

The care exchange Series 5 **Episode 2: Is it a**

Hosts

Pia Rathje-Burton and Wendy Adams

Guest

Leah Smith, Chief People Officer, Berkley Care Group

Pia Rathje-Burton 00:08

Welcome to the care exchange the Skills for Care podcast for managers in social care. I'm Pia Rathje-Burton and

Wendy Adams 00:13

I think a really good place to start is around what neurodiversity is, because it's interesting. We're

up process. So when we first started the project, we spent a good six months probably going into the homes and this, this was together with the consultant I was talking about previously, having one to one meetings, doing focus groups, doing surveys to understand a) how many People neurodiversity touches so either people who have been diagnosed or who feel that they have neurodiverse traits. How many people perhaps have family members as well? Because it's it's one thing to understand people who who have neu

terms of making changes to your recruitment following all the learning that you've gained from your existing employees, and what they've told you,

22:42

yeah, so there's some there's some simple things, and there's some more complicated things that we've done. So one of the things that we have done is actually on our website. So we've got our main website, which includes our careers website, and we've implemented a new accessibility tool, which is a brilliant tool, because it includes neurodiverse aspects. So for example, you can choose to turn on the ADHD function. And what that does is it helps the person to stay focused on what they're reading. It blacks out all of the screen other than where your mouse is, stops animations to enable people to focus. There is the dyslexia function so you it will change the website into a particular font, and helps kind of improve that comprehension and fluency. And you know, again, that that that's open to absolutely everybody, but from a careers future workforce point of view, that means that we're, we're truly able to adapt our careers website, in this case, to ensure that individuals are getting the information they need in the format that they need it, um, so that that's one thing that we've done, I think other thing in terms of recruitment. So I mentio

sector. So I see this as a massive opportunity for us as a sector to both attract new individuals into the workforce as well as support our existing workforce. Yeah,

Wendy Adams 27:39

have you had any feedback from either the professionals or family members or carers about this work that you've done?

Leah Smith 27:50

Yeah, quite a lot of feedback. But again, Wendy, it's, it's more antidotal kind of stories that we get back. So we've got examples of for example, we had a resident who who came to live with us, and her family came and spoke to us. They'd long believed that she was on the autistic spectrum, but this lady had never received a diagnosis, but she came and spoke to us about it because of some of the work that that we had been doing, and what that did is it helped us have a really open conversation about whether or not she had a diagnosis. Wasn't up to us to obviously make that decision, but actually recognizing the way that we communicate with the with the individual, some of the behaviors that we were seeing, particularly where it was busy times of day, so dining times, for example, breakfast, if there's activities going on, and some of the behaviors this lady was showing, because of the work that we've done, we were able to just adapt things slightly for her. And that's just one example of that conversation might not have happened if we hadn't have been having these, these wider conversations. We've also got a real standout situation for for me, was we, we had a male carer who was working for us, never worked in social care before, very caring. Our residents really, really loved him very, very much, but we were starting to get some comments that he couldn't be found, certainly during busy times. And when he was found, he would be somewhat, quite often, looking outside of a window, and some of the other team members felt he wasn't pulling his own weight. Now, it would have been very easy to have taken that conversation down a certain route with that individual. The lineman manager actually recognized that there were probably some neurodiverse traits within this individual, and. And and was able to have a different conversation with them, which ended up basically this individual saying, Actually, I am autistic, and I'm really struggling, because I'm given all of these tasks at the beginning of my shift, and it's overwhelming me, and I can't remember them. So a simple little thing for that individual. Instead of having, you know, all of these tasks, can you go and support Mrs. A and Mr. B and Mr. C, it's changing. It. Would you mind going and support Mrs. A, and when you're finished there, come back to the senior and we'll give you the next task. Tiny, tiny, little things. But that has completely changed that individual, really productive team member. He actually left not that long ago, went to work somewhere else, and he's since come back to us because he feels that he didn't get the support elsewhere that he'd had with us. So we are getting the feedback, but it's often through these examples and through these stories, which I think are just as powerful, often as anything else. Yeah, yeah. Just,

Pia as aan (p) (e) (r) (n)

he (p) (e) (e) 545 (t) m 58h

31:38

So I think the first thing is making sure that you know where we where we are engaging with CQC. Actually, they understand what we're doing around neurodiversity, sharing our strategy, sharing our action plan, sharing our reasoning behind it with the video applications. It is as simple as just turning that video application into text which is then stored. And don't forget, that's just the application stage. If we need more information after that, we're still getting it. But instead of, for example, the individual having to write that in an application form, we're doing that via discussion which is then noted down. So you're absolutely right in that we are highly regulated, and we recognize that we need to have evidence for these different stages, but we're j

Yeah. And I think your website, you know, having a good look at your website the other day, and it, you know, it's, it's really, you know, once you when you look at it, you think, Oh, this is really user friendly. But then when you start thinking, start thinking, Oh, the reason why it's user friendly is, and it's really clear, you know, really, really clear about, you know, stages, what would happen, you know. And, and I think for anybody that's you know, you know, takes the uncertainty to to out of the of the process, isn't

is great news. One of the questions that we ask all of our guests is our time for care slot. So I'd like to ask you the same question about what's your most time saving tip.

38:45

So a saying that I have had with me for a long, long time, that I talk about a lot is I don't have time as the grown up version of the dog ate my homework. And what that means to me is, if something is important, you make time for it, no matter how busy you are. So it's about, how do you make sure you're making time for the important things? So my tip is to ask yourself, is it a hell yes? So hell yes is something I use and other team members in Berkeley use a lot. It's a way to ask ourselves and challenge ourselves, not just is this thing urgent and important, but is it significant? Is it going to add value? Is it going to have an impact? If it's a hell yes, we're going to do it, and we'll make the time for it, because it's important. If it's not a hell yes, if it's a, oh, maybe, or a Yeah, then that's where delegation, prioritization and having structure comes in. It might be, in that case, something that gets pushed to a different week or month. It might be something you can delegate to someone else. Might even be something you don't end up doing. But so think about it. Is it? Hell yes. If it is, do it. If it's not, think about not doing it, or how you can delegate it to someone else. That's

Wendy Adams 40:04

brilliant. And after this, that's me going down my to do list. You can see which are and which aren't. So our our final question to you, and again, this is a question we ask all of our guests, is, imagine we're in the lift on the 10th floor, and we're going down with a group of registered managers, and before everyone gets out, you want to tell them what you think is your most important key message to leave them with. Now remember, we're only going down 10 floors, so what would that be?

Leah Smith 40:34

So there are three things. One is Stay curious. Two is never presume and three is never stop asking questions in the context of neurodiversity. Talk about it. Be curious. Who may be neurodiverse, who may have experience or be impacted, what it means for them, how it shapes them, what strengths they have, how you can support them. Don't presume that everybody has the same experience or even needs the same things take time to understand and then keep the conversation alive by constantly asking questions, both to educate yourself and kind of develop your own knowledge around neurodiversity, but that also then helps develop that neuro inclusive culture as well. So stay curious, never presume and never stop asking questions.

41:20

Brilliant. Love

Pia Rathje-Burton 41:22

it. I the

my tagline for this, for this podcast, thank you so much. Leah, that's been absolutely fascinating and really, really interesting, and a topic we haven't spoken about before. So I'm really just thought it was an

this really made me think about the positive culture toolkit for adult social care that skills for care have now that's not specifically about neurodiversity. It's about culture much more, much more generally. But actually within that toolkit, there's some really good stuff that links to some of the things that that Leah was talking about and talking about that is, you know, some examples of that is about noticing how people do what they do, you know, thinking about feedback and experiences from other. People, and how to embed that into into your own organizational culture. And that was really something that that Leah talked about when she was talking about having a good understanding of the the experiences that people had, and then thinking about what needs to change, to embed that into the into the culture, so that everybody feels comfortable and happy in working in the in the service?

Pia Rathje