

## **How to select a coach, and how to be a good client?**

### **Workshop Session with Rob Watling, Executive Coach.**

This was an interactive workshop, where Rob Watling facilitated a discussion between the 20 or so delegates in the room. Between us we settled on the following sub-questions and shared information and opinions on each.

#### **How important are qualifications and how do you choose between them when looking for a coach?**

We all recognised that this is a difficult and complex area for potential coachees to judge, especially as there are so many different routes for qualification, and so many different awarding bodies. We were reminded however, that some form of recognised qualification is essential and that coachees should at least try to understand what was involved in achieving them. It is also important to bear in mind that coaches who have been accepted onto the approved NHS Coaching Registers will have had their training verified and approved as part of the selection process and that, even when they are hard to compare with each other, represent training to a suitable level for inclusion on the register.

#### **How important is it to set up a formal coaching contract and what aspects of the coaching relationship should it cover?**

Contracts were widely acknowledged as crucial. Again it was recognised that the NHS Institute provides model coaching agreements for work carried out by those on its Registers, and that these are available from the Institute. Rob described the “three-cornered contract” which takes account of the interests of the three main parties: the coachee, the coach, and the organisation. It is important to acknowledge and follow the needs of each party throughout the coaching. And others reminded us of the need to revisit the contract between the coach and coachee regularly and repeatedly throughout the relationship – even at key points within the sessions themselves, to make sure that the work is remaining as focused and as useful as possible.

#### **How can I be sure that I choose a coach who is a good match for me in terms of their experience and style?**

Colleagues pointed out the advantages of some simple research about potential coaches – reading their CVs, looking at a range of possible coaches, and (potentially) holding a “chemistry meeting” (by phone or face to face) where these things could be sounded out. But we also discussed the possibility that you may not want someone who is too close to your experience and style – that it can sometimes be an advantage to work with someone who can help you think differently, to bring a fresh perspective, and to challenge the assumptions that can so easily gather around you in your everyday work.

### **What constitutes success for the coach – and how is it measured?**

The notion of success, for most coaches, is led by the client and the organisation, and what it is that **they** want to get out of the coaching relationship. Progress in this chosen area is always the most important part of the contract, and the coach will certainly want to ask how your work together is making a difference. But it is important to remember that these things are not always easy to identify at the beginning of a coaching series. A client may set out thinking they want to achieve one thing, and end up realising that they need to put their attention somewhere else first. Success for a coach is, in the end, about building a relationship and a process which can help their client navigate all these things.

### **How appropriate is it to explore a core issue for a client in the “chemistry” session?**

Chemistry sessions can be a good opportunity to explore a possible issue, and can give the coach a chance to explain how they might go about supporting you. But remember that you will not necessarily resolve the issue in this sort of conversation. And, as was said earlier, it may not be the ultimate focus of your work together.

### **What are the common characteristics of a “good” coachee:-**

Running out of time by now, we quickly gathered the following characteristics which the coaches in the workshop like to find in their clients:-

- Curiosity
- A capacity for self-reflection
- A willingness to engage in the process
- An open mind
- Ready to ask for and accept challenge
- Willingness to work between sessions (not just in them)
- Making and taking the time to do this properly
- Giving and receiving feedback on the coaching relationship