1-10) in relation to the management challenge (e.g. managing conflict) before the training intervention. They were also asked to rate their confidence levels in the same way. Towards the end of the survey or portfolio they were asked to rate their knowledge and skill and confidence level after the training intervention. Both of these questions were designed to give us a numerical figure on how their knowledge, skill level and confidence had changed as a result of attending the training. We received a much higher survey response rate to MC2 and 3 as we developed a process of using the facilitators to prompt survey and portfolio return at several points.

Analysis of the data shows that, overall, managers' self-ratings on both 'confidence', and 'knowledge and skill' are higher following exposure to the training. The mean overall uplift was equivalent to 1.95 points on a 10 point scale (roughly equivalent, for example, to a manager rating themselves as '5' before the training intervention and '7' afterwards). By way of illustration, the mean self-rating for 'knowledge and skill' before attending a masterclass was 5.56.

This rise in self-rating differed by management challenge, as the following table shows, with MC1 having the greatest impact, and MC3 the least. Some caution is need in approaching the MC1 figure as this is based on a smaller sample (due to lower response rates in MC1 that were improved in later phases because we converted the survey to be online).

Table 9.4. Uplift in Manager Self-Report for Knowledge, Skill and Confidence Before and After Training

Management Challenge	No Improved Practice	Mean uplift in self-rating following training
1	74	2.66
2	177	2.00
3	149	1.69

Management Challenges 1 and 2 each covered two different topics. There are some indications that self-ratings improved more for some topics than others. In management challenge 1 the improvements in self-ratings for 'Values-based Recruitment' were higher than for 'Agile and Secure Working', and in management challenge two the reported improvements in 'knowledge and skills' following masterclasses were higher for 'Creativity' than they were for 'Handling Conflict'. Findings in relation to particular topics are based on smaller samples, so need to be treated with caution.

The following table indicates the uplift in rating on 'knowledge and skill' and 'confidence' in respect of each of the different types of training interventions, i.e. 'masterclasses', 'peer learning' and 'coaching'.

Knowledge and Skill	Number of Data Points	Mean uplift in rating following training
Masterclass	114	1.90
Peer Learning	30	1.73
Coaching	43	2.51
Confidence		
Masterclass	118	1.45
Peer Learning	34	2.00
Coaching	48	2.60

These data suggest that coaching has the most positive impact of all the interventions, both in relation to 'knowledge and skill' and to 'confidence'. In relation to the other two intervention types, the data suggest that peer learning performs more strongly than masterclasses in raising manager confidence, but less well in developing knowledge and skills.

The data were interrogated to see whether increases in (self-reported) 'knowledge and skill' or 'confidence' before and after the training were more likely to be experienced by particular 'types' of manager (in relation to gender, ethnicity, age, level of education, length of line management experience, size of team and size of organisation). The most noticeable differences related to levels of line manager experience, with managers with fewer than five-years' experience reporting larger increases in confidence (mean difference 1.91 scale points versus 1.47) and knowledge and skill (1.85 versus 1.62) after the training, compared with more experienced managers. Managers with fewer staff reporting to them also reported larger increases in confidence (1.79 versus 1.50) following the training, than those with larger teams. However, these differences weren't found to be statistically significant (at the $p<0.05$ level), and no significant differences were found in relation to any of the other groups mentioned above. We therefore conclude that the GELL training was probably most beneficial to relatively inexperienced managers but it was still effective in raising the knowledge, skill and confidence of more experienced managers, including those managing large teams.

10.

Conclusion And Summary: What Works To Develop The People Management Skills Of Line Managers?

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The Good Employment Learning Lab (GELL) has trialled short online learning interventions - online masterclasses (2 hours), flash peer learning (3 x 90 minute sessions) and skills coaching (3 x 60 minute sessions) - to learn 'what works, for whom, and why' to develop the people management skills of line managers. We have worked with a range of partners in the Greater Manchester Good Employment Learning Lab and the Adult Social Care Learning Lab and delivered sessions to 366 managers (230 of whom took part in our research). In total we ran 34 masterclasses (involving 363 participants), 17 flash peer learning sets (involving 65 participants) and 78 skills coaching sets (involving 78 participants). We delivered 506 learning interventions. These sought to raise line manager capability to address five management challenges identified as timely or important by our practice partners (Table 10.1).

In this chapter, we use our evaluation findings to adjust and build on our original programme model, using our evaluation findings to assert some principles for the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes that develop line manager practice and have positive spill over effects for staff, teams and organisations. The chapter ends by summarising our recommendations in a GELL Framework to Develop the People Management Skills of Line Managers. In short, we share what have learnt about how developing the people management skills of line managers can create good and productive work.

Table 10.1 The GELL People Management Training Interventions In Three Management Challenges

Management Challenge	Developing People Management Skills In:	
	Greater Manchester Good Employment Learning Lab	**Adult Social Care Good Employment Learning Lab**
1	Agile Working and Secure Work	Values Based Recruitment
2	Conflict Management and Creativity	
3	Getting the Best Out of Your Team	

Before presenting our evaluation findings, we offer a summary reminder of our original programme model in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. The Original GELL Model

Evidence about management development
Using/testing management development theory by deploying 5 pillars of learning: gain new knowledge, reflect, make sense', experiment and learn together.

Evidence about better management practice
Using/testing theory about ways of managing around particular challenges that create good and productive work.

KNOWLEDGE

Context
Variation in managers, their teams, organisations, sectors and wider environments

Learning intervention
Online Masterclass, peer learning, coaching

Learning Pillars
Gain knowledge, reflect, make sense, experiment, learn together

Improved management practice

Improvements in Good or Productive Work
Considering the subjective experience of the manager or workers, working conditions and work efficiency

Sector or place-based community learning

Iterative feedback loop for learning journeys that involve multiple interventions or independent learning

Improved organisational practice

Better practice in the place/sector

Positive impact on staff

Key

Context
Knowledge
Inputs/outputs
Intervention outcomes
Higher level outcomes

Learning pillars – Our training was initially based on evidence-based management learning practices regarding five learning pillars: gain knowledge, reflect, make sense, experiment, learning together.

Short Interventions – Designed On a Theory of Change – We designed a masterclass, flash peer learning (three sessions) and coaching (three sessions) for each management challenge. These are founded on a Theory of Change. In other words, we started with a theory of how the design of these sessions would empower line managers to learn about, experiment with and consolidate better people management practices.

We also designed in prompts for this to influence organisational practice, employee experience of work and good and productive work. Participants could take one or more learning interventions on each management challenge. They were asked to complete a learning survey or portfolio after each learning event to extend and track their practice development.

- **Masterclass –** Online 2 hour session with approx. 15 participants led by an experienced HR practitioner. Chance to gain research-based principles for management (translated to be relevant to practice) and to reflect and make sense of management options individually and together (via break-out sessions). Culminating in making a commitment to experiment with a new practice.
- **Flash peer learning* –** 3 x online 90 minute sessions with 3-6 participants led by an experienced HR practitioner. Rapid model of participants sharing challenges, listening to peers reflecting and generating solutions and then articulating an 'I will' statement of commitment to experiment with a new practice.
- **Skills coaching –** 3 x 1 hour sessions with an experienced HR practitioner coach. Deploying the GROW model – goals, reality [context], selecting options and will to gain knowledge, reflect, make sense and commit to experiment.

We built systems for recruiting, onboarding and engaging managers and linked learning interventions into a programme. We also offered a Resource Bank (a curated set of open-access resources to support self-directed learning).

Realist evaluation – So that we could understand how learning varies according to the type of line manager and their context, we evaluated 'what works for whom and why?' by exploring how Context + Mechanism = Outcome.

* The Flash Peer Learning Model emerged after initial programme piloting during Management Challenge 1; it was modified to be faster than the original 3 hour model.

Realist Management Development - Context + Mechanism = Outcome. Our training was built on the realist principle that the mechanisms of a learning intervention will interact with factors in the context (relating to the learner, their role/organisation/sector and wider society) to create outcomes. We found the Context+Mechanism=Outcomes framework to be highly valuable in designing and delivering learning interventions and evaluating 'what works, for whom, and why'. Therefore, we present our core evaluation findings under associated headings.

We begin with Outcomes – reminding the reader of the outcomes sought in our Theory of Change and summarising evidence about the outcomes produced in our learning interventions. We then present Mechanisms – using evaluation findings about how our learning interventions worked (or not) to develop management practice and wider innovations. We assert a new set of learning pillars, some enhanced principles for masterclasses, flash peer learning and skills coaching and summarise what we have learnt about how learning events combine to create effective development journeys. We then consider Context and offer a range of context factors that enable or constrain line manager development and broader innovation. After briefly summarising some specific findings about developing people management skills in the management challenges on which our training focused, we summarise our evaluation findings by offering the GELL Framework to Develop the People Management Skills of Line Managers. Finally, we outline the next steps for the Good Employment Learning Lab and how you can learn more and get involved.

The GELL team is currently developing a toolkit that will enable programme designers or commissioners to review existing training provision and develop new approaches in light of our findings. Join the **GELL Network** to hear more.

10.1 Outcomes: How Well Did The GELL Learning Interventions Work?

The GELL learning interventions were built on a Theory of Change which laid out the logic of why our programme design was expected to produce particular outcomes. We found that a key benefit of working with a Theory of Change is that it causes programme designers to think clearly about the outcomes they seek to achieve. Time invested in thinking carefully about the outcomes sought are invaluable in stress-testing the proposition that a particular programme design can deliver these effects, in a particular operational context. This analysis can help to improve programme design before resources are committed because it draws early attention away from the 'hot problem' of how to operationalise a programme to ask more fundamental questions about why the programme is being commissioned and why you might think it will work. Taking time to review a Theory of Change in the light of practice experience and evaluation is

also good practice for programme commissioners and developers. This chapter ends with the GELL Framework to Develop the People Management Skills of Line Managers. This outlines a range of principles that build on our original Theory of Change and programme logic and that are enhanced by using our evaluation findings.

We suggest that the outcomes that commissioners can seek to generate from learning interventions to develop the people management skills of line managers are largely those that we proposed in our original Theory of Change. However, we have different strengths of evidence regarding which outcomes were achieved in the GELL programme (or could be observed, given the limited scope and timeframe of our evaluation), as follows:

Improved manager practice. This is where a manager has experimented with a new practice or started a new practice (without prior experimentation) and spoken about intending to continue this. A practice here can be an improvement in the manager's internal life (how they think about something or handle stress and so cope better with being a manager) or a behaviour that means they are managing better.

Most of the GELL participants moved on from gaining new knowledge, using this to reflect on their management problems and to make sense of their options. They tried out a new practice idea or consolidated it as a new management practice. We observed that 88% committed to experiment with a new management practice, and 72% developed a new practice. This usually related to the management challenge addressed (managing secure and agile work, Values Based Recruitment (VBR), conflict, creativity or getting the best out of your team). In some instances, the management practice related to another issue the manager brought into the learning environment and this was enabled by our deployment of HR professionals as facilitators who could 'drop in' knowledge on a range of people management topics, as they arose. Some managers noticed the approach to coaching or peer learning used by our facilitators and applied this to their people management style (approaching one-to-ones differently or setting up peer learning within their teams), thereby developing their practice in a broader sense.

Development of management practice was most likely after participating in all three learning interventions (95%), coaching or peer learning without a masterclass (89%) or a masterclass and coaching (87%). Less effective was a masterclass and peer learning (74%). However, there were wide differences between high rates (83%) of improvement to management practices following a masterclass and peer learning in management challenge 1 (VBR and secure/agile working) and management challenge 3 (getting the best out of your team - 86%) compared to management challenge 2 (conflict/creativity – 57%). Management practice improved for 60% of managers taking a masterclass alone.

It seems that coaching was the strongest method for developing management practice but it should

be remembered that this is also the most expensive intervention as it is one-to-one with a skilled HR professional coach. Peer learning was still highly effective and a masterclass alone produced stronger results than anticipated. Particular challenges – perhaps particularly managing conflict – benefit from the privacy and personal focus of coaching, but some management practices can be effectively developed in group settings.

We did not quantitatively measure the breadth or depth of change to management practice. But our analysis did observe significant variability. In later parts of this chapter, we seek to explain this variability in terms of how learning mechanisms operated and interacted with particular contexts.

Our evaluation method was relatively short-term and so we cannot comment on the durability of changes to management practices. We did observe that many managers faced people management challenges of a frequency and complexity that far exceeded the development they had received in people management. They commonly expressed relief at being given an opportunity to develop within the GELL programme and, indeed, at realising that people management is a set of skills that can be learnt. There was a strong sense of isolation and desire for ongoing development among managers. It may be that some will sustain the process of developing their management practice through independent study or by creating their own approach to learning with other line managers. But, in most cases, it is likely that sustained progress in developing people management practice will require ongoing provision of learning events and relationships. Thus, while line manager practice can be developed from short interventions, we suspect that sustained development will require sustained investment so that people management is no longer a neglected organisational capability.

Improved organisational practice. This can be either a local change to team management and work practices or spill over to wider organisational practices and policy. We observed a change to organisational practice in just under a third (29%) of learning journeys within a given management challenge. Almost half (47%) of the participants who underwent all three learning interventions within a management challenge changed an organisational practice and 40% of managers participating in a masterclass and coaching did so. Observations of improved organisational practice were around a quarter for those engaging in a masterclass alone, a masterclass and peer learning or peer learning or coaching alone. Please note that our observations of organisational change are likely to be under-estimations as we interviewed managers or collected a survey or portfolio relatively soon after completing their learning and organisational changes may require longer to take effect.

Change to organisational practice was observed less often in management challenge 1 (VBR and secure/agile working). This may, in part, be the outcome of our research method as we became more skilled in detecting these wider changes as our research process progressed.

However, it also seems that one of the main practices in management challenge 1 - managing agile work - was more about managers catching up with organisational change than influencing it, given the rapid changes occurring on transitioning back to the office following Covid. This is likely to have suppressed or delayed opportunities for line managers to affect organisational processes. Some organisations also had HR profession-led systems for recruitment that were not easily influenced by line managers.

Positive impact on staff. This is an improvement to the working life of one or more staff members. It may be in terms of their subjective experience of work and/or objective work conditions (e.g. pay or flexible working hours). It may be reported by the manager (e.g. claiming to have improved staff wellbeing) or (in a very small number of employee interviews we achieved) the employee.

We observed a positive impact on staff in just under a third (31%) of learning journeys within particular management challenges. Approaching half (42%) of the participants who underwent all three learning interventions within a management challenge reported a positive impact on staff and 42% of managers participating in a masterclass and coaching did so. Observations for those engaging in a masterclass alone were surprisingly good at 28%, compared with 26% for masterclass and peer learning and 21% for coaching and peer learning without a masterclass. Our observations of positive impact on staff are likely to be under-estimations as we interviewed managers or collected a survey or portfolio relatively soon after completing their learning and these changes may take longer to take effect.

Positive impact on staff was observed most often in relation to management challenge 2 (conflict/creativity – 44%). This seems to demonstrate how learning to harness staff initiative and resolve conflict can improve the quality of jobs and how these are changes often within the discretionary power of line managers.

Improvement to good or productive work. This is an improvement to the working life of one or more staff members or an improvement to the organisation of work so that it is organised more efficiently or achieves an outcome that will have an indirect effect on efficiency (e.g. staff retention or care quality).

We observed an improvement to good or productive work in just over a third (34%) of learning journeys within a particular management challenge. Around half (53%) of the participants who underwent all three learning interventions, or a masterclass plus coaching, made an improvement to good and productive work. Surprisingly, the result for those undertaking a masterclass was nearly a third (31%) and for a masterclass plus peer learning and peer learning or coaching without a masterclass, it was a quarter (26%). Our observations of improvements to good and productive work are likely to be under-estimations as we interviewed managers or collected a survey or portfolio relatively soon after completing their learning and these changes may take longer to take effect.

Improvement to good and productive work was, again, most evident in relation to management challenge 2 (44%), reflecting the value of discretion that line managers have to harness staff initiative and to reduce conflict, and the positive effects this can have on work efficiency or quality.

Iterative feedback loop for learning journeys that involve multiple interventions or independent learning.
This outcome reflects the non-linear and iterative nature of learning cycles including connections between our learning interventions, where the effects of one intervention create a new context into which the next learning intervention is then related. So far, we have primarily focused on understanding learning journeys within our three management challenges. We have substantial evidence from our rapid analysis of learning journeys and qualitative data to suggest that outcomes improved with particular patterns of learning and, in particular, that Masterclasses acted as an effective scaffolding to coaching and peer learning. In general, more learning interventions produced deeper outcomes, although pacing this was important; too much concentrated learning sometimes consumed the time needed to experiment with new practices and too much time between learning interventions could result in a loss of memory and momentum. The right pace of learning is likely to vary according to the manager's context but, in general, we observed that having a handful of weeks between a Masterclass and peer learning or coaching was effective. When a manager took on the management challenge as a 'project' that would significantly change their management practice and have spill over effects, there was a case for accessing a Masterclass, peer learning and coaching.

In future analysis, we hope to give more attention to the learning journeys of the 38 managers who participated in two or three management challenges. We will be interested to consider different types of journeys, particularly distinguishing between line managers who are very keen to learn and those whose appetite grew as their confidence and capability grew within the programme.

Sector- and Place-based learning / Better practice in the place/sector. Our switch to online learning due to the Covid19 pandemic negated our original intention to bring learners together in-person and to promote the development of informal, face-to-face learning relationships that might have endured after learning interventions. As our stakeholder partners were still interested in developing place-based learning, we made an initial attempt to form place-based online groups. These became somewhat diluted when filling sessions (and over-recruiting, due to high levels of no-shows) depended on offering line managers the range of dates set up for different localities. Our overall conclusion here is that prioritising the development of very specific place-based learning communities creates significant rigidities to recruiting to online learning programmes. Of course, this may not be problematic if working with partners or groups who are place-based (e.g. local Chambers of Commerce or groups of staff within an organisation). Our aim to develop place-based learning has endured but become secondary, in the context of our online learning offer. However, we will

still report on the difference that our learning has made to improve people management skills in Greater Manchester in later reflections on our project. And, we still have a strong focus on developing sector-based learning via online learning and we will report on the development of skills in a sector in the Adult Social Care Learning Lab as our project progresses.

Overall, the GELL programme delivered short-term learning interventions (a masterclass, three flash peer learning meetings or three coaching sessions) and yielded relatively powerful outcomes. The intention of our project has not been to 'prove' this approach but to use it to learn how outcomes occur (or not) and then to advise on effective means of developing the people management skills of line managers. Moreover, we do not have data on the sustainability of programme outcomes but we do strongly suspect that the nature of the line manager role and the scale of their development challenges means that serious improvement in people management skills will require long-term investment, growth of learning communities and, indeed, change to the valuing of people management as an organisational capability so that line manager development can occur under enabling conditions.

Our realist evaluation methodology is focused on explaining why the GELL programme generated particular learning outcomes for particular managers. We do so by considering in the next two sections the mechanisms of our learning interventions and how they inter-related with context factors.

10.2 Mechanisms: How Did Learning Interventions Change Management Practice And Create Wider Innovations?

In this section, we build on our initial programme design and integrate our evaluation findings to offer:

- **Eight Learning Pillars**

- **Masterclass, flash peer learning and skills coaching models**

- **Key programme design principles (linking learning interventions together to support management development and innovation journeys)**

10.2.1 Learning Pillars

Our programme was initially designed on five learning pillars: gain knowledge, reflect, make sense, experiment, learn together. Our findings enable us to say more about the role of each of these in developing line managers. Our evaluation has also prompted us to add three new learning pillars: access, psychological safety and accountability.

Learning Pillar 1: Access. Line managers are typically very busy and unable or unsupported to take prolonged periods out of their roles to develop people management skills. Some of our learners did not feel safe enough in their organisations to 'admit' to their managers or teams that they needed to improve their approach to people management; instead, they attended without telling others or even during a day's leave. Line managers may also lack a budget to travel and pay a fee for a face-to-face event. Online learning in short interventions that demand limited time were welcomed as time efficient and relatively private means of accessing training. Managers had the discretion within their roles to decide for themselves to access learning, particularly as our provision was free. We deployed a widely used platform (MS Teams) and managers were able to engage with this (albeit with a few technical challenges). We note, however, that many of our learners engaged from home and office-based managers may struggle to find a private space to engage with online learning. Our programme also offered a range of dates and the ability to re-schedule a masterclass or coaching (although not peer learning) when operational demands prohibited attendance. This significantly improved take-up and retention.

As we did not compare online and face-to-face provision, we are not able to comment on the relative efficacy or accessibility of online learning. Some delegates did express a desire for face-to-face learning but others actively preferred online provision. Future programmes could helpfully experiment with how to make hybrid or face-to-face learning accessible to line managers.

Our provision was free and we cannot assess how much a fee would reduce accessibility. However, some managers did state that lack of budget, or the bureaucracy and time involved in having an expense approved, would have discouraged participation. Free provision does have the disadvantage of making learning somewhat disposable, however. We had to invest in time in over-recruiting and re-scheduling to fill places with busy line managers.

Learning Pillar 2: Psychological Safety. This is the belief that a person is safe within a given setting to take interpersonal risks (Edmondson, 1999). We were surprised to discover how feasible it was to establish psychological safety in online learning with line managers. Most moved with apparent ease into valuing the GELL activities as purposeful and feeling able to reflect on their people management practices, make sense of alternative options that would work in their contexts and experimenting with new practices.

It may be that online working during the Covid19 pandemic has built familiarity with technology and relationship building online. The skills and credibility of our facilitators and programme undoubtedly enabled the rapid establishment of trust in our staff and helped to build trust between learners. Communication of the ethical principles of GELL is also likely to have had an effect. Our marketing, induction, research ethics approval processes and learning event introductions all expressed commitment to improving the working lives of line managers and their teams, appreciation of the people management challenges faced by line managers and valuing of the line manager role. Our programme was also fundamentally founded on taking the risk of trying something new and was designed to support this process, without judgement or public assessment as to outcomes.

Coaching and peer learning started with explicit contracting to establish confidentiality ("what is said in the space does not leave the space" except as anonymised research data). In hindsight, it would be helpful to begin masterclasses with explicit contracting. Several managers stated that they enjoyed learning with people they did not know, often from sectors outside of their regular work; this relational distance created a safe space to reflect on personal weaknesses or frustrations with organisations, share emotions and try something new.

Line managers' motivation to share their people management challenges, and the camaraderie of discussing these in sessions where topics were timely, built a sense of belonging and shared purpose that enabled rapid development of trust between group members. The warmth, empathy and non-judgemental approach brought to sessions by facilitators tended to be mirrored in the managers' behaviour towards one another. When necessary, groups were facilitated to manage less helpful behaviour.

For some managers, masterclasses acted as gateways to coaching and peer learning and it is likely that psychological safety was built slowly as they received information (a psychologically low risk activity) and engaged in short periods of learning together in groups, while having a chance to assess the wisdom of so doing. A small number of managers actively chose not to progress to peer learning or coaching as they saw learning together as 'not their learning style'. Yet, some of these surprised themselves by enjoying the breakout sessions in masterclasses. We suggest that future programmes could use masterclasses more consciously as a process of developing psychological safety to try to enable the gateway to peer learning and coaching for more tentative managers, or even brand sessions as masterclasses when they involve longer sessions of peer learning. This may be particularly important if delivering compulsory training or when seeking to engage 'hard to reach' or struggling people managers who might not otherwise step forwards for training and who may bring more defensiveness to the learning process. If training is explicitly related to development reviews, progression processes or performance management, the objective risk of being

exposed or failing would be introduced and require careful ethical consideration and management.

We do note that the majority of GELL participants were women (83% in the Adult Social Care Lab and 73% in the Greater Manchester Lab, where gender is known). Future programmes may need to explore how to engage and develop psychological safety among male line managers; this is also an interesting agenda for future research.

Learning Pillar 3: Gain knowledge. GELL participants gained knowledge in masterclasses, peer learning and coaching. In masterclasses, the predominate mode was to receive knowledge about research or better practice ideas from carefully researched and selected sources presented to the group. This was a key aspect of our commitment to evidence-based management, within our Theory of Change. Masterclasses were designed to impart such knowledge in short, structured inputs and to follow these up with time to reflect and learn together.

There was widespread appreciation of the quality of the content in masterclasses. Managers enjoyed learning about research evidence and theory as well as practice models and some line managers also said they enjoyed being part of a university programme. There was evidence of managers taking notes from the masterclasses that they referred to repeatedly over the coming weeks and copied to share with others. Future programmes could explicitly encourage this or provide 'crib sheets' summarising key ideas, with permission to share widely (although we cannot say if these would be valued as much as the notes that managers took on the points they found particularly relevant). Our attempts to ask managers attending masterclasses only to complete a learning portfolio after the event were unsuccessful, although when we converted this into a survey the response rate was good. Learning reflections on masterclasses must primarily occur within masterclass sessions, however.

The credibility of the content really mattered and this related both to the reliability of up-to-date knowledge imparted and the fact that time had been taken to translate materials or to use translated models so they were relevant to practice. It is noteworthy that some well-packaged models (e.g. the toothbrush exercise – to brainstorm new uses for a toothbrush that demonstrates the everyday exercise of team creativity) were well remembered and deployed by managers. Packaged models may not always be evidence-based, however, and so programme designers should invest time in identifying those that are founded on research evidence or they should undertake the translation of research evidence into memorable and practical activities themselves.

Pitching knowledge so that it is novel and digestible to the audience, or a timely reminder of how existing knowledge can be applied to current management challenges, is vital to gaining and retaining manager interest. The GELL programme seemed to get this right in most masterclasses but we did note two points:

(1) less experienced managers required learning about basic recruitment practices in order to engage with Values Based Recruitment - we term this the need for 'scaffolding' and observe that programmes should assess who needs scaffolding to engage with specialist learning.

(2) small numbers of managers had received significant training in-house and from academic programmes (e.g. MBA) and did not identify new knowledge in the GELL provision. Clearly, we should not assume that managers are 'empty vessels' – or inadvertently give that impression. Prior learning matters and targeting of sessions to learners is important. However, we found that the vast majority of managers – including those with long experience or managing large teams – enjoyed the GELL content, suggesting a generalised hunger for relatively basic learning about people management.

Masterclasses provided a chance to gain knowledge from other managers during breakout sessions and this was valued by many managers and built interest in gaining more knowledge from peers via peer learning. Masterclasses also established the credibility of the GELL facilitators whose HR professional background meant they could 'drop in' knowledge' beyond the masterclass curriculum, according to the issues raised by managers. This is likely to have encouraged participation in coaching with these same facilitators.

Peer learning enabled managers to gain knowledge from other managers and the GELL facilitators, and both sources were valued. This knowledge was imparted by hearing peer reflections on the challenges that the manager presented and by listening to other managers' challenges, solutions they had already tried and group ideas about next steps. On occasion, facilitators also emailed follow-up materials about a relevant model or approach to a peer learning set member after the event. The fact that we used skilled HR professionals meant that knowledge could be 'dropped in' in a bespoke fashion and provision was not limited to the course materials or delegate input. On occasion, managers could also be advised that a practice would contravene employment law or, conversely, that they were over-interpreting the law.

Skills coaching enabled managers to go deeper in accessing knowledge about their specific challenges from GELL's experienced HR professional coaches. The role played by their expertise, that could be 'dropped in' on an ad hoc basis, was again significant. On occasion, this extended to the coach emailing relevant resources to a coachee after the meeting. We note that a more generalist coach or facilitator would not have the same effect in enabling managers to gain knowledge about people management. And, that this may reduce the credibility of learning interventions and the psychological safety they inspire, as well as restricting the opportunity to gain relevant knowledge.

Notably, when peer learning or coaching was undertaken without engaging in a masterclass, facilitators often had to manage 'topic drift' away from the foci of our management

challenges, and the need to spend more time in finding a focus for sessions and imparting knowledge. Thus, we observed that the knowledge gained in masterclasses often acted as an efficient foundation for peer learning and coaching.

GELL provided a Resource Bank for self-directed learning that contained the masterclass slides and a curated set of other open access learning materials (e.g. CIPD or ACAS resources, professional articles, links to practice models or diagnostic techniques etc). It is unfortunate that the platform we used for the Resource Bank did not allow us to track who used each resource. However, we observed during research interviews that some managers were clearly self-directed learners who found it very helpful. Overall, however, we had relatively little evidence of its intensive use and this is a further indication that line managers are likely to need learning events that prompt them to make time in their schedule to learn, and to have an opportunity to reflect, make sense and experiment with others, in order to gain their attention to develop their people management practice.

Learning Pillar 4: Reflect. Reflection is the process of a manager using knowledge to diagnose their own management challenges, as these relate to their context, and so to understand the challenge better. It includes improvement in self-realisation and understanding of organisational or sector context as well as informed thinking about management challenges within teams. Sessions were structured to prompt managers to reflect on their practice in masterclasses, peer learning and coaching and an important mechanism of these learning interventions is that they create reflective spaces. Managers were more able to reflect having gained knowledge from the coaches/facilitators or one another; this knowledge provided a new means of thinking about their situations. In the previous chapters we recount in detail the different ways that managers reflected on their management challenges.

Learning Pillar 5: Make sense. Making sense is the process of moving beyond reflecting about the nature of a management problem to considering the management options available to address it and considering how likely these are to work in context. Sessions were structured to prompt managers to make sense of their management options in masterclasses, peer learning and coaching and an important mechanism of these learning interventions is that they consolidated thinking to identify ways forward. In previous chapters, we present considerable detail about the ways in which managers made new sense of their management options during the learning interventions. This usually meant that managers had renewed commitment and confidence to tackle management problems and develop their team. In a small number of cases, the manager concluded that their fit with their organisation or manager was poor and their best option was to commit to find a new job.

Learning Pillar 6: Commit to experiment / Experiment. Committing to experiment involves selecting one or more of the management options identified when making

sense of a problem and committing to trying this out. Experimenting is acting on a commitment to experiment (or jumping over the commitment stage entirely) and trying out a management practice that is new to the manager or new to the context in which it is applied. This latter point is important because sometimes managers experiment with using familiar practices they had forgotten or using practices better (e.g. following through on having quality check-ins with staff). The GELL masterclasses, peer learning sets and coaches all culminated in asking a manager to commit to experiment. Portfolios and surveys aimed to encourage managers to record progress with their experiments. And, they were invited to report back on experimenting in the second and third peer learning or coaching sessions.

Experiments with practice were deeper and more likely to spill over to innovate organisational processes and the good and productive work of others if the manager talked about their experiment with others in their workplace. And, if they recruited fellow managers, team members or their own managers to experiment with them in a shared 'project'. A minority were actively courted by their organisation to conduct a 'project' on the basis of their new learning. For example, managers often conducted recruitment with other managers, worked with HR departments to develop job descriptions and advertisements and utilised team members in onboarding. They could achieve more change to Values Based Recruitment (VBR) by working with these colleagues. This was most often achieved through informal activity but managers occasionally talked about making VBR a 'project'. When managers or organisational actors such as HR departments noticed this, they sometimes harnessed this innovation by asking the manager to lead or inform a wider organisational project. Here, we can see that the depth of experimenting depends on context (more of this below). In terms of thinking about experimenting as a learning pillar, we suggest that learning interventions could be designed to draw in other stakeholders to the making sense and experimenting processes and to develop a 'project' for the manager, a team or an organisation. This is an example of how programme design can seek to massage context, to make a management practice or innovation 'land' and have spill over effects.

We note that some managers committed to experiment with the facilitative or coaching styles of the GELL delivery staff and, so, to make a broader change to their line management practice. Some also committed to develop coaching or peer learning within their teams. We suggest that learning interventions could be enhanced to encourage this, either within sessions focused on management challenges or as optional additional provision.

Learning Pillar 7: Accountability. Accountability is the process of holding a learner to account for doing something they committed to doing. It was not a learning pillar in our original programme design, although it was implied in the design of coaching and peer learning where managers were expected to report back on progress in each session. We have added it in explicitly as a learning pillar as our

coaches/facilitators developed a stronger approach to accountability as the programme delivery progressed, making it clear that action to experiment was expected and managers would be asked to reflect on this in portfolios and feedback in the following sessions. This was motivated by disappointment that managers were often too distracted by operational issues to experiment and by a practice-based finding that clearly communicating an expectation of progress, and seeking feedback on this within a group or coaching relationship, did seem to focus more attention on experimenting.

In line with our finding that organisational context really matters, we suggest that programmes could extend accountability to the line manager's own manager, team or HR department. Managers should be expected to schedule a meeting to discuss their learning with another stakeholder in their organisation and to work with them to complete the making sense process and commitment to experiment. This wider organisational lens would mean valuing, resourcing and noticing the line manager's learning and working with them to use it to innovate organisational practice, create positive impacts on staff and, so, shape good and productive work. Programmes would need to establish psychological safety, so that sharing vulnerabilities and ideas within organisations was safe. This effectively means that programmes will need to be extended to change the contexts in which managers manage to win the buy-in and ethical practice of senior leaders, fellow managers and teams.

Clearly, the GELL programme was not compulsory, assessed or accredited. It also relied on empathic and non-judgemental facilitation and this would be undermined through a humiliating, unrealistic or shaming accountability process. Accountability processes in the form of clear expectations and feedback on progress at the beginning of sessions two and three of peer learning and coaching produced experimentation but it may also have led some managers to skip sessions if they had not progressed. We judge that, overall, accountability is an important and useful mechanism but it should be handled with care, in the context of shared trust and purpose.

Learning Pillar 8: Learn together. Learning together occurs through the operation of the other learning mechanisms. Above, we particularly point to the importance of psychological safety, gaining knowledge from other managers and facilitators/coaches and reflecting and making sense with them. Accountability is also, ultimately, to a group and not just to the programme facilitators in peer learning. We note that flash peer learning was particularly valuable in rapidly learning with other managers and from their experience. Due to no-shows, these sessions often ended up involving three managers and a facilitator. Some managers said they liked this approach, suggesting that learning together can happen well in small groups (that may be easier to schedule) as well as groups of 5 or 6.

We found that, for line managers, learning together is not simply a process of advancing their management challenges. It also plays a crucial role in reducing isolation,

realising that line management is complex and challenging and their struggles are not their fault, and discerning that line management is a skill set that can be learnt. It built confidence that much of what they are already doing is appropriate and effective and that they can learn new practices or deploy established practices to solve different problems. When managers had a chance to also effect organisational practices and good work and productivity, this was a further boost to their confidence and development.

We did not observe managers spontaneously working together with each other or colleague managers to form their own flash peering learning or coaching relationships after the GELL sessions. We had hoped for this kind of outcome when first designing the programme (pre-Covid) to be face-to-face but had fewer hopes when our learning went online as we were aware that the relationship building that usually occurs during refreshment breaks etc would not be happening in online learning and that managers would be at a greater spatial distance from one another. It may well be that establishing these approaches may be feasible in some contexts. Again, this is another idea for programme extension.

10.2.2 Masterclass, Flash Peer Learning And Coaching Design: Combining Learning Pillars Into Effective Development Events

The original GELL model for masterclasses, flash peer learning and skills coaching are outlined in full in chapter 3 of this report . In this section, we comment on how these models can be enhanced in the light of our evaluation findings.

Pre-And Post-Intervention Learning And Development

We originally offered:

A programme sign-up online meeting or telephone call to explain the GELL programme and help the manager select an initial learning event, thereby prompting sign-up. As ours is a research project we also talked through our research ethics approval process. And, we gained programme management data.
- **Enhancement:** Use this meeting to begin to establish psychological safety and deploy the collection of programme data as a means of helping to target learning where it can land. Signal the accountability aspect of the programme to assess programme readiness, but with sensitivity to the line manager's probable busyness and low confidence. Ideally, develop a means of extending accountability to the organisation as part of the selection process so that the context

becomes more ready to invest in, and adapt to, the manager developing their practice and creating spill over effects.

- **An online Resource Bank,** which is a curated collection of articles, news stories, videos and other media about the management challenges we addressed in learning interventions. We included content which appeals to a diverse range of managers.
  - **Enhancement:** In a longer-term programme or community of practice, find means of sharing particular resources at timely moments for particular line managers and accompany this with peer messages about their value. Thereby reminding managers that the Resource Bank is available and useful and, hopefully, stimulating ongoing self-directed learning. Consider founding coffee sessions where peer groups discuss particular resources. Encourage and enable managers to post resources they find useful, potentially with brief testimony, as part of developing a community of practice.

- **Pre-meetings** for coaching and peer learning participants, which clarified the process, confirmed participants' suitability, and provided an opportunity for questions.
  - **Enhancement:** Use these meetings to develop psychological safety by discussing confidentiality and adopting an empathic and valuing approach. Discern the importance of relational or sector distance or similarity between peers for this particular manager. Assure the manager about non-judgement but also emphasise accountability to experiment and to adhere to the peer learning group schedule (in particular) to sustain the group.

- **Portfolios** for coaching and peer learning participants, to provide prompts and structure to reflections before and after each session, a mechanism to track goals and progress between sessions, and provide research data.
  - **Enhancement:** Use portfolios to collect evaluation data about which learning pillars and outcomes are activated and how context shapes this. Develop efficient means of recording this in summarised, anonymised form to make evaluation manageable and ethical. To extend reflection and accountability to organisations, develop a mechanism for other stakeholders to also track how they are enabling the line manager to develop their practice and create spill over effects.

- **Surveys** for masterclass participants, designed to aid participant reflection, articulate commitment to experiment, and provide research data.
  - **As above.**

Masterclass Model. Our masterclasses were designed to be two hour online, facilitator-led interactive sessions aimed at approximately 15 participants, with opportunities to share experiences with others. The facilitators were experienced, qualified HR practitioners with management education experience.

The research team provided research-based principles on each topic which guided the broad structure, content design and key takeaway messages. Research was often presented alongside models where research evidence had been translated into management principles and we found that these models were particularly memorable for participants. Sessions included a range of activities to promote reflection on material and on the manager's context and practice (e.g. using self-assessment polls, breakout groups on personal/organisational reflections or on case studies, seeking feedback via a padlet). And, then, to begin to make sense of new management options and to commit to experiment with one of these (e.g. using a postcard activity). While these sessions were expert-led and structured to convey carefully selected knowledge, they also included chances to learn together from group members (whole group reflections, padlets, breakout groups) and from facilitators (whose HR experience meant they could 'drop in' knowledge as it was called upon and were not limited to conveying the formal presentation content).
- **Enhancement:** Improve access by explaining what a masterclass is in advertising and use alternative language where the word 'masterclass' is seen as intimidating in a context. Further develop masterclasses as gateways to peer learning and coaching by building psychological safety (stating confidentiality rules and contracting and; delivering with warmth, empathy and non-judgement etc); explicitly setting up breakout sessions as tasters for peer learning; offering testimony from a user to encourage engagement in coaching. Explore means of enhancing experimentation and accountability by asking masterclass participants to book a meeting where they share their learning with a team member, fellow manager or senior manager and involve them in sensemaking and experimentation.

Flash Peer Learning Model. Our peer learning design was based on action learning, a well-established process of learning and reflection, that helps people 'get things done' by tackling real life challenges with the support of peers, (McGill and Brockbank, 2004). **Unlike in traditional action learning, our design requires the facilitator to take an active role in the group as an HR expert** who, in addition to facilitating the sessions, offers knowledge or even advice on participants' challenges, as required. Participants ask curious questions about each other's challenges, offering critique and insights in a supportive yet challenging environment (Daloz, 1986). The aim is to reflect on their challenges from different perspectives, draw on the experience of others, and identify actions with which to experiment. Aligned to our original management learning pillars, peer learning encourages reflection, making sense, learning from others, and experimentation. It creates space to challenge participants' underlying assumptions about what they are taking for granted, encouraging double loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1974).

We adapted a pilot design based on six participants from different organisations meeting online three times over a five-week period for three- hour sessions. Each participant had a chance to present a challenge, the group would then ask enquiring questions and the learner would ultimately

state an action for experimentation. However, three hours was too large a time commitment and was very intense for participants, affecting retention. Hence a 'gossip method' of peer learning (De Haan, 2004) was developed for online delivery. We called this 'flash peer learning'. In 90-minute sessions, participants discuss each challenge in 15-minute 'sets'. The participant who shares their challenge then 'listens in' on other participants generating solutions. At the end of the set, the participant returns and articulates their 'I will' statement: a commitment to experiment. Pilot participants preferred the new format and the shorter timeframe made it is easier to recruit and retain participants. Groups worked well with as few as three participants.
- **Enhancement:** Test whether the term 'flash peer learning' feels accessible and safe to managers in context and, if not, adopt a different term. Explore means of enhancing experimentation and accountability by asking flash peer learning participants to book a meeting where they share their learning with a team member, fellow manager or senior manager and involve them in sensemaking and experimentation.

Skills Coaching. Our skills coaching model **retained the curious questioning approach of traditional coaching, whilst allowing the coach to adapt to the participants' needs by providing people management knowledge where participants lacked knowledge or experience.**

Our coaches are skilled HR professionals who are able to 'drop in' knowledge about basic people management practices (e.g. recruitment processes) in a bespoke fashion and to let participants know when a practice may contravene employment law (or, indeed, when they over-interpreting what they are not allowed to do under the law). Their experience was vital to offering skills coaching in people management and much richer in people management knowledge than if they had been general leadership or small business coaches. Participants were offered three one-hour online coaching sessions, held approximately fortnightly.

As is best practice with coaching, we had "contracting" meetings and provided information on "What to expect at skills coaching" materials. Coaches used the GROW model (Whitmore 2014: 52-57), which guides participants through questions relating to their goals, reality [context], options and will. Our approach to coaching involved several original management learning pillars. In particular, we created a safe space in which to reflect deeply, make sense of the situation and context (realising our later 'psychological safety' learning pillar), and experiment with a range of options. The participant was also able to gain knowledge from the coach, particularly where they lacked knowledge or experience and benefited from suggestions. A key aim of the coaching sessions was to facilitate double-loop learning.
- **Enhancement.** Test whether the term 'skills coaching' feels accessible and safe to managers in context and, if not, adopt a different term. Explore means of enhancing experimentation and accountability by asking coachees to book a meeting where they share their learning with a team member, fellow manager or senior manager and

involve them in sensemaking and experimentation.

10.2.3 Designing Development Journeys: Combining Learning Pillars And Learning Events Within Programmes

The GELL programme offered masterclasses, flash peer learning, coaching and a resource bank in relation to three sets of management challenges.

We did not dictate what combination of learning events a particular manager should adopt, or a minimum or maximum amount of engagement. Neither did we suggest an order although we did programme masterclasses to begin before coaching or peer learning and so, while it was possible for a manager to start with peer learning or coaching and then pick up one of the later masterclasses, this was less likely to occur. We were curious about the pathways that managers would adopt and what effects these may have. We have primarily evaluated the effect of doing particular combinations of learning events within a single management challenge and we call this a learning journey. In later research, we hope to look closer at how learning journeys inter-connected across management challenges.

Key take-away points about programme design are:

- Masterclasses are effective modes of gaining knowledge and beginning to reflect. For some they do prompt making sense and experimenting. But, these latter actions are more likely following peer learning or coaching.

- For many learners, masterclasses act as a foundation and gateway for peer learning and coaching. They help establish psychological safety and enable a manager to gain knowledge and reflect on a particular management challenge, thereby laying the way for focused sensemaking and experimentation in peer learning and coaching.

- Undertaking a masterclass is not an absolute pre-condition for the effectiveness of coaching and peer learning. We found good outcomes from these as standalone interventions.

- Pacing is vital to ensure that the relatively limited amount of management attention that can be gained by a programme, and the process of developing people management skills, is not fully absorbed by continually gaining knowledge and reflecting. Spacing between a masterclass and peer learning or coaching is necessary to allow time for experimentation. However, if this spacing is too wide, the manager is likely to forget their commitment to experiment or lose interest in it. Accountability depends on pacing being appropriate. When spacing learning events, it is important to take into account the manager's work rhythms and events

such as Christmas that may disrupt a commitment to experiment. Deciding on spacing with the manager is plausible in coaching. In peer learning, dates must be supplied so they can be diarised but a group may collectively decide to adjust these if they are asked to think about the pacing of experimentation to which they can reasonably be held accountable.

- We noted earlier that some managers adopted experimentation very consciously as a 'project' and, rarely, organisations noticed their experimentation and asked them to lead or input into a wider organisational change 'project'. This concept of a 'project' seems very useful in raising motivation and commitment and linking learning interventions together, to have sustained effect on the development of management practice and – if the organisation supports this – wider organisational change. The 'project' could also include the more general adoption of facilitative or coaching approaches to management or team working and the creation of flash peer learning or coaching in teams. We suggest that programme developers could usefully deploy this idea of a 'project' (or multiple projects) being the core mechanism at the heart of a learning journey across a programme.

10.3 Context: How Context Enables Or Constrains Line Manager Practice And Wider Innovations

Our realist evaluation method focused our attention on how Context+Mechanism=Outcomes. This meant thinking about how the mechanisms of our learning interventions combined with factors in the manager's context to create outcomes. Our findings clearly show that context matters. Programme developers and facilitators can usefully think about context in two ways to design line manager training that can work in the contexts they are targeting:

1. Understand the context factors that enable line manager development to work and target programmes at these contexts.

2. Actively shape contexts so that the factors that enable line managers to develop are more present and the factors that constrain manager development and wider spill over effects for organisations and staff are reduced or removed.

In fact, when programme leaders realise that they need to change factors at work in the context to make line manager development 'land', they are effectively committing to broaden the programme design. For example, an organisation may see that work is needed to more actively value people management as a productivity or efficiency priority. Practical steps may then be taken to create time for managers to learn and develop their people management practice, to form communities of learning for managers and

to form 'projects' to innovate organisational systems on the basis of learning.

GELL has thought about context as three layers (individual manager, role/team/organisation/sector and wider society). Below we summarise key factors that enable or constrain line manager development under these headings, while also pointing to factors that work across them.

10.3.1 Individual Context: The Line Manager Themselves

The GELL programme was voluntary and relied on managers in Greater Manchester and the Adult Social Care sector coming forwards for training. Our findings cannot speak to the context of a more resistant or reluctant line manager, therefore, or indeed to those who were not reached by our marketing (e.g. we have said that time and network constraints meant we may not have reached ethnic minority businesses trading in deprived areas). In particular, we note that our programme was dominated by women (83% in the Adult Social Care Lab and 73% in the Greater Manchester Lab, where gender was known). We do not know the distribution of line managers in our target populations by gender and so cannot be sure how strong the gender bias is for engagement, but these figures do seem to suggest that women line managers are more likely to come forwards for people management training than men. It is likely that change is required to both mechanisms and contexts to address this.

We repeatedly found that line managers have received little line manager development support, despite most of our participants being experienced line managers and some managing larger teams. The complexity and challenge brought by everyday people management challenges and the pressure that line managers felt to develop high performing teams was significantly stronger than the training on offer in their organisations. Most line managers also did not routinely engage in informal reflections with other line managers or self-directed learning about people management. Line managers typically felt isolated and somewhat overwhelmed by their people management roles and lacked confidence in managing people. This affected both the productivity of their jobs and teams and their wellbeing. It is very likely that it also affected the wellbeing of the staff they managed.

While we concluded that line managers' people management development is typically neglected and that line managers typically feel neglected, we also noted that this neglect motivated line managers to engage with GELL. They were keen – although often initially nervous – to reduce their isolation and learn from others. And, they were interested to learn with managers from different sizes of organisations or sectors. Managers also wanted to gain knowledge from the GELL 'experts' (they trusted a

university programme to offer expertise). This hunger led them to take the risk of trusting the programme and its participants and 'jumping in' on the assumption that this was a psychologically safe space to build their skills and confidence.

Line managers were keen to resolve long-standing and current people management problems and, so, to learn about timely challenges. Manager motivation also arose from having a new role or team, being under new pressure to raise the performance of a team, due to organisational and wider societal pressures (e.g. the pandemic, homeworking, recruitment crises). In this sense, the manager's context related to the wider contexts. Motivation to learn also arose, in some cases, to a desire to progress and, so, to developing experience or credentials to display on a CV or skills needed for the next step up (e.g. managing a larger team). A small number of managers said they would have liked the GELL programme to be accredited because they were looking to achieve a management qualification in order to progress and did not otherwise have access to such an opportunity.

We found that participating in GELL had a significant effect on line manager confidence; on a self-reported scale of 1-10, there was a mean uplift in confidence of nearly two points following a GELL learning intervention. We suggest this is relatively significant given that the learning interventions were relatively short. The realisation that people management is a shared and tricky challenge, that much of what they are already doing is appropriate and that new approaches are possible, and can be learnt and experimented with, created a turning point for some managers beyond just changing particular practices. This new confidence could later be undermined if their role or organisation constrained changes to management practice or wider innovations or, indeed, if the manager was denigrated (e.g. labelling them 'bossy' for leading their team more strongly or for trying to create change beyond the normal remit of their role). This demonstrated how context may need to be adapted to enable line managers to flourish.

Managers from the across the age spectrum, with varying experience in their roles or in managing people, who managed different sizes of teams (from 1 to over 100) and worked in different sizes of organisation learned and developed practice from the GELL programme. Experienced managers were occasionally frustrated if peer learning groups or masterclass breakout sessions were exclusively with relatively inexperienced managers as they felt less able to learn from their experience. Thus, peer learning groups should be carefully curated to ensure learning is possible for all members.

It was noteworthy that the acute and shared challenge that managers felt to manage agile working as staff transitioned back to work following the Covid19 pandemic was partially met by reminding them to use practices they were already familiar with, such as having regular check-ins with staff. An important take-away here is that crisis readiness planning should include support to line managers so they have the space to reflect on people challenges thrown up by the crisis and to mobilise practices they have already mastered to address this.

Hunger for new ideas meant that managers enjoyed learning about research evidence, best practice ideas, accessible models and from managers within and beyond their sectors in masterclasses, flash peer learning and skills coaching. It was vital that this was pitched at the right level to provide novel information while not depending on too much prior learning. The GELL interventions seemed largely successful in this with two caveats: exceptional managers, with access to in-house and academic learning (e.g. MBA) could feel that the sessions repeated knowledge they already knew, and; inexperienced managers sometimes needed scaffolding within peer learning and coaching to work with a specific management challenge (e.g. learning the basics of recruitment to engaged with VBR). This point emphasises the need to target training carefully at particular line managers but we also still emphasise a large range of managers who can benefit from a well-pitched provision.

Many managers took notes and looked at these after sessions or shared them with others. Some accessed the GELL Resource Bank or embarked on self-directed learning. However, as we shall see below, the line manager role is typically very busy, focused on operational pressures and lacks incentives for sustained investment in professional development, practice change or wider innovation. Most managers consequently required learning events that supplied new knowledge and peers or facilitators/coaches to learn with in order to focus on sustained development. When a manager took on changing management practice as a 'project', their commitment was enhanced and the scale of the change undertaken increased. Extending commitment to experiment to commitment to talk to colleagues (staff they managed, fellow managers or superiors) to make sense with them and draw them into the commitment to experiment could be powerful. Forming a change team and undertaking a 'project' seems a worthwhile learning mechanism. We shall see later that this was particularly powerful if the organisation recognised the project and extended it to foster organisational change and, equally, it was frustrated when this change was resisted. Ensuring congruence between the development that managers are encouraged to undertake and organisational goals is vital.

Of course, managing your own manager is an important skill and some GELL participants used their learning to improve this. We also noted that a confident manager explicitly sought to create a 'micro-climate' where she could shape good work and productivity by developing her team in a range of ways, despite lack of engagement or constraints from wider systems. Supporting managers to recognise the limitations of their contexts and to focus on developing what was possible, as a form of 'micro-climate', may be a means of fostering bottom-up change and sustaining manager motivation. In the face of organisational resistance, this change and manager motivation may not be sustainable, however. A more powerful approach would be to be to enable managers to challenge organisational processes by designing programmes that are sanctioned by senior leaders to enable line managers to shape the context within which they manage.

10.3.2 Role/Team/Organisation And Sector: The Workplace Context

The Line Manager Role

The line manager role is typically very busy and focused on operational demands. Managers are not typically resourced or incentivised to develop their people management practice. And, yet, line managers are often subjected to increasing performance demands, manage constant organisational change and are facing recruitment and retention crises. They are also charged with actualising wellbeing policies and the contradictions that can sometimes exist between these and productivity priorities. Some said that they and their staff were 'frazzled' or 'jaded' following the pandemic. Many teams were under-staffed. All of these forces create people management challenges, yet the necessity of excellent people management skills to develop productive, agile and healthy teams is overlooked. Most managers do not receive sustained training, do not have a peer network of managers with whom to discuss people management challenges and some feel too afraid to tell their managers that they are struggling with people management and accessed our training privately. Hence, they typically feel isolated and under-confident.

This, we suggest, is as a result of the poor design of their roles. Line managers are keen to develop their people management skills despite the lack of obvious incentive to do so because they find people management very challenging. However, as operational issues are the core demands of their roles, they are easily distracted from this goal. In most cases, manager attention is not focused on self-development, even once managers have engaged with GELL. If their busyness is not amended, programmes need to be pragmatic in working around the operational demands. In particular, by offering flexible scheduling and re-scheduling and pacing learning so that managers have a realistic amount of time to experiment between sessions.

Online learning that is asynchronous is unlikely to garner widespread or sustained engagement. Our evaluation suggests that line managers need learning events in order to focus their attention and they benefit from learning with peers and/or a facilitator or coach. Of course, attention can be diverted to asynchronous learning by making it compulsory or assessed. We question whether the psychological safety that we observed to be necessary for line managers to reflect and share about their people management challenges would be present under these conditions. Accountability to attend training and to experiment with new practices is important and we suggest that the line manager role can be developed to incentivise this. For example, by expanding programmes so that team members, fellow managers and senior managers expect line managers to bring back ideas from training and give them the resources and co-operation to involve them in making sense of problems and designing practice and organisational practice changes.

In order to effect organisational change, line managers need to have some power. This can be granted to them as part of their role or it can be left to them to try to earn this power through personal influence. If an organisation wants line manager training to inspire development in organisational practices, we suggest that manager should be given the power to pursue projects that are legitimised and resourced by the organisation. This power will need to include space to challenge organisational systems and suggest changes to context that make better people management possible. Granting this power, or developing a process where it can be sought (e.g. applying to propose and run a change project), would effectively involve extending a line manager development programme and the line manager role, to enable innovation.

The Organisation & Sector

Organisations and sectors have the power to value line manager's people skills and to prioritise practise development. They also have the power to reduce the isolation experienced by line managers, develop communities of practice that learn together and to reach out and capture better practice ideas and system changes that line managers see as necessary to enable teams to flourish. In short, organisations have the power to move from neglecting line managers to developing their people management skills as a core organisational resource.

Core pillars of the GELL training are gaining knowledge, psychological safety, reflection, making sense and experimenting. We note that spill over from manager practice development to organisational or sector practice change demands that organisations are also open to gaining knowledge, reflecting, making sense and experimenting. Aligning line manager development with a wider project of improving people management in an organisation is much more likely to achieve results.

Timeliness is highly important in motivating line managers to focus on a people management practice and organisations and sectors have a role in lifting up particular issues and making them timely for line managers by linking them to their role and incentives. Of course, this communication needs to be consistent with organisational and sector culture and strategy. As we found with VBR training, expecting managers to lead in a values-based way in one area of practice (recruitment) but not others, or subjecting staff to mixed messages around who and what is valued when it comes to resources and strategy, may position managers in an awkward tension and undermine practice development

The Broader Socio-cultural and Environmental Context

Our observation that line manager people management skills are somewhat invisible and under-valued as a key productive resource in organisations reflects, we suggest, a wider societal issue. It is within the gift of policy makers and civil society bodies to re-value people management skills as a core productive resource for UK plc and to particularly value line managers as people managers. There is, we suggest, a case for national investment in line manager's people management skills. This raises questions about where people management could fit in a broad array of curricula (in further and higher education, small business training, management training, professional or trade courses and apprenticeships etc).

Particular people management challenges can also be highlighted by policy makers and civil society. During the Covid19 pandemic there was a national conversation about the efficacy of agile working (although not necessarily how to manage it effectively). We note that our training on secure work struggled to 'take' with managers as they did not recognise it as a social problem or organisational priority. This suggests that people management is a political issue, and that political attention can lift particular issues up to encourage organisations and line managers to pay attention to them.

Our observation that line managers are very busy also reflects wider societal patterns. Society is always changing but recent times have brought particular challenges: Brexit, pandemic, the great homeworking experiment and the cost of living crisis each end up as challenges line managers must juggle. People management skills should be a part of crisis readiness planning because they create significant people management challenges and depend on agile change to how human resources are deployed to address the crisis. The scale and rapidity of challenges faced by line managers seems to be a further reason to invest in developing their people management skills and sharing learning – such as in GELL – about how to develop line managers effectively.

From Line Manager Neglect to Line Manager Development By Creating an Enabling Context

A core take-away message from our evaluation is that line managers are commonly neglected and that investing in their development so they can manage people better and create both good work and productivity should be a priority for policy makers and organisations. We use the term 'neglect' in three senses:

1. **Neglected development of line managers -** we found that line managers are commonly neglected in that they are offered sparse opportunities to develop their people management skills and that they particularly lack access to timely learning that prompts them to change management practice. The quality and depth of their development offer is commonly far outweighed by the breadth and complexity of the people management challenges they face day-to-day.

2. **Neglected experience that undermines confidence and development –** we found that line managers often feel isolated and under-confident about their people management skills and overwhelmed or stuck with difficult challenges. Realising that other managers face similar problems and that people management can be learnt often spurs confidence and a process of self-development.

3. **Neglected role in shaping good work and productivity –** we found that developing confident and motivated people managers can make a difference to the quality and productivity of the teams they manage and – in contexts that are structured to absorb their learning and new practices – there can be spill over effects to organisational practices. If sustained and supported, there is good reason to suggest that these can better harness the core resource in most organisations – their people – and create good work and productivity. *Investing in line manager*

people management skills should not be neglected in developing public policy, tackling the UK's productivity puzzle or improving public services.

Our findings can enable the design and delivery of effective and realistic people management training that nurtures line managers so they are better skilled, more confident and developmental and able to shape good work and productivity. Of course, we don't have evidence about the longer-term effects of our training but our findings do suggest that line managers will thrive best if they can access ongoing and timely support and be part of learning communities. Ultimately, we recommend that line managers are enrolled into cultures that prioritise the development, sharing and innovation of people management practices.

10.3.3 What Did We Learn About Developing Skills To Manage Particular Challenges?

The GELL project focuses on learning how managers develop and change organisational practice, rather than creating knowledge about the practices associated with specific management challenges. Nevertheless, we do have some learning to share.

First, there was common processes going on in all the management challenges, particularly around validating the challenge faced by often isolated line managers and building their confidence to manage. Managers often brought historical as well as contemporary challenges to peer learning and coaching and were seeking to process long-standing or injurious experiences. This reflects the lack of peer community most had to handle the line manager role. A common response to feeling overwhelmed was to take on too much responsibility themselves and learning the importance of delegation, and ideas about how to delegate, was also a process common to most challenges

It is particularly noteworthy that managing conflict was apparent in almost all of the challenges. Indeed, historical and current conflicts often had to be processed before the manager was able to focus on a challenge such as creativity or getting the best out of a team. Unresolved conflict stood in the way of addressing these challenges and some challenges (e.g. agile working) also generated conflict within teams and between line managers and teams. The ubiquity of conflict reflects tensions within organisations and in the design of line manager roles, as well as being a natural part of working with people. Line managers are commonly situated between conflicting strategic priorities (e.g. delivering on operations while minimising resource investment or protecting staff wellbeing while developing high performing teams). The isolation of their roles means that they are positioned to absorb this conflict, rather than manage it in a supportive environment. Unprocessed and unresolved conflict was a common burden for the line managers and this undermined their confidence and

wellbeing. Once in coaching, in particular, they were hungry to make sense of it and find a way of moving on, and in peer learning they sought validation that the conflict was not their fault and they should actively manage it. We suggest that developing line managers crucially depends on supporting them to continually process and manage conflict, therefore.

A final general observation is that VBR, agile working and conflict were relatively discrete management challenges and it was possible to gain manager attention to experiment with these. Managing creativity and getting the most out of your team were less well defined challenges and managing secure work was a challenge that many managers did not recognise as timely. All of these were easily crowded out by burning challenges concerning conflict. It may be that longer is required to develop skills in these areas, as conflict must be handled first.

Below, we summarise some specific learning gained about particular management challenges.

Values Based Recruitment. This captured Adult Social Care manager attention due to the sector's recruitment and retention crises and the sector-wide conversation occurring around VBR. Managers were keen to learn more and to have practical support to experiment. Operational pressures meant practice development took time and so learning had to be paced accordingly. Some well-placed or motivated managers took on VBR as a wider change 'project' in their teams or were supported to extend this to their organisation, reflecting the importance of buy-in back at work to create greater change. Managers reported a lack of synch between the values espoused in recruitment and the treatment of staff, and the need for VBR to sit within an authentic approach to values-based management. There may be a value in the adult social care sector adopting a set of values to guide this process.

Agile Working. This challenge was acutely timely as sessions occurred just as organisations were transitioning staff back to offices following the great homeworking experiment during Covid19. Managers were often working with emerging agile working policies and managing the conflict that arises from this ambiguity and change. Some managers benefited from understanding how agile working can operate in favour of organisational productivity, rather than it being purely in the interest of staff's work-life integration. This enabled them to more actively manage the process with confidence. Reminders to use existing management practices – such as checking-in with staff – were well received, demonstrating the value of such support during moments of significant change.

Secure Working. Managers rarely perceived secure work as a timely challenge because they did not control terms and conditions and secure work was not discussed in society or organisations as a management issue. Secure working was also crowded out by being combined in sessions about the very timely issue of agile working. This reflects the role of other actors in the context to making challenges timely and the importance of giving such issues space, rather than treating them as supplementary to more obviously timely issues.

Managing Conflict. There was a huge pent up need for managers to process past and current conflict and to develop the skills and confidence to manage conflict. Unresolved conflict and previous injuries from poor experiences of conflict significantly undermined manager confidence.

Managers commonly brought conflict to coaching (in this and other challenges) and it took several sessions to make sense of it and decide on ways forward. When managers brought conflict to peer learning they were often seeking validation that the conflict was not their fault and that they should actively manage it, as well as ideas about how to manage it. Less experienced managers were particularly validated by finding that experienced managers also struggled to handle conflict. Self-realisation and raising of self-esteem, in the sense of being able to protect a sense of self when being disliked or challenged, was often at the heart of developing management practice. Sector-specific knowledge from peers about types of conflict and appropriate action was helpful. Addressing fear about the fallout from conflict, and whether the manager would be blamed or suffer consequences such as the member of staff going off sick of accusing them of being bossy or a bully, were also common. Development of management practice depended on managers feeling psychologically safe in the sense of being protected by organisations to actively manage conflict.

Managing Creativity. We were initially concerned that 'creativity' might be seen by managers as a 'nice-to-have' and we would struggle to recruit to these sessions, relative to other themes that seemed to speak to more pressing concerns. However, the creativity sessions were popular, and managers reported good outcomes. It seemed there was considerable pent-up demand from managers for finding new ways to address long-standing need for innovation. For some managers, this involved learning about and deploying new 'creative thinking' tools to use with their teams. However, it seemed that more powerful insights for managers emerged from the material in the sessions on employee 'voice'. Managers learned about ways to involve their teams in decision making and problem solving. Many reported that they had put these ideas into practice, and with positive results in terms of solutions to problems, improved staff involvement and morale, and less pressure on the manager themselves (though greater delegation). It seems that an awareness of the benefits of involving and empowering staff is missing from many manager's development, and/or not encouraged by their organisations. Our experience suggests that including this topic in line manager development programmes has the potential to generate some strong outcomes for managers, their teams, and the organisations they work for.

Getting the Best Out of Your Team. Managers learned in two ways in this management challenge. First, they learned about effective styles to work with their teams, many adopting the approaches used in intervention delivery. For example, many sought to coach their teams, as they had been coached by the facilitators, and also adopted more consultative styles. A prominent theme was the extent to which their confidence had developed. Second, they

used many of the techniques covered in the interventions to effect change in how they worked with their teams. They introduced skills frameworks and strengths-based approaches and also worked to re-design jobs, often with their teams, to create more interesting roles. Many noted that they had started having career conversations, which was not something they had previously done, and were taking performance appraisals more seriously. Both were suggested to have positive outcomes and to benefit staff. Amongst these outcomes were improved confidence, team members better using their skills and gaining promotion, having more varied roles and being more motivated and engaged. These fed through into improved retention, performance and autonomy. In some instances, they supported new business development and thus enhanced firm performance.

10.4 The GELL Framework To Develop The People Management Skills Of Line Managers

The GELL programme began by offering a Theory of Change that was an initial logic of how the learning we designed would achieve the outcomes we sought. We also started with a core interest in how context shapes the relationship between intervention mechanisms and outcomes. We conclude by offering the GELL Framework to Develop the People Management Skills of Line Managers. This is effectively an enhancement of our original programme model, incorporating key findings from our evaluation. It can be used by programme commissioners and designers to review existing provision and to design new Theories of Change and associated programmes.

The GELL Framework is founded on the Context+Mechanism=Outcome principle. It:

• Summarises the context factors that enable or constrain line management practice development and wider innovations from a training programme.

• Proposes mechanisms for development via an enhanced list of 8 Learning Pillars, refreshed models for online masterclasses, flash peer learning and skills coaching and principles for programme design.

• Offers six outcomes that may be sought from a training programme.

• Offers tips for adopting a realist approach to programme design, delivery and evaluation that will create knowledge about how learning relates to context to produce outcomes.

10.2. How to Develop the People Management Skills of Line Managers

Context

The Person: The Particular Line Manager

Neglected – Likely to have little access to training or peer support, isolated, under-confident.

Facing significant & changing people management challenges.

Struggling to process and manage conflict, affecting ability to tackle several management challenges.

Busy and easily distracted from developing people management skills – needs flexible and timely learning events and communities of practice.

Hungry to learn & be validated (within our programme – majority women; this may be different for other compulsory or 'hard to reach' programmes).

Often willing to experiment or even take on a change project (in our cohort; this may vary).

The Line Manager Role

Neglected – People management is under-valued and development is under-resourced and under-incentivised.

Tenuous power to enact practice & organisational change.

The Organisation/Sector

Neglects the importance of line management and of people management skills as a productive resource.

Needs to give line managers power & resources to enact practice and organisational change via projects.

Psychologically safe, learning and experimenting organisations/sectors are more likely to absorb learning & innovation.

Values message are often out of synch with resources/strategy.

Society

Neglects the importance of the people skills of line managers as a resource & promotes operational busyness as a sign of productivity.

Mechanisms

8 Learning Pillars:

1. Access
2. Psychological safety
3. Gain knowledge
4. Reflect
5. Make sense
6. Commit to experiment/experiment
7. Accountability
8. Learn together

Short online & evidence-based learning interventions led by HR professionals:

- Masterclass
- Flash Peer Learning
- Skills Coaching.

Programme Design Principles:

- Learning events to garner manager attention & reduce isolation
- Masterclass as a foundation & gateway to coaching and peer learning
- Pacing to enable experimentation between learning events
- Promote experimentation as personal and organisational projects
- Target learning in contexts that enable manager development
- Extend programme design to shape context, reducing barriers to practice and organisational development and to enable innovation.

Outcomes

- Experiment
- Improve manager practice
- Improve organisational practice
- Positive impact on staff
- Improvement to good and productive work

Realist Design, Delivery and Evaluation

Design – Think about how Context+Mechanism=Outcome at programme design, using the GELL Framework and by developing (and stress testing) a Theory of Change.

Delivery – Remain sensitive to context and how Context+Mechanism=Outcomes during programme delivery, continually improving programmes by being aware of what enables or constrains experimentation and practice/organisational development. Observe how the programme can capitalise on contextual enablements and overcome contextual constraints.

Evaluation – Observe how learning works and what experimentation and practice/organisational development is occurring and record what causes this so you become aware of how Context+Mechanism=Outcomes in your programme setting. Revise your Theory of Change in light of your evaluation findings to inform future delivery and wider reflection on 'what works' to develop the people skills of line managers.

10.4.5 What's Next For The Good Employment Learning Lab?

Our next steps are to:

• Develop a toolkit that will guide programme commissioners and delivery teams to use the GELL Framework to Develop the People Management Skills of Line Managers to review existing provision and design new programmes.

• Engage with our project partners and a wider range of stakeholders to discuss the implications of our research for the tricky problem of how to develop line management practice for better work and productivity. We will host events and meetings and are keen to talk to you so please get in touch!

• Stimulate debate with policy makers about how to embed and fund training for line managers and how this will promote good work and productivity.

• We will work across sectors and also conduct some focused engagement with the Adult Social Care sector.

• Publish research papers on our Learning Lab method and our evaluation findings.

Keep in touch with latest developments and get involved by:

Signing up to the GELL Network to hear all our news: **www.mmu.ac.uk/research/research-centres/ dwp/ projects/good-employment-learning-lab/good-employment-learning-lab-network-sign**

Getting in touch: **goodemploymentlab@mmu.ac.uk**

Learning more about the Good Employment Lab, watch our video and access our project outputs on our website: **https://www.mmu.ac.uk/research/research-centres/dwp/ projects/good-employment-learning-lab**

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11

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