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Evaluating Career Coaching

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Evaluating career coaching: challenges, methods and reflections

Evaluating career development interventions is not easy.....

- **Objectives** of career interventions may not be clear and may not lead design
- The impact of career interventions can be **complex**, take a long time, be personal and varied, difficult to observe or for individuals to articulate
- Evaluating **impact** (rather than process) and trying to **measure** (not just suggest improvements) is especially challenging
- Privacy and **anonymity** can be in tension with tracking individuals and accessing factual data

Models of impact, based on theory and with appropriate metrics are lacking

- **Coaching** has theory, practice and evaluation approaches, but often rooted in coaching for job performance or learning and development, not career coaching
- **Career development** has plenty of theories too, but not widely accepted evaluation models and metrics

Context matters.....

- Impacts relevant for young people or unemployed adults are not appropriate for **employed adults**
- The **employer** may be providing the coaching and may be interested in organisational as well as individual impact
- There may be **specific issues** related to the workforce, the work and work settings

The service being evaluated



- Launched October 2021
- Born out of previous award-winning coaching service to support wellbeing of primary care workforce during Covid-19
- The career coaching service was designed to support workers to take **practical steps**, take more **control over their career direction** and **proactively advance** it
- 1-1 on-line or telephone delivery
- No barriers to access for primary care workers including dentists, pharmacists, optometrists, GPs and their colleagues
- 1,938 people were coached through the service up to end Jan 2024

Some specific evaluation challenges in this case



- New impact model needed – evaluating career coaching different from well-being coaching
- Impact may take longer to show
- Desire to evaluate organisational as well as individual impact
- A lot going on in primary care workplaces and with workforce
- Fragmented and complex labour market. @120,000 workers, @ 80 occupations & 100s of employers
- Asking time-poor workers for data

Establishing the evaluation logic model

How did we agree a model to underpin the evaluation?

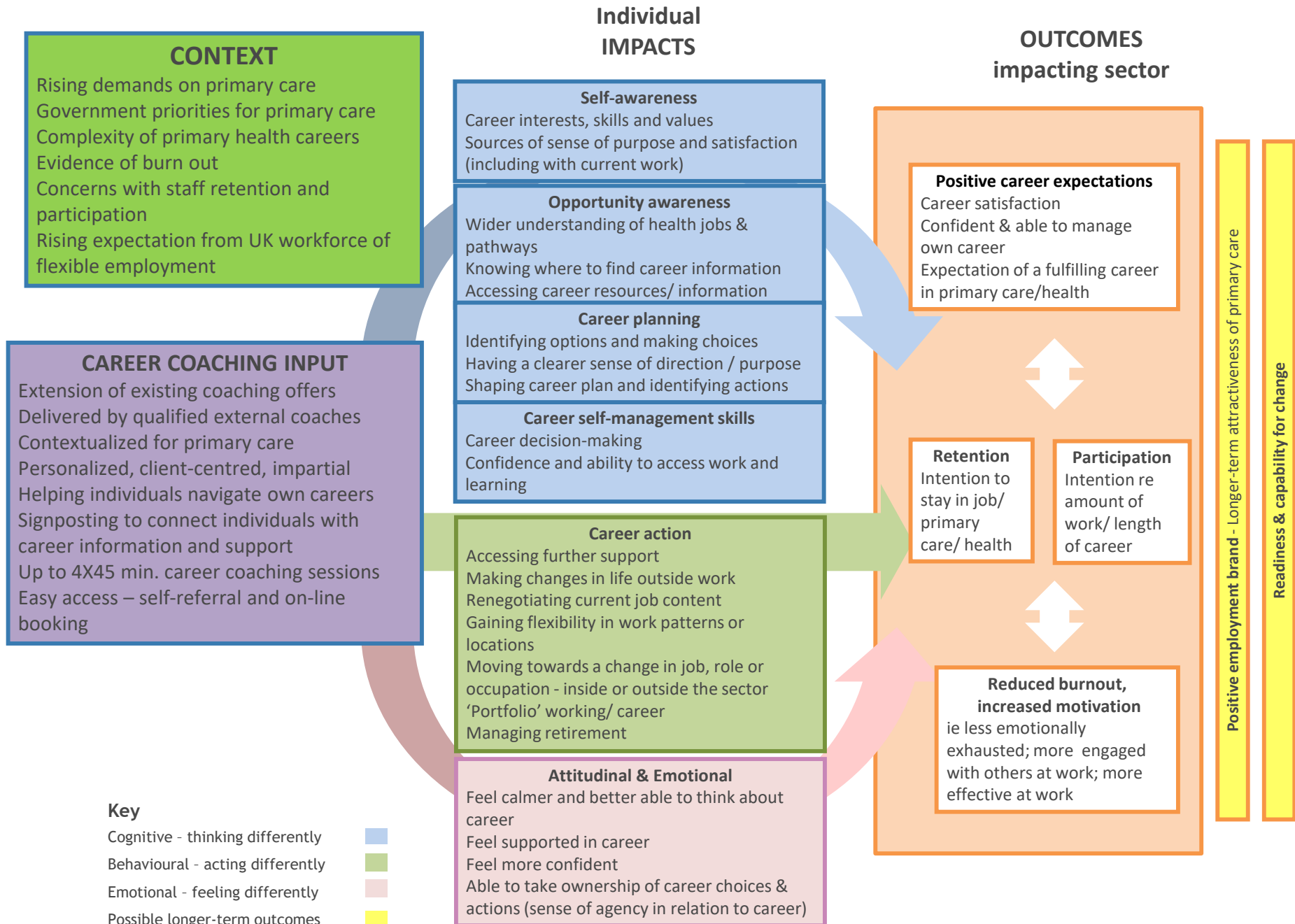
Conversations with:

- sponsor for the evaluation
- coaches already involved in delivery
- NICEC Fellows re appropriate theory and metrics

Literature searches for relevant models and existing instruments for measuring career development impact and organisational impacts of interest to the client

Sense checking with the coaching community of practice

Evaluation model for career coaching intervention



Cognitive impacts explored

Self-awareness

Career interests, skills and values

Sources of sense of purpose and satisfaction (including with current work)

Opportunity awareness

Wider understanding of jobs & pathways

Knowing where to find career information

Accessing career resources/ information

Career planning

Identifying options and making choices

Having a clearer sense of direction / purpose

Shaping career plan and identifying actions

Career self-management skills

Career decision-making

Confidence and ability to access work and learning

Actions and emotional impacts explored

Career action

Accessing further support
Making changes in life outside work
Renegotiating current job content
Gaining flexibility in work patterns or locations
Moving towards a change in job, role or occupation - inside or outside sector
'Portfolio' working/ career [working fewer hours]
Managing retirement
[Achieving a good worklife balance*]

* Worklife balance
added to survey after
consultation

Attitudinal & Emotional

Feel calmer and better able to think about career
Feel supported in career
Feel more confident
Able to take ownership of career choices & actions (sense of agency in relation to career)

Organisational outcomes explored

Positive career expectations

Career satisfaction
[Meaningful work]*
Confident & able to manage own career
Expectation of a fulfilling career in primary care/health

Retention

Intention to stay in job/ primary care/health

Participation

Intention re amount of work/ length of career

* Meaningful work and burnout were measured with pre-existing scales/ inventories

Reduced burnout*, increased motivation

ie less emotionally exhausted; more engaged with others at work; more effective at work

Not explored yet, but of longer-term interest

Readiness & capability for change

Positive employment brand - Longer-term attractiveness of primary care

Evaluation conducted in two waves from:

Impact surveys

124 coachees completed surveys before and immediately after coaching

51 coachees completed surveys before and up to 22 months after coaching

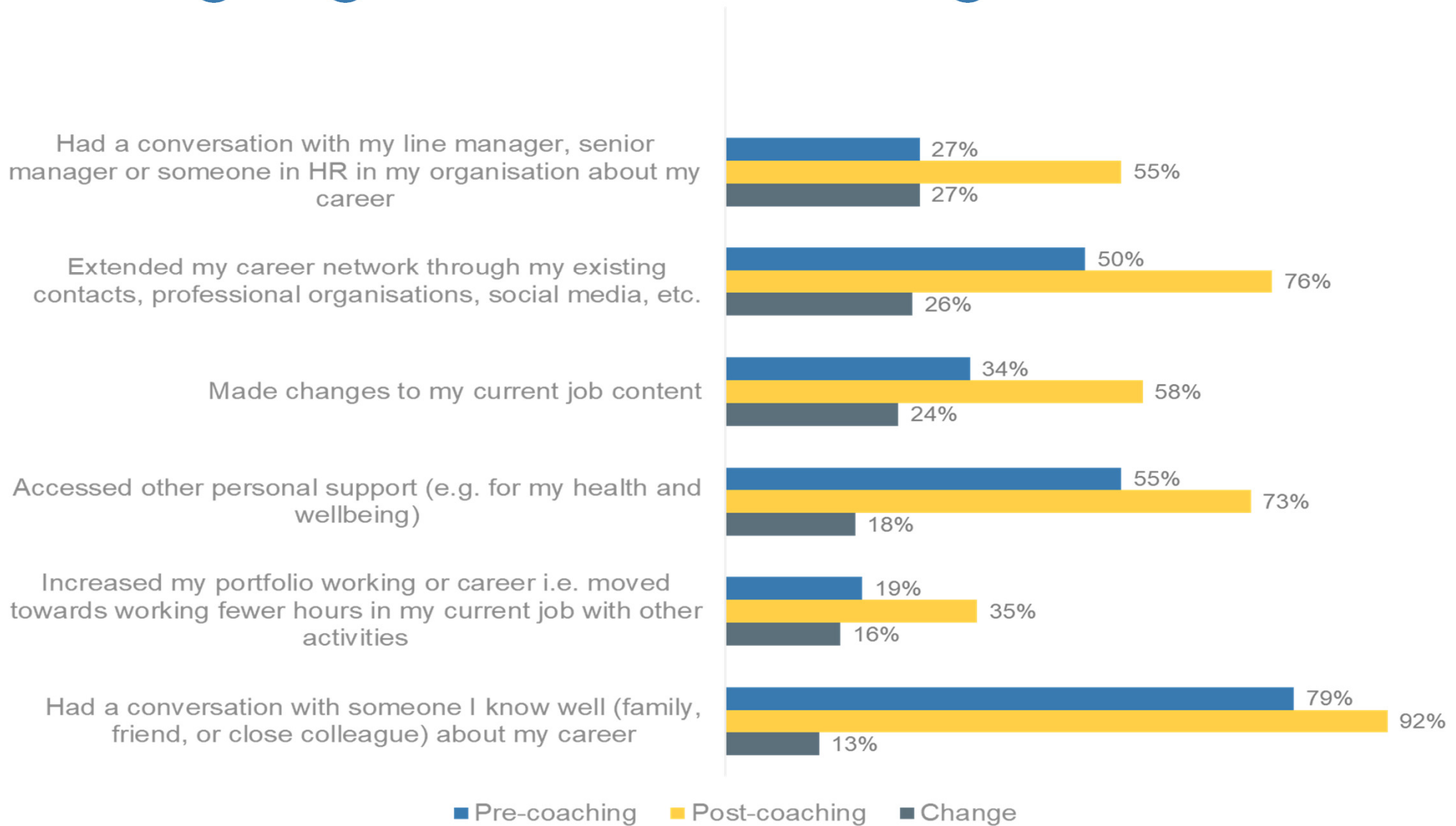
Prompted journals

227 coachees submitted entries before, during, and/or after coaching

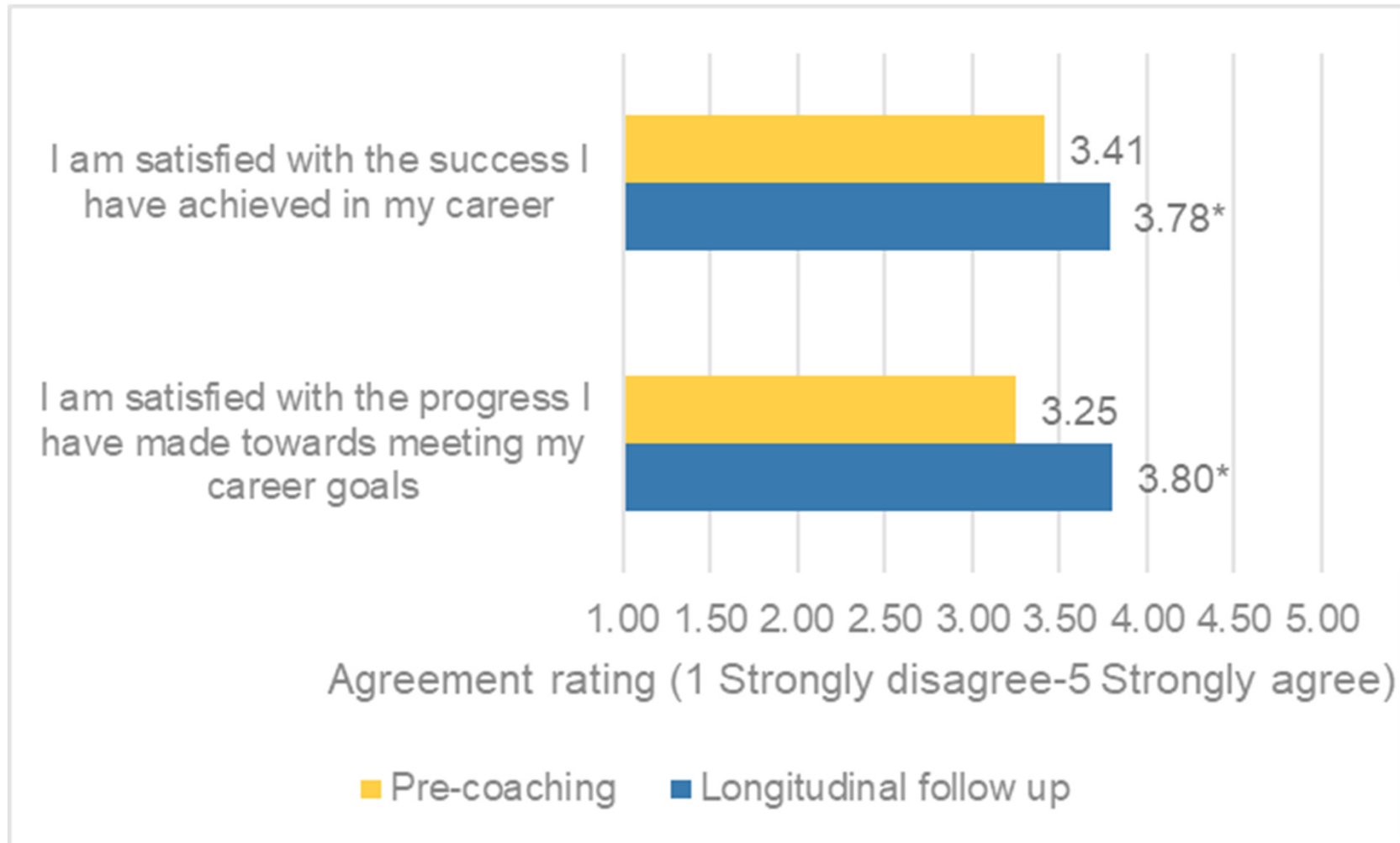
Career tracking interviews

9 coachees each interviewed twice

Career Action statements - average agreement and change



Longer term effects: Career Satisfaction statements - average agreement



Note: * denotes statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between pre-coaching and longitudinal follow up surveys

Source: IES, 2024

What have we learnt about the impact from the career coaching service in primary care?

Quick effects

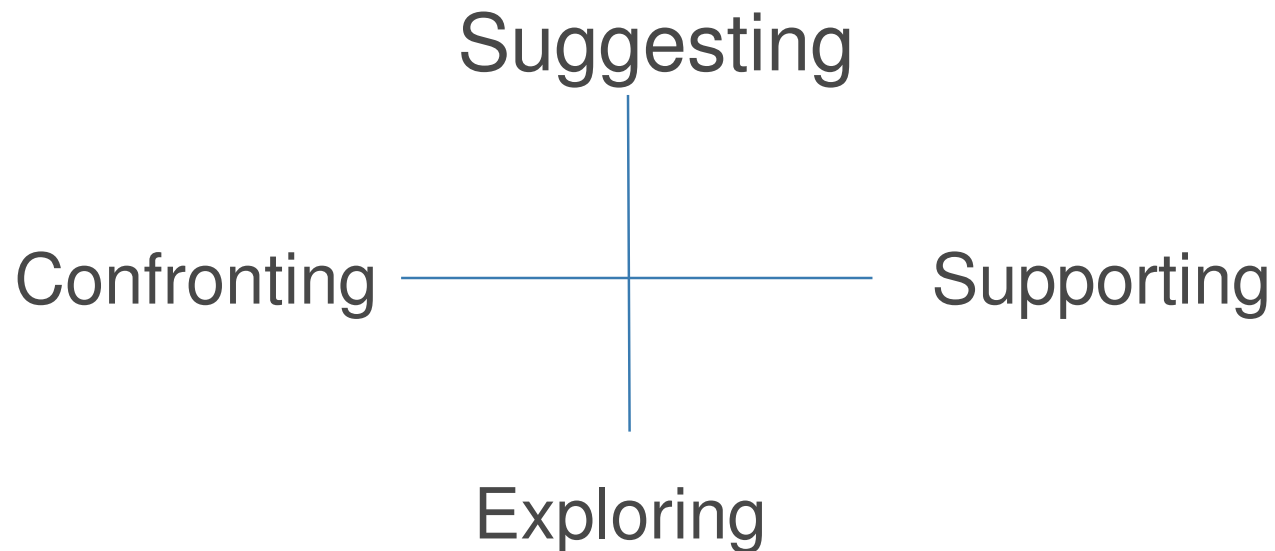
- *Career thinking*, especially in career planning and career management skills
- *Emotionally* calmer, more confident, more able to think
- Increased confidence and agency in managing own career
- *Actions and behaviours* esp. in conversations and networks, negotiating changes to current job content

Longer term effects

- *Career intentions* – reduction in seeking a job move but possible trade-off between fewer hours and retention
- *Career satisfaction*
- Slight improvement in burnout and meaning in work measures
- Hard to know if effects due to coaching

Erik de Haan

Slide shown by John Lees in reflection session



*Relational Coaching: Journeys Towards Mastering One to One Learning,
Wiley, 2008*

Our reflections on evaluating career coaching

Some challenges overcome by the logic model

- Knowing why service is happening (purpose)
- Using feedback from those involved in piloting
- Cognitive, emotional and behavioural clusters seem both memorable and useful

Some challenges overcome by the methods (procedural aspects):

- Participation improved by getting coaches' active support and keeping them informed
- Separate out requests (helps response rate)
- Interviews too time consuming in this setting
- Journalling a surprise success in both popularity and depth of insights
- Don't underestimate the power of a good story (narrative)

Some challenges remained

- Employer and health system outcomes
- Lack of widely accepted metrics or instruments for career interventions with employed adults. Importing scales from other fields (eg burnout) can push out other key questions

Thank you

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