

REFLECT Lab Co-mentoring

2011-2012

North West Evaluation

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on behalf of HSE West (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, West Cavan)



Executive Summary

1.1 Background to REFLECT Lab Co-Mentoring

The REFLECT Lab Co-mentoring programme is a model of cross sector co-mentoring devised and delivered by The Sage Gateshead (UK). The Sage Gateshead were awarded funding from Creative Partnerships in 2006 to conduct a national programme in co-mentoring between emerging leaders in creative and cultural organisations and schools to develop more innovative partnership practice and enhance creativity at the heart of their organisations.

REFLECT Lab Co-Mentoring provides an opportunity through conversation and reflective enquiry to pause, reflect, reconnect and re-appraise professional practice from a new perspective. Due to its cross sector orientation, REFLECT Lab has been seen as a pilot programme which could act as a springboard for further development in many different contexts.

1.1.2 REFLECT Lab in an Irish Context

In 2010, Sligo Arts Service together with Donegal Arts Service and Helium Children's Arts and Health with the support of HSE West applied to the Arts Council for funding under the Local Partnership Scheme to pilot REFLECT Lab with the Health Service (HSE) in the North-west of Ireland.

The aim of this REFLECT Lab was to advance arts and health partnerships in order to benefit the health services' and the arts services' provision for children and young people within healthcare contexts. This was to be achieved through the professional development of artists and healthcare professionals in Sligo and Donegal, the development of partnerships between artists and healthcare professionals and the training of six trainers who could then go on to deliver similar programmes in the future. The majority of funding for the programme came through the Arts Council's Local Partnership Scheme with additional funding provided by Sligo Arts Service. The HSE West provided resourcing through the provision of an evaluator and by facilitating their staff with time to participate in the programme. The Model Sligo and the Regional Cultural Centre in Donegal provided venues for development days.

The objectives of the programme were to:

- Establish a supportive framework to oversee the delivery of a pilot REFLECT Lab programme and to secure continuity of the programme
- Recruit and train co-mentors from arts and health sectors (working with children) in the North West to enable cross-sectoral learning
- Deliver and adapt the REFLECT Lab co-mentoring programme to Ireland and the Irish Health Sector and support the sustainability of the model and its mainstreaming in Arts and Health.

1.2 Management, Support Structure and REFLECT Lab Process

In previous REFLECT Labs in the UK, the management and delivery elements of the programme were led exclusively by The Sage Gateshead. This included handling the REFLECT Lab co-mentoring matching process using the expertise of the two Programme Managers from The Sage Gateshead supported by the knowledge of Regional Advisory Groups, and ongoing monitoring of the programme by the Programme Managers as well as organising three training and development days.

In the Irish context, it was decided that Helium Children's Arts and Health would manage the programme on the ground with ongoing mentorship and support from Programme Managers from The Sage Gateshead with a view to Helium Children's Arts and Health gaining the skills and expertise to successfully manage future iterations of the programme. The Sage Gateshead provided trainers for the programme and also managed the matching process with input from Helium Children's Arts and Health in relation to geographic location of participants.

Helium Children's Arts and Health organised the practical details relating to each of the training days and also provided support and advice to participants between meetings.

In addition, a stakeholders group was formed to act as a steering group. This group consisted of representatives from Local Authority Arts Offices in Sligo and Donegal; Sligo and Letterkenny General Hospitals; HSE Early Intervention Services from Donegal and Sligo, Leitrim & West Cavan; Mary Scally (Evaluation Support, HSE); Helium Children's Arts and Health; The Sage Gateshead (UK); and Teresa Cawley (HSE Regional Training and Development Officer, Child Health), the evaluator. Stakeholders (except the trainers) agreed terms of reference for how they would commit to and support the project and these were documented and communicated to all.

A crucial element of REFLECT Lab in Ireland was a Train the Trainers programme. This element was put in place in order to ensure the sustainability of the programme into the future and so that it could be transferred to other contexts. Participants on the Train the Trainer programme came exclusively from the arts sector, although one of these worked within the mental health service of the HSE. However, this evaluation does not include the Train the Trainer Programme. The evaluation of the Train the Trainer programme was undertaken by The Sage Gateshead.

Eleven artists (5 from Donegal, 6 from Sligo, Leitrim, West Cavan) and eleven healthcare providers (HCPs) (5 from Donegal, 6 from Sligo, Leitrim, West Cavan) commenced the programme in April 2011. Seven artists (3 from Donegal, 4 from Sligo) and seven HCPs (3 from Donegal, 4 from Sligo) completed the programme in March 2012. The artists worked in theatre, educational drama, music, puppeteering, movement, writing, directing, textiles, glasswork, visual arts and street theatre. The HCPs worked in community mental health and community early intervention services. Six train the trainers commenced and completed the programme.

REFLECT Lab co-mentoring has a clearly defined structure. There were three group sessions during the life of the programme which all co-mentors attended in pairs: An Initial Training Day, A Development Day and a Final Sharing Event. These group sessions offered more insights and information to help develop co-mentoring skills and give co-mentors the opportunity to share their experiences with others. In addition to the group sessions, the co-mentors met 5 times for two hours at a time over the course of the year-long programme.

At the Initial Training Day, the co-mentors meet each other for the first time, began to learn about reflective practice, how to mentor another person, and to start discussion on an agreed area of learning (A Shared Focus). For example, one agreed area of learning between a healthcare provider and a drama worker was 'transitions' which was inspired by the transitions experienced by very young children with disabilities (e.g. starting school). A Learning Agreement was made between each co-mentoring pair which gave them a framework to base their reflective meetings throughout the year.

The Final Sharing Event was the last day of the programme, where all the co-mentors met as a group. It was a chance to reflect on learning and to share and celebrate experiences with other co-mentors and the REFLECT Lab facilitators. The day involved some group conversations and practical activities. The co-mentoring pairs each brought props or visualisations of their conversations to the group and most pairs chose to do a presentation of their learning. Some of the co-mentors chose to frame their presentations through an artistic medium, such as theatre, installation, or song. However, this was not a requirement and some chose to share their learning in a conversational format.

1.3 The Evaluation Process

The evaluation followed the methodology of the [UK evaluation](#) (2008) and made additions to it. It was conducted mainly by conversations with participants and stakeholders, through semi-structured interviews at key stages of the project and a questionnaire which was administered at the end of the project. This was supported by a case study and some personal reflections from participants.

20 baseline and 17 midway interviews were conducted with participants.
9 baseline and 10 midway interviews were conducted with stakeholders.
Final interviews were conducted with 12 participants and all 6 train the trainers.
Final interviews were conducted with 9 stakeholders. 9 participants completed the final questionnaire (including 4 artists and 5 HCPs) together with 3 train the trainers.

The Train the Trainer Programme was not included within this evaluation.

1.4 Findings

Findings are presented as related to personal and professional development, creativity and then key findings and outcomes.

1.4.1 Personal and Professional development

1.4.1.1 *Healthcare professionals*

When asked in the final interview what they had gained most personally and professionally, 60% of respondents (three) said the time to reflect, one realised a need for and prioritised self-care and another identified increased knowledge of arts and its potential use in health. Two said they had learned about the use of arts in Child Health, the “role arts has in health of children” and “tools and resources from arts that can be used with children with disabilities”.

In the questionnaire, when asked to what extent the co-mentoring relationship had contributed to their personal development, 60% of respondents (three) felt it had contributed to their personal development, two were unsure and were also unsure regarding professional development and creative learning, but did not comment further.

In the questionnaire, when asked to what extent the co-mentoring relationship had contributed to their professional development, 60% of respondents (three) felt it had contributed to their professional development. .

These responses suggest that the respondents’ experience of the programme had, in the main, supported their personal and professional development.

1.4.1.2 *Artists*

When asked in the final interview what they had gained most personally and professionally, 66% of respondents (four) said they had their confidence boosted in relation to their work. One said she made a friend and had her life experiences mirrored back to her, another realised a need for and prioritised self-care. Further feedback included “confidence gained and focused connectedness,” “confidence to programme for children with disabilities,” “how to include children with disabilities and their families in arts events,” and “reassurance and assurance re transitions as a valued programme and area.”

In the questionnaire when asked to what extent the co-mentoring relationship had contributed to their personal development, 50% of respondents (two) felt it had contributed to their personal development, one said it did not and one did not record her feedback. The artist who felt it did not contribute to her personal development felt that it did contribute to her professional development.

In the questionnaire when asked to what extent the co-mentoring relationship had contributed to their professional development, 75% of respondents (three artists) felt it had contributed to their professional development.

One of the outcomes of the evaluation was that the artists said they had increased knowledge and understanding of healthcare contexts for children and young people. They identified increased knowledge in their final interview as follows:

- function of Health Service
- health in pre-schools
- child observation
- appropriate activities for younger children
- healthcare professionals as being already creative
- understanding of work in early intervention service
- knowledge of early years development

One said she learned “how she could work with a therapist and have drama guided by the healthcare professional.”

The responses from the artists suggest that the experience of the programme supported their professional development to a greater extent than their personal development, including significantly enhancing their knowledge of healthcare contexts for children and young people.

1.4.2 Working creatively

1.4.2.1 Healthcare professionals

When asked in the interview how far the co-mentoring process had encouraged them to deepen and sustain their understanding of creative learning through shared reflection, 66 % of respondents (four) said the co-mentoring process had encouraged them to be reflective about their practice and two respondents were now more open to learning through a creative process. However, as of yet, this had not resulted in them acting creatively within their work. When asked for any examples of working creatively and creative methods of dialogue and management with children or plans for same, they said, “bring learning to team”, “to use what [is] available at work to work more creatively”.

In the case study one said she was, “more confident and [had] ideas about how to be more creative in my sessions”. This sentiment was identified in the personal reflection too: “The REFLECT project gave me an opportunity to look at my work with renewed creativity, energy and positive focus.” One identified in the final interview that she learned about “the role arts has in health of children” and how to access Arts and Health.

72% (three) of respondents to the questionnaire said it had enhanced their creative and professional learning. Another respondent commented that “it’s about remembering what we already do that is art within practice”. One stakeholder provided funding for a new project as a consequence of her staff’s development.

One output from the programme was that HCPs have developed creative methods of dialogue and engagement with children and young people. In the final interview, one HCP said she would use available resources at work to work more creatively and another reflected in her case study on “how I might approach things differently and with more creativity in my sessions”. When asked how the outcomes might

benefit their clients, one said she was “hoping it will make them more practical and that parents will transfer it to their home rather than buying a flashy toy”.

1.4.2.2 *Artists*

When asked in the final interview for any examples of working creatively and creative methods of dialogue and management with children or plans for same, one said she was able to develop arts for children with disabilities and another said a project was being developed with the HSE. In the questionnaire when asked to what extent the programme enhanced their creative and professional learning, 50% of respondents (two) felt it had enhanced their creative and professional learning.

When asked in the interview how far the co-mentoring process had encouraged them to deepen and sustain their understanding of creative learning through shared reflection, one artist said it helped her to observe children more and use age appropriate activities with younger children.

One of the outputs from the programme is that the artists have developed creative methods of dialogue and engagement with children and young people. In the final interview, one said it enabled her to develop arts for children with disabilities and a co-mentoring pair were developing an arts and health project to help very young children with their extra needs through periods of transition (e.g. starting school). One elaborated, “it would improve the creativity and quality of their work and create work opportunities.”

1.4.3 Key findings

The key findings are presented based on the three project objectives:

Establish a supportive framework to oversee the delivery of a pilot REFLECT Lab programme and to secure continuity of the programme

- Effective matching of the co-mentoring pairs was highly significant to the success of co-mentoring relationships.
- Support in the establishment of a clear shared learning focus is essential to the success of the co-mentoring process.
- A high level of support and clarity around where that support could be found was required by all participants at the outset – this included support from line managers within the HSE, support from Helium Children’s Arts and Health and from The Sage Gateshead.
- Training and development days were a very positive element of the programme and acted as an effective support for participants. However 44% of respondents to the questionnaire were either “unsure” or “unclear” at the end of each day of the next steps.
- Commitment to the process from all participants contributed to the success or otherwise of the co-mentoring process.

Recruit and train co-mentors from arts and health sectors (working with children) in the North West to enable cross-sectoral learning

- Clarity in the information provided to potential participants during recruitment is a key factor in successful recruitment of suitable participants and to the continued commitment of participants to the co-mentoring process. 27% of respondents to the questionnaire said they were either “unsure” or “unclear” about what the programme was before they commenced it.
- Sufficient time must be allowed for recruitment particularly for the recruitment of participants from the health sector.
- The involvement and support of managers within the health sector in the recruitment process is crucial.

Deliver and adapt the REFLECT Lab co-mentoring programme to Ireland and the Irish Health Sector and support the sustainability of the model and its mainstreaming in Arts and Health

- Distance that participants are required to travel in the North West can impact on the ability of participants to meet regularly.
- Time constraints imposed by working hours within the Irish Health Service can act as strong mitigating factors against co-mentors meeting regularly in person and having time to reflect on the process.
- Involvement of managers within the HSE in ensuring that participants commit to the entire programme is important.
- Structured support between development days is crucial to the retention of participants.

1.4 Outcomes

- Artists have increased knowledge and understanding of healthcare contexts for children and young people.
- Both artists and healthcare professionals have developed creative methods of dialogue and engagement with children and young people.
- HCPs have increased knowledge and understanding of how to work more creatively. This was evidenced by 72% of respondents to the questionnaire who said it had enhanced their creative and professional learning. One healthcare professional further commented that “it’s about remembering what we already do that is art within practice”.
- Both artists and HCPs have broadened their visions of arts practice with children and young people in healthcare contexts and have explored how they might work together in the future.
- The need for Arts and Health programmes was reinforced for HCPs together with a realisation of how they currently use the arts in their work.
- Arts and Health was validated for the majority of participants and partners in two ways: The programme developed the network between artists and HCPs. It also increased awareness within the HSE of the benefits of arts and health.
- A number of REFLECT Lab activities are planned beyond the pilot including a seeding programme whereby one co-mentoring pair from Donegal will

develop a six week pilot project to benefit the healthcare worker's service and the artist's practice.

- 6 trainers have been trained in facilitating REFLECT Lab programmes.
- Two trainers are developing a new programme with early years in the South.
- One artist is working on developing programmes for arts festivals in both Local Authority areas that support children with disabilities.

1.5 Limitations

The numbers who engaged in and completed the programme were small but response rates were satisfactory. This was also a new programme that may have benefited from more groundwork that took into account Arts and Health as a relatively new sector and the programme being rolled out in a new country.

1.6 Evaluation Recommendations

Evaluation recommendations are presented related to the three project objectives.

Establish a supportive framework to oversee the delivery of a pilot REFLECT Lab programme and to secure continuity of the programme

- Close attention needs to be paid to matching co-mentoring pairs and matches should not be made unless they are suitable;
- Clear systematic communication channels should be in place with all stakeholders and line managers;
- As artists are self-employed and participation was very much self-motivated, it is not possible to establish clear channels with line managers. The nature of the support they receive from the programme manager, in this case Helium Children's Arts and Health, may need to be more clearly defined;
- Preparation for the introduction day for the co-mentors to include advising them who the other co-mentors are and what to expect on the first day.
- The nature of support needs to be specified to include a mechanism to facilitate reflection on action for the co-mentors at the end or when they leave early;
- The timeframe is specified at twelve to eighteen months for the Education Sector. This timeframe needs to be revised for the Health sector to a shorter timeframe;
- An additional development day between day 1 and 2 should be considered.
- Scoping of the administrative role is needed to ensure that sufficient, systematic support is provided to all participants between development days;
- Roles of Helium Children's Arts and Health (or other organisation managing the programme on the ground) and The Sage Gateshead need further clarification;
- Facilitators need to ensure that the co-mentoring process is continually clarified during training days. This could include a presentation on the first

training day from a past REFLECT Lab co-mentor who gives an account of their process. Facilitators also need to ensure a prompt learning focus, clear goals for each training day and steps for between training days;

- Day one needs to ensure that co-mentors make plans to meet and commence developing their shared focus;
- Mandatory number of meetings between co-mentors which need to be in person.

Recruit and train co-mentors from arts and health sectors (working with children) in the North West to enable cross-sectoral learning

- Commitment of participants to be made explicit from outset (query a contract);
- Sufficient time to be given for the recruitment process;
- Clear presentation of what REFLECT Lab co-mentoring is including specifying and articulating its deliverables in all marketing to potential co-mentors and the stakeholders;
- More clarity on the outcomes of the programme provided to stakeholders at the outset;
- A commitment from senior stakeholders to attend presentations at outset of recruitment phase;
- Consider recruiting people within the health service who will have time to engage fully in the REFLECT Lab co-mentoring process.

Deliver and adapt the REFLECT Lab co-mentoring programme to Ireland and the Irish Health Sector and support the sustainability of the model and its mainstreaming in Arts and Health.

- Address cultural differences of Ireland and the Arts and Health Sectors in Ireland to support establishing a common ground before initiating a further REFLECT Lab co-mentoring programme;
- Engage Performance and Development department of the Health Service Executive as a stakeholder in supporting managing and leading the programme;
- The REFLECT Lab Handbook needs to be adapted for working within the healthcare context (education was the context in the UK) and be more bespoke with a healthcare process;
- Consider focusing the programme on a smaller geographic area to ensure that participants can meet;
- Further examination of which sections of the health sector have time to participate fully in a co-mentoring programme (e.g. Hospital staff did not have sufficient time).

1.7 Conclusion

The findings of this REFLECT Lab Co-mentoring North West and the UK evaluation (Renshaw 2008) reiterate the need for effective matching, clearly defining a shared focus at an early stage and the criticality of the Training and Development days. In the main, the REFLECT Lab Co-mentoring North West achieved its objectives with the majority of participants recommending the programme. It was found to have supported the co-mentors' personal and

professional development including enhancing their creativity, capacities and supporting actual outcomes with a number of REFLECT Lab activities planned beyond the pilot. It was found to have had an impact on both sectors, but to optimise this, it requires more persons engaging in co-mentoring together with further rollout into the next phase. Notwithstanding its positive impact, the programme rollout in Ireland may have benefited from greater scoping at the outset to compensate for the fact that it was new to Ireland and the Arts and Health sectors. This cross-sector programme was described by one HCP as a “Google moment in the HSE” that increases listening, compassion and empathy and by an artist as “an invaluable opportunity to grow and learn”.

REFLECT Lab is an acclaimed model of cross-sector co-mentoring devised by The Sage Gateshead, UK.

The 2011 REFLECT Lab cohort was led by Helium Children's Arts and Health under the Arts Council of Ireland Local Partnership Scheme with Sligo County Council Arts Service, Donegal County Council Arts Office, HSE West (Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal), Letterkenny General Hospital, and Sligo General Hospital.