

Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT)

**EVALUATION REPORT OF THE PILOT CROSS
BORDER ACTION LEARNING PROGRAMME
FOR SENIOR SERVICE MANAGERS IN THE
CAWT REGION**

**LORRAINE THORNTON
MY WORKSPACE**

MARCH 2008

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1.0 FORWARD

After many months of research and discussion, the CAWT Human Resources Management Development Sub Group developed a proposal for a cross border management and services development Action Learning initiative. The group were successful in securing European Union INTERREG IIIA funding to develop and implement the programme on a pilot basis. While variations of this model have previously been successful in other contexts, this was the first time it was tested in a cross border context.

In line with best Human Resources Development practice, the evaluation process and methodology was an integral part of the programme from the start. In order to achieve an objective evaluation of the programme, an independent evaluator was commissioned arising from a rigorous tendering process which applied agreed and clearly defined criteria for the project and the selection process. The following final evaluation report from Lorraine Thornton (My Workspace) is the outcome of a significant data gathering, collation and analysis exercise throughout the life of the programme and which also builds on a previous interim evaluation report produced in October 2007.

We are grateful for the financial support provided by the European Union through the INTERREG IIIA Programme for Ireland/Northern Ireland 2002 – 2006. Without this support, it would not have been possible to implement this programme. Our thanks go to the evaluator, Lorraine, for her enthusiasm and hard work on the evaluation project. We also appreciate the efforts of the participants on the programme who each made a significant and positive contribution to its success. We wish to thank the programme facilitators, ITS and Paul Flynn & Associates for the excellent facilitation of the programme. In addition we wish to acknowledge the contributions of line managers and participating organisations for their input and support. Our final thanks go to CAWT and the Project Manager, Pauline Doherty, whose skills and dedication made a significant contribution to the success of this pilot programme.

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2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Summary

Action Learning is a management development model that has been consistently adopted over the last 30 years as an educational approach which aims at linking the themes of thinking and doing; ideas and actions. Reg Revans, the father of Action Learning, believed that Action Learning could empower managers struggling with intractable problems. Ian Cunningham (1994) highlighted that when people in a learning set start to see the similarities of some of their problems, this enhances the in-depth development of a learning culture. People feel less isolated and more able to be open with colleagues.

The CAWT Management Development sub group developed a cross border action-learning programme which aimed to enable participants to explore cross border service development projects and learn about practices in the adjacent jurisdiction. The programme was facilitated by a partnership of ITS and Paul Flynn and Associates from February 2007 until February 2008.

This report demonstrates that the Action Learning project achieved its objectives successfully due to a combination of good planning and on-going involvement by the project team and the support of an experienced facilitation team. The project evaluation recommends that the CAWT partners should build on the learning from this pilot programme and consider delivering a similar programme on an annual basis, which would equip managers and clinicians with the skills to develop and deliver services on a cross border basis. Further recommendations are identified in section 9.

The evaluation has identified two main levels of achievement in this programme; action learning as a facilitating methodology and process and the development and implementation of cross border projects.

2.2 Action Learning Process

The end review workshop identified the significant learning that took place as a result of participants engaging in the process of action learning, including:

- Providing insights into the health services in the adjacent jurisdiction
- Sharing of best practice
- Overcoming obstacles to cross border service planning
- The importance of understanding and influencing the process for accessing EU INTERREG funding.

Participants endorsed the action-learning model in effectively facilitating cross border working. Some comments, which supported this, included “*support in a secure and safe environment*” and “*combined intellect, experience and*

perspectives.” One Learning set commented that their existing group could support the CAWT agenda by advocating and lobbying for further cross border collaboration within their respective organisations, by identifying opportunities for shared work. Interestingly they also acknowledged that cross border work doesn’t always need funding but can happen naturally.

2.3 Project Development and Implementation

Participants joined the programme bringing with them ideas for cross border service development. Throughout the programme all participants developed their projects into actual service proposals, and any issues encountered were addressed within the learning sets. Set meetings were considered as opportunities to test proposals within secure settings. Some projects progressed further than others, partially due to the restructures in both jurisdictions.

The key emphasis within the Action Learning programme was placed on extracting the learning from the process as opposed to chasing the full implementation of the project. There were a variety of reasons for the differing rates of progress during the lifespan of the programme. In particular the organisation restructuring taking place in both jurisdictions was identified as a barrier to progress, which contributed to changes in participant’s roles, the appointment of new line managers and changes in service priorities. Another hurdle to progressing projects was the inaccurate perception of participants that funding would be available. The scope of some of the projects was identified as being unrealistic. The common theme with all projects is that they had potential to make significant differences in cross border health and social care. A number of projects are currently being implemented on a cross border basis while others are being given further consideration and remain ‘active’.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 History & Development

Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) is the cross border health and social care partnership, comprising the Health Service Executive in the Republic of Ireland and the Southern and Western Health & Social Services Boards and the Southern and Western Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland. Formed in 1992, CAWT's focus is on improving the health and social well being of the resident population, through practical cross border projects, which have been developed across the border region.

The CAWT Management Development sub group, which comprises management development specialists from within the CAWT partner organisations, were successful in attracting EU INTERREG IIIA funding to develop a pilot cross border Action Learning programme for senior service managers and clinicians in the CAWT region.

The project was designed to support managers and clinicians in developing the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate the co-operative development and provision of integrated cross border health and social care services for the resident populations. The programme was also designed to support participants to develop project proposals for establishing cross border services. Prior to this programme there were no similar training or development programmes that incorporated this cross border element.

The objectives of the project were established as follows:

- Develop an action learning based training programme which will equip managers and clinicians with the knowledge and skills necessary to plan and implement effective cross border health and social care.
- Identify 24 managers, with a multi disciplinary mix, across the eligible area to engage in the programme.
- Each participant will identify a specific area for cross border co-operation which will be explored and developed into a project proposal.
- Make full use of communications technology to deliver the programme.
- Evaluate the programme with a view to incorporate into mainstream training schedules.

3.2 Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the effort and hard work that has gone in to making this pilot programme a major and pivotal learning for all persons connected. The programme has provided an opportunity for

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participants, facilitators and the project team to reflect upon the value of action learning and it's potential for promoting cross border engagement.

My main involvement has been with project co-ordinator, Pauline Doherty, who has been a pleasure to work with and has displayed professionalism and hard work at all times.

Finally, I would like to thank the facilitators from Paul Flynn Associates (ROI) and ITS (UK), the CAWT project team and the participants who have taken part in the programme by providing the evaluation with their thoughts and visions for the future.

Lorraine Thornton
My Work Space

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Evaluation Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation, were as follows:

- To establish the effectiveness of this model of cross border engagement
- To establish what learning has taken place
- To what extent the learning is being applied
- To establish whether the programme is making any significant difference to cross border service development / provision
- To assess the performance of the provider
- To establish the impact of individual projects
- To assess the Return on Investment

4.2 Evaluation Framework

In order to evaluate the programme and the learning that occurred, the CAWT Management Development group suggested that the Philips Return on Investment framework should be employed. The following table represents this framework. It is important to note that Level 5 'Return on Investment' cannot be assessed at this stage as the impact that participant's projects have made on services will not be apparent until they are fully implemented.

Level	Description of Level	Measurable Activity
1	Immediate reactions of participants	Use of time; level of connection; quality and range of training materials and administration.
2	Learning from the Training / Development	Changes to knowledge, attitudes etc. Participant contribution.
3	Application of the Learning / Development	Extent to which individuals' behaviour has changed as a result of training and whether those changes have been sustained.
4	Organisational impact	Achievement of organisational objectives; satisfaction of stakeholders. Level of cross border engagement reached across the CAWT initiative.
5	Return on Investment	Placing a monetary value on the benefits of the programme and subtracting the input costs.

4.3 Data Collection

The following sources of data were used to gain information relating to the four levels:

1. Contract of Learning
2. Pre-programme Data Collection Form
3. Reaction sheets completed immediately after each event
4. Telephone interviews with participants at interim stage
5. Telephone interviews with facilitators
6. Focus group with the project board and
7. Post-completion questionnaire with participants

All of the above documents can be found in Appendix 1.

Participants completed the Contract of Learning and Pre Programme Data Collection Form prior to commencement of the programme. The evaluator designed an individual post-completion questionnaire for each participant based on their responses collected previously in the programme. This enabled comparisons at different stages of the programme. In addition, questions were raised in relation to participants' experiences at attending the Themed Workshop II, the Master Class and the End Review Workshop.

4.4 Research Participation

The table below indicates the number of each group who participated in the evaluation:

Table 1 – Numbers Participated in Evaluation

Group	Number
Telephone Interviews with Participants	13 5 from HSE West; 3 from SHSSB; 5 from WHSSB)
Focus Group with Project Board	4
Telephone Interview with member of Project Board	1
Telephone interviews with Facilitators	4 (2 from ITS and 2 from PFA)
Post-Programme Questionnaire with Participants	6

5.0 MAIN FINDINGS

5.1 Project Objectives

The following is an account of the extent to which project objectives have been achieved:

Objective	Evidence of Achievement
Work with service providers to develop an action learning based programme tailored to the needs of cross border working	The service providers appointed to develop and deliver the programme were Paul Flynn and Associates (RoI) and ITS (UK). The programme was developmental to match the needs of participants and their organisations.
Identify 24 people across the CAWT area to engage in the programme	Initially 24 participants were identified and signed up to the programme however, only 13 participants attended. The reasons for the reduction in the number of participants was mainly related to work pressures particularly in relation to participants from the acute sector.
Establish a process of assessment which will explore the skills needed for effective cross border working	The programme participants were key to identifying the skills required for effective cross border working. Some of the skill deficits were addressed during the Action Learning sets and during the themed workshops for example influencing skills and overcoming obstacles to cross border working.
Assist with the identification of specific service areas for proposed development	Identification of project areas was a key objective of participants meetings with their line managers prior to programme commencement. The CAWT project team also met with participants in their area before the programme, to discuss their contract of learning and the importance of identifying relevant service areas for developing during the programme.
Use communication technology to facilitate the programme	The following methods of communication were employed throughout the programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Telephone and email for all correspondence with participants, facilitators and presenters. ➤ Tele-conference facilities for project team meetings. ➤ Telephone interviews were used to gather information by the programme evaluator. ➤ Website communications via the CAWT website www.cawt.com

Develop opportunities for integrated personal and professional development	<p>Programme workshops were the main source of integrated development for participants.</p> <p>A masterclass was developed and facilitated by Mike Pedler, Action Learning guru, and was attended by 12 participants and 25 other senior service managers from the CAWT partner organisations.</p> <p>Participants were given the opportunity of masters-level accreditation by the Institute of Healthcare Management. None of the participants availed of it at this time.</p>
Action Learning Sets to become self-managed at an early stage in the programme	All sets became self-managed after 3 or 4 facilitated set meetings. All sets have agreed to meet after the programme has ended.
Evaluate the programme	An interim and final evaluation have been conducted by an independent evaluator.

5.2 Phillips Return on Investment Framework

Using the Phillips Return on Investment Framework, the following is an account of the participant's learning & development during the programme:

5.2.1 Level One – Immediate Reaction of Participants

Residential Workshop

- 100% of participants felt that the training was delivered within the set time frame which was 3 days.
- 92% reported that the supporting material provided by the facilitators was appropriate.
- 50% of participants felt that the facilitation on the *Principles of Action Learning* was pitched at the right level.

At the **First Themed Workshop**, 100% of participants' indicated that:

- The facilitation at this event on *Influencing Skills* was pitched at the right level.
- The supporting material provided by the facilitators was appropriate and
- The training was delivered within the set time frame.

5.2.2 Level Two – Learning from the Training / Development

At the **Residential** workshop participants indicated that learning at this event included a better understanding of the following:

- CAWT and cross border working.
- Theory and concept of Action Learning and Action Learning sets.
- Other participant's projects.
- Management development tools such as Myers Briggs and Belbin.

The main learning gained by participants at the **First Themed Workshop on Influencing Skills** included:

- Planning of meetings
- Theory of influencing and its application to the projects
- Feedback from the Myers Briggs management development tool

Presentations made by CAWT Project Managers focused on case studies of cross border projects, highlighting how obstacles were overcome and issues resolved. Participants reported that these practical examples provided direction and insight into cross border working and the complexities involved with such arrangements.

The objective of the **Mid Review Workshop** was to review programme developments to date and to plan for the remainder of the programme. Participants had also requested presentations on the restructures within their respective jurisdictions. These were delivered by Tom Daly, HSE West and Ann McConnell, WHSCT.

The main learning gained by participants at this workshop included:

- A better understanding of cross border issues including facts, figures and information from the other jurisdiction.
- Responses from the CAWT project team to participant's questions and answers.
- A better understanding of the restructures in both health services. Participants were particularly impressed with the honest approach of the presenters on the restructures.

The aim of the **Second Themed Workshop** was to (continue to) raise awareness of the political context for cross-border cooperation, to explain the options for accreditation of the programme and to update participants on CAWT's new strategy 2007 - 2013. Speakers for the event were Quentin Oliver, Stratagem, John Shanks, IHM and Sadie Bergin, CAWT.

The main learning at this event included:

- An understanding of the power and influence of political lobbying in a health-related context
- An overview of politics from the North and the South, the need for ongoing lobbying, insights into the workings of the governments, and a broader thinking on the politics of health.
- Increased understanding of CAWT and its structures in both jurisdictions.
- How the Institute of Healthcare Management operates its accreditation programme.

Participants noted in particular that they felt more informed and gained a better insight into cross border engagement, having been participants on the programme.

It is evident that the programme facilitators, project board members and project co-ordinator took account of participants' needs during the design of the programme which resulted in needs-led learning and development.

Participants noted in the end review questionnaire that the **Mike Pedler Masterclass** had helped to provide a clearer insight into Action Learning, the importance of reflective practice and the benefit of questioning techniques in resolving problems. Participants were more motivated about Action Learning as a result of the masterclass.

5.2.3 Level Three – Application of the Learning / Development

To assist with establishing whether learning was applied at the workplace, responses to a number of questions were sought from participants before the commencement of the programme. Six out of the thirteen participants responded to the post-completion questionnaire (Appendix 1), which measured potential changes.

Responses to the question '*To what extent do you feel the Action Learning programme will help you in the future, at work?*' is highlighted in the table below:

Table 2: Pre and post programme responses to application of learning at work

No of participants	Response pre-programme	Response post-programme
4	A great deal	A great deal
1	No comment	No comment
1	A great deal	A little

The participant who noted a downward change from 'A great deal' to 'A little' based the response on the repetition within the programme in relation to continuous reflection on learning and also vagueness of the programme at times.

At the end of Themed Workshop II one participant noted that lobbying is a legitimate part of the job and another had jointly established a cross border partnership, which was influenced by their attendance at this event.

In the post programme questionnaire one participant noted that they are introducing the action learning approach to team meetings as a result of the Mike Pedler masterclass.

The appointed facilitators Paul Flynn and Associates and ITS worked well with participants in aiding them to apply their learning back to the workplace. One

participant, for example, noted how they had applied the learned techniques on influencing which resulted in being successful in a new role. Others reported using learned techniques in their daily work.

In relation to learning of the Action Learning model and process, it appears that this has been gradual for participants and assisted through the masterclass by Mike Pedler. At this event, participants noted that they learned the 'value' of action learning which includes the value of listening to others and asking questions to progress particularly difficult issues at work.

5.2.4 Level Four – Organisational Impact

Results of the evaluation indicate highly significant achievements in relation to organisational objectives. For example, one participant initiated a forum whereby protocols and procedures have been developed in relation to cross border placements. This has enabled considerable involvement with equivalent counterparts in Northern Ireland. Similar findings have been made by at least five other participants, whereby meetings have been arranged with very senior personnel in the adjacent jurisdiction.

Projects

Participants' presentations at the **End-Review Workshop** revealed encouraging findings in relation to their project objectives. This was particularly positive considering the ongoing changes in organisations in both jurisdictions.

Project ideas were developed prior to participants starting the programme. A significant objective of the set meetings was for participants to help to develop each other's project ideas and progress any issues. This highlights the importance of the set meetings in reaching organisational objectives through support, encouragement and development of project proposals.

The findings at the interim stage of the evaluation process found that some of the participants felt frustrated with the progress of their projects. This was due partly to the impact of ongoing changes in their respective organisations. However, at the End Review Workshop it became apparent for participants', that having the motivation to progress the project is crucial. As a result of the learning which took place during the programme, much progress has already been made on implementing some of the projects. For example one participant stated that a cross border partnership for suicide prevention has been established and is currently working on the development of joint protocols.

Results from the End Review Workshop indicate that all participants have been able to progress their projects to varying extents during the programme. In some cases it has been necessary to amend the scope and focus of projects. In addition some projects are dependent on the outcome of applications via CAWT for EU INTERREG IV funding. All projects have the potential to make a significant difference within Health and Social Care and

some participants indicated that they will continue to progress their projects beyond the lifespan of the programme.

5.3 Other findings

5.3.1 Pre-programme

During telephone interviews participants revealed why they had attended the programme. A majority of responses referred to wanting to know more about CAWT, in particular in relation to funding opportunities and forging cross border relations. The learning to be gained from Action Learning and networking opportunities were also attractive options for participants.

The following table represents how participants heard about the programme:

Table 3 Sources of information about the programme

Contact	Number = 13
Line Manager	4
Email from Personnel/HR/ CAWT Office	7
Chair of CAWT Sub Group	2

5.3.2 Programme design

Feedback from facilitators found that they would like to have had more input to the design of the programme.

6.0 PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

6.1 Workshops

The following table represents all events/workshops conducted and evaluated throughout this project.

Table 3: Schedule of programme events

Title of Event	Date and Venue	Facilitator	No. of Participants
Residential	20-22 nd February 2007 Cavan Crystal Hotel	Paul Flynn & Associates (Helene Coyne) ITS (Gurmail Bahia and Olivia May)	N = 12
Themed Workshop I – Influencing Skills	25 th April 2007 Cavan Crystal Hotel	Paul Flynn & Associates (Helene Coyne) and ITS (Olivia May) CAWT Project Presentations	N = 10
Mid-Review Workshop	20 th June 2007 Cavan Crystal Hotel	Paul Flynn & Associates (Helene Coyne) ITS (Gurmail Bahia Restructures in Rol and NI - Tom Daly (HSE West) and Ann McConnell (WHSCT).	N = 13
Themed Workshop II	19 th September 2007 Cavan Crystal Hotel	Paul Flynn & Associates (Helene Coyne) and ITS (Gurmail Bahia) Speakers: Quentin Oliver, Sadie Bergin, John Shanks	N = 8
Master Class and Workshop	21 st November 2007 Manor House Hotel, Enniskillen	Mike Pedler	N = 37, 12 of which were programme participants
End Review Workshop	16 th – 17 th January 2008, Manor House Hotel, Kiladeas, Enniskillen	Paul Flynn & Associates (Helene Coyne) ITS (Gurmail Bahia)	N = 13

6.2 Action Learning Groups (ALGs) or Sets

The membership of the sets was decided at the opening programme event. Participants were asked to organise themselves into sets based on the following criteria:

- mix of gender,
- different jurisdictions
- different disciplines

It was agreed that there should be three learning sets in total for the programme.

Action Learning set meetings were scheduled by agreement with members of each learning set and it was agreed that (in the first instance) the first two meetings would be supported by the facilitators. From the outset, the objective was for sets to become self-managed as soon as possible. Each set availed of facilitation for either three or four meetings, depending on the set.

6.3 Project identification

Prior to selection of participants onto the programme, it was anticipated that participants would have an idea for a health and social care focused cross-border project or initiative that would benefit the border population.

The project proposal and participant's individual objectives were established in the document 'Contract of Learning' (see Appendix 1), which was a joint agreement between line manager and participant. Projects identified were wide-ranging and included proposals for developments in health promotion, children's services and learning and physical disability. Project titles and descriptions are listed at appendix 3.

7.0 DISCUSSION

7.1 Programme Design

This pilot programme was the first of its kind and had to be fluid and adaptable during the term of the programme. Those involved, i.e. facilitators, members of the project board, participants and the programme co-ordinator contributed to the development of the programme.

Some participants have commented that some workshops should have been at an earlier stage in the programme, however, it is acceptable that the developmental nature of a pilot programme would identify these issues which would be built on during the design of future programmes. In future programmes, for example, the Mike Pedler master class should be delivered at the beginning of the programme so that participants can fully understand the Action Learning concept as early as possible.

The End Review Workshop was valuable in gaining feedback from participants on programme design and their recommendations for future programmes. Participants on this programme have produced a list of useful recommendations that should create a sound learning platform for future participants. These are noted in section 8.

7.2 Action Learning Groups (ALGs) or Sets

The objective from the outset of the programme was that action learning sets would have eight set meetings during the programme and that initial meetings would be facilitated by Paul Flynn and Associates and ITS. It was a requirement that sets would become self-managed as early as possible in the programme. Each set had either three or four facilitated meetings, depending on the participant's assessment of their readiness to self-facilitate.

Not all groups achieved the eight anticipated set meetings during the lifespan of the programme. During the summer period of the programme the availability of set members was reduced significantly due to annual leave commitments. In addition, changes in participants' roles due to restructuring in both jurisdictions reduced their availability to attend the set meetings. The evaluation has found that participants valued the set meetings as they provided a constant in that a support mechanism was available to them during major changes in the health services. All groups have committed to continue meeting beyond the completion of the programme.

Significant value has been derived from the communication and networking opportunities that have resulted from this programme which otherwise would not have occurred. Cross border networks have been established which will enable sharing of best practice and more effective cross border working in the future.

7.3 Projects

At the End Review Workshop participants presented on progress achieved within their projects. Participants and facilitators commented that project implementation was not the sole indicator of success. Participants ability to move their projects along was also an achievement. The majority of projects were pitched at a strategic level and, given the significant organisational change that was taking place in both jurisdictions, all projects would not have been expected to progress at the same rate. Some projects are currently being implemented within the CAWT partner organisations. It is not possible to establish the impact of these projects so soon after the completion of the programme therefore; this report recommends that level 5 of the Phillips Return on Investment be employed at a later date to assess the value of the impact of participant projects.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Cross Border Engagement

This programme has provided opportunities for networking and communications between personnel at senior levels in the health services in both jurisdictions. This is a major indicator of programme success and will impact positively on cross border working in the Health and Social Care Services in the future.

Lines of communication have been established which are readily available to participants to contact each other when trying to locate other staff in other areas of the adjacent jurisdiction. This 'sign-posting' service will create new cross border networks outside the programme.

Throughout the programme the CAWT Management Development sub group and CAWT Development Centre staff have provided sound information and explanations of CAWT's structures and processes, particularly in relation to European funding. It is hoped that this knowledge by participants will be brought back to their respective areas of work and circulated to generate a wider understanding of the CAWT initiative.

The timing of this programme in relation to initiating and enriching cross border engagement has been positive in terms of political/governmental priorities. Participants have learned how to overcome possible complexities and how to apply this to the benefit of each service/organisation.

8.2 Action Learning and Project Development

The End Review Workshop demonstrated the extent of participant's learning throughout the programme. Learning included an increased appreciation and understanding of the action learning concept. The programme also gave a better understanding of what the CAWT organisation is all about, ideas on cross border working and the potential to overcome obstacles to enable cross border service development.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Pre-programme information and expectations

Initial information sent to participants needs to be clear and concise in relation to what is offered by the programme, particularly in relation to funding opportunities. This may help to offset unrealistic expectations at the outset. The relationship between action learning and project development has also been a source of confusion for some participants and has therefore minimised the impact of learning for these participants. More clarity is required for participants on these issues. The emphasis to be placed on progressing projects needs to reflect the reality in line with current changes in health and social care in both jurisdictions.

For facilitators, clear roles need to be identified. Facilitators commented that they were sometimes unsure of their role and the project team's expectations of them. If this is not clear from the outset, confusion will arise throughout the programme. Specific briefing/discussion sessions to address role clarity issues are recommended at the outset.

9.2 Facilitation of Action Learning Sets

The evaluation has found that there is a need for a protocol that establishes principles and procedures to be followed by all action learning sets. The protocol would address a range of self managed action learning set issues such as how to respond to losing member/s of the set during the programme and addressing the issue of continuation, post-programme completion etc. It is suggested that some consideration be given to the development of protocols for self managed action learning sets in advance of any further programme.

The need for additional facilitation of set meetings needs to be considered. An experienced participant of Action Learning commented that "we need to get more formalised and focussed...need more regular facilitation for checks and balances". Another participant's comment also highlights the need for additional facilitation or maintenance of action learning sets: "...these groups are a central element of this programme and need to be maintained accordingly."

9.3 Projects

Participants each identified their own projects before the commencement of the programme. The project team / line managers should consider a more robust approach to participant project selection or consider allocating projects to participants based on specific organisation / service requirements. This might ensure a greater sense of interest and ownership from line managers and lead to a closer tracking and monitoring of project progress.

Project implementation is crucial in order to establish the value of this programme. The project team need to consider developing a strategy which tracks project progress beyond the lifespan of the programme.

9.4 Organisation Restructuring

The implications of the restructuring of Health Services organisations in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland have impacted greatly on the programme. This is particularly significant in relation to changes in participant's roles and those of their line managers. In the event of a participant taking up a new role, their project often becomes redundant. Line Managers are instrumental in providing support to participants and a new line manager may not have the same priorities or resources as the one who developed and agreed the Contract of Learning. For these reasons, the timing of future programmes needs to be carefully considered. This issue also highlights that in times of change, the ability of the facilitators and participants to adapt and be flexible was fundamental to the success and effectiveness of this programme.

9.5 Participant recommendations

At the End Review Workshop participants identified a number of improvements for future programmes:

- Review the process for selecting membership of Action Learning sets whereby participants fully understand the rationale for the selection process.
- Encourage community and voluntary sector participation.
- Ensure that a tighter focus on projects is maintained throughout the life of the programme e.g. project team / line manager should request regular updates from participants and offer support. This will help to ensure that issues are identified and dealt with in a timely manner.
- There was a suggestion to set up an alumuni association for Action Learning with an annual event involving the programme's participants.
- Ensure that participants maintain a communications link with CAWT e.g. inclusion on the CAWT mailing list.
- Some participants felt that CAWT should try to secure funding for smaller cross border projects/initiatives that could be phased over the next 5 years. As requested by SEUPB and the Departments of Health, currently CAWT have submitted an application for funding to implement 12 large-scale projects from 2008 – 2013.
- Develop marketing material for the programme which classifies the ideas within the AL projects e.g:
 - Patients & clients
 - Systems
 - Strategic influence within healthcare systems
 - Networks

- A booklet should be developed with input from participants, facilitators and project board to capture the learning that took place as an outcome of the programme. This might include a set of principals and guidance statements for Action Learning in healthcare settings.
- Promote the programme with Directors of the CAWT partner organisations, presenting on the benefits of the Action Learning process and the projects which were driven as part of the programme.
- The induction programme for project staff recruited to CAWT INTERREG IV projects should include reference to the Action Learning process and specific training on how to use Action Learning to promote project development. This might not have an immediate impact but would introduce/promote/embed AL techniques in the healthcare systems in both jurisdictions. This could be run as a pilot scheme to be evaluated.

9.6 Facilitator Recommendations

In terms of future action learning programmes, facilitators made some suggestions:

- They commented that the presentations by participants at the End-Review Workshop was effective in demonstrating the volume of work that went into each project and identified the progression of projects. The requirement for participants to present at the end of the programme should be maintained in any future programmes.
- Post programme, participants from both jurisdictions should be invited to meet on a regular basis to set up, for example, an alumni association.
- A workshop on how to access European funding, via the CAWT structures, should be introduced.
- In terms of selection onto action learning sets, participants with similar project proposals should be grouped together in order to invite a forum for communication and exchange of ideas etc. on similar issues.

It is recommended that all participant and facilitators recommendations be considered by the CAWT Management Development sub group and, if deemed appropriate, be fully implemented.