



## The care exchange – Series 5 Episode 2: Is it a ‘hell yes’?

### 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'm Wendy Adams. Today we're speaking to Leah Smith, who's the Chief People Officer for Berkley Care Group. This is a role she's held for three years. Berkeley care group has a number of care homes and nursing homes to provide care to older people, including those with dementia. Leah has worked in social care for 20 years in a variety of roles, including in HR and as a care home manager.

### Pia Rathje-Burton 00:42

Worth knowing that earlier this year, about the care group was recognized by the top employer Institute for going above and beyond for the care and development of their employees. And just to add, the top employers Institute is a global authority in recognizing excellence in people practices. So really looking forward to chatting to Leah today. She's got an exciting project to tell us about on the show. So welcome to the care exchange. Leah.

### Leah Smith 01:16

Thank you very much. Thank you for having me.

### Pia Rathje-Burton 01:20

Great to have you on. So we invited you because we were just really intrigued to hear about this project you've been working on. You know, both care being really inclusive and your focus on neurodiversity, you tell us a bit about what that is, what is your project? Well,

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I think a really good place to start is around what neurodiversity is, because it's interesting. We're talking to a lot of people about neurodiversity, and not everybody fully understands what it is, and really simply, all it is is it's an understanding that all of our brains work differently. It's just a natural variation in the way that we process information. But typically, neurodiversity can include things like dyslexia, obviously difficulties with reading or spelling, dyscalculat dyscalculia, which is difficulties with numbers and maths, to things like ADHD, autism. There are many, many different things which kind of falls under that neurodiversity umbrella. But for us, it's, it's a beautiful thing, this, this diversity in the way that our brains work is really, really beautiful, and it makes us as a species more innovative, more creative, more resilient, and make sure that we have that that diversity of thinking and some of the kind of amazing creations and innovations and achievements that we have have been from people who are or who were thought to be considered neurodiverse. So people like Albert Einstein, for example, it was thought he had ways now thought he had ADHD, dyslexia, possibly autism, more recently. Bill Gates, for example, has dyslexia and ADHD. If you're a fan of the Olympics, I love the gymnastics. Simone Biles has ADHD. It is something which is natural. It is something that has probably been around since humans have, but it's only in kind of more modern times that we've developed this concept of neurodiversity. So it's not a new thing, but it is something that I think is starting to get a lot more focus, and we're starting to see much more of a movement around neurodiversity, particularly neurodiversity at work, which is kind of the angle that we've we've come from. We were, we were getting increasing feedback from our team members around people disclosing more and more neurodiverse conditions. And at the same time, we had a very chance meeting some of these, some of these things happened like this, don't they? They everything just sort of comes together quite naturally. But we had a chance meeting with a gentleman who is very much considered an expert in his field. He's neurodiverse himself, has neurodiverse family members, and that kind of really sparked this project off, really, and that's where we started. So we've been on the project now for two years. We've got a five year strategy. So we're not, by any means, kind of at the end of that journey, but we've been spending the last two years, really understanding what neurodiversity looks like within Berkley care, what we do well how many people it affects, things that we can improve to both support our existing team who are neurodiverse, but also attract more people into Berkley care and the sector as a whole. So. And also really start improving the awareness, the understanding around neurodiversity, because ultimately, people who are neurodiverse bring such amazing skills and strengths into the organization and into the sector as a whole, and they're kind of skills and strengths that we really want to capitalize on. So in a kind of short, a short journey, that's kind of our journey, where we are to date.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 05:28**

So So in terms of how you're sort of kind of shaping it, so obviously you've got something around recruitment. I mean, I'm good a little bit about that in a minute. But if you're thinking about your sort of current workforce. Were people that you work with, Were they involved when you were creating this project? You know, people who are from a well, neurodiverse were they part of the project? You know, how did you make sure that that it was kind of meeting their needs? I suppose,

05:57

yeah, 100% it's a really good question Pia, because with any of these sorts of projects, you know, you can, you can have these, these wonderful ideas, and you can think it's going to add value, but ultimately you need to involve people that it affects. And for us, this is absolutely been a kind of bottom

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 neurodiversity themselves, but we have a huge workforce, and those individuals might also be touched by family members or spouses, and how does that impact them, and how does that then impact them at work? So we spent this kind of six months really doing this deep dive, gathering all of this information, which was also, you know, what, what do our employees think that we can do as an employer to be more neurodiverse. And it was fascinating the results that we had. So we had 10% of our workforce who have been diagnosed as neurodiverse. You know, one of the different aspects that I was talking about earlier. Fascinatingly, though, we have another 20% who might not have received a diagnosis but absolutely identify as being neurodiverse, so that's nearly a third of our workforce. And then on top of that, we also have 40% of our workforce who had a family member who was neurodiverse as well. So when you're looking at employees and and how many people this touches, this is such an important topic for so many people, and that's just looking at our team members. So if you then start thinking actually, how many of our residents and the people we support might be neurodiverse for us, we we look after older people, the likelihood of older people being diagnosed is less than it is for them for younger generations. And then you start looking at your relatives and your health professionals that you come into contact with, this is potentially huge. So we know that it touches a lot of people. We know it's really important for people, and we've done a huge amount of work with our employees to understand what their experiences are, what their thoughts are, and they've really helped shaped the strategy that we have in place today,

**Wendy Adams** 08:52

and what sort of effects or barriers were your staff members experiencing as a result of their neurodiversity?

09:02

Yeah, it's a really good question. Wendy, so I think one of the things that we have learned is that barriers often start at school. And the more you talk about this, it doesn't matter where I talk about this, there's always people who come forward and say, Actually, that's really hit home with me because of X, Y and Z, and a lot of people will talk about experiences that either they've had or their family members have had at school, and sometimes it's getting access to services. Sometimes, you know, I've heard stories from personal stories from people who talk about being labeled as the naughty child in school, whereas actually, school just wasn't set up right for them, and perhaps they had too much stimulation or they couldn't focus. So sometimes some of these barriers start in school, and then that comes through to the workplace as well, and some of those barriers can be things as simple as applying for a job. So if you have dyslexia, for example, which is so common, actually completing an application form or doing a CV can be so difficult for somebody, and might actually mean they don't end up applying for that particular job that requires an application form or a CV because it's just too difficult for them, and that goes kind of all the way through your employee lifecycle as well. It very much depends upon the individual, and some of the things that we've been able to implement are some really simple, often at no cost, ways to ensure that we've got diversity in all of our employee life cycle, so that regardless of

whether somebody is neurodiverse or not, there are different ways that people can, for example, apply for a job or Interview or have an onboarding different onboarding experience. That's really, really important. So yeah, the barriers are often starting at school, but they do kind of follow through into the workplace as well, and they're often things that we might not even think of. So it's been a really helpful exercise for us to look at our organization, our processes, our policies, through this neurodiverse lens, and

**Wendy Adams 11:26**

I think it's interesting what that you said you'd been able to make some changes, actually at no cost, because I'm guessing that there'll be some managers listening to the podcast today who were thinking, Well, I'd really like to do this, but what's this going to cost? How difficult is it going to be? But it sounds like you've been able to make some changes, you know, relatively easily,

**Leah Smith 11:49**

absolutely and you know, of course, there are things that you can do that that will cost, things like technology are typically going to cost. But for example, things like interviewing somebody. One of the changes that we've implemented is that we now give people interview questions in advance that costs nothing. But what that does is breaks down the barrier of somebody who perhaps doesn't know what to expect, doesn't perform well in an interview, it gives them an opportunity to really show their best version of themselves. And actually, it makes interview experiences more unique and much more rich in terms of details, because you have a discussion that is a lot more in depth, because the person is not anxious or off put by the fact that they're in an interview situation, another thing that we have also done is that we encourage different ways to interview so it's not going to be right for everybody to sit in an interview situation with a with a with a load of questions, so things like case studies or walking interviews, where you're walking and you're interacting with people and you're having more of a discussion. Are just some of the real, small, non cost ways that we can adapt our processes which just enable people to be much more relaxed. And this is about also culture and values and and making sure that we are helping people to show us their their best selves and they feel comfortable to do so.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 13:24**

And what about this is really interesting to hear the different and they, you know, as you say, they are more about, you know, processes rather than a cost. Because I think sometimes I just get so focused on this, you know, reasonable adjustment. It's going to cost me, you know, this is kind of things that you can do in terms of your sort of kind of workforce. There's that not, there's not neurodiverse. Have you had to do any sort of kind of work of saying because, like, you can imagine people saying, well, you know, they're getting special treatment, or whatever, you know, Is there things that you've, you've done to support them or train them, or, you know, I don't know what the right word is, but you know, it's kind of giving some information and reassuring people

**14:05**

absolutely. So I think the first thing to say is that all of the things that we have implemented, we have implemented for everybody, because they benefit everybody. If you, we've, I've taken just a very small example of interviews. But if you think about it, if you if anybody were to go for an interview with somebody, actually, if you get that interview questions in advance, and you're able to prepare and

you're able to think about it, that's going to benefit everybody, whether you're neurodiverse or not. So I think that's the first point that the kind of culture, the awareness piece is has been a real focus of ours for the last couple of years, so we have developed some internal awareness training courses. And to your point, earlier on, we've done that actually, it was developed in our homes by our staff so individuals who are neurodiverse themselves, but also who have family members. And for example, one of our senior carers is now delivering that training of course across our different homes. That senior carer has a family member. She has a son who is neurodiverse. She's very passionate about the subject, and because she shares that training as a personal experience, and she uses her personal story. It makes it real. It makes it way more impactful than it would our regional trainers, for example, going out into the homes. And what we've really seen is that it opens up a conversation. And a lot of what we're talking about is about having just these open conversations. It encourages others to share their stories. And what it then does is it encourages other people to come forward and say, Actually, either, you know, I'm neurodiverse, and this is how I experience it, and this is some of the challenges I've come across, or actually, I think I might be. We've had quite a few people who who come up to us and say, you know, what you've said has really resonated with us. And I think I might be, or I certainly might have some neurodiverse traits. So this this kind of training, this awareness, this conversation, has certainly started to develop this culture of openness, about talking about how we experience things and our different strengths. We have also done, for example, we have our own podcast at Berkley called 'Be together', and we've done a podcast on neurodiversity that's available externally, but that's also internally. That goes on to our learning management system. We cover neurodiversity in our employee newsletters. You know, we it's about keeping the conversation going, really. And then the other thing that we've done more recently is that we have trained internal neurodiverse workplace assessors. So these are not individuals who will diagnose at all. What they do is that they will work with individuals who are or believe themselves to be neurodiverse. They'll understand how they experience work, and they'll make suggestions and adjustments for that individual to enable them to get the best out of work, and us to get the best out of them. So all of these things together have been really, really important. And I would my kind of number one thing, and my number one suggestion is that's where you start. Always start with that awareness piece. Always start with the conversation, the processes, the some of the technology that we've put in. For example, you can't do that unless you've got that general awareness within the organization and you start to get the buy in. So yeah, that would be my tip. That's that's certainly where you need to start.

**Wendy Adams** 17:52

And for the managers of your neurodiverse employees, so the home managers of the senior care workers, have, they have, have they needed any additional training in how to be that first line manager for somebody who's neurodiverse? Or has the awareness been enough? Yeah,

**Leah Smith** 18:11

it's. It's an interesting point. Wendy, so the awareness has been enough, but what it's then done is sparked for further conversations with managers in particular. So for example, we do now have neurodiversity as a standing agenda item in our leadership meetings to ensure that our managers, a have the space to talk about neurodiversity, but B are developing those skills that they need around managing people who are neurodiverse. We've also just implemented a new training course on our learning management system, which is exactly that, so managing employees who are neurodiverse,

and equally, the workplace assessors that I've just talked about, they've only just been trained, but their job is also to support general managers as well as employees, to make sure that you know, everybody feels supported in this developing, this neuro inclusive environment,

**Wendy Adams** 19:15

and I'm assuming, based on the numbers within your workforce that You probably either have or will have in the future, line managers who were also neurodiverse. We

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do we know that we have neurodiverse individuals within our senior leadership team at all levels within the organization. We have neurodiverse individuals, and I think that's going to be reflected across the whole of the social care and outside of social care, probably as well. You know, our figures, it's very difficult in terms of the outside of the sector to look at, you know, what's the average, but it's thought to be anywhere between 15 to 20% of the population as a whole are neurodiverse. So you're absolutely right. It is. Highly likely that we have neurodiverse individuals at all levels within an organization.

**Pia Rathje-Burton** 20:06

And do you think, you know, it's a very, you know, it sounds like what you've kind of created. It's just a really positive culture. Have you seen a change in culture in general, and how has that affected things like retention? Yeah,

20:24

so it's something that we're working, still working on as as I said, we're in this two year journey, and we're doing this alongside many of our other strategies, our people strategies as well. So as a whole, we are seeing a decrease in our vacancy rates, we're seeing an increase in our retention rates. We're seeing an increase in our employee engagement satisfaction rates. What we now need to do is understand is that a direct impact of the work that we're doing around neurodiversity, we are seeing some some quantitative information that indicates that this project is having a positive impact upon those KPIs. So for example, we have a quite an innovative AI platform, which gathers employee feedback on a regular basis. So instead of doing annual pulse surveys, we do them every fortnight, and we have specific questions around neurodiversity, around culture, around support, around awareness. And since we've started the project, we have seen those scores increase, and we have also seen our employer net promotion score increase in that that time as well. So we've got some antidotal evidence in terms of data that shows this might be. I think what we are seeing a lot more of is that qualitative discussion based outcomes. So, you know, we are having so many more conversations with people, and people are coming forward to talk to us about their own experiences, their own journeys, their own stories, and that, I think, is really powerful. We just need to really understand. How do we capture that to evidence this is having the positive impact that we think that it's having, yeah, and it, you know, obviously,

**Pia Rathje-Burton** 22:24

you talked a lot about the investment of your for your current workforce, and you've touched a little bit about kind of the recruitment side. So what are, what are some of the other things that you've done in



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 mentioned at the beginning that application forms, CVS can be very difficult and can be a barrier to people applying for jobs. We are working in a highly regulated sector. We know that, and we need to ensure that we have evidence of these processes to ensure that people who come to work for us are of a good character. One of the things we've done is that we, again, on our careers website, have implemented the ability to submit a video application, or even if you don't want a video application, you can submit an audio application. Again, it's just enhancing the different ways that people can apply for a job. So if somebody does have dyslexia, for example, actually we're taking the barrier away from them. They can do that application via that video or via that audio application for. I think obviously talked about interviews, some of the things that we are looking at doing now is to develop things like animated job descriptions. My experience of job descriptions has always been lengthy words, one, two page Word documents, and that can be very difficult for people, and again, could be off putting for for somebody who's potentially looking for a job. So having animated job descriptions, having videos of our existing staff talking about, what, what does a day look like? What does a normal day look like for them? What kind of things do they get involved in. It's something that we've just started doing as well, things like working with our some of our suppliers and our partners. So this isn't just about what we're doing internally with Berkley, we outsource, for example, some of our advertising around recruitment and so working with our suppliers and partners so that they're also implementing some of the neurodiverse principles is really, really important to us. So yeah, there's many, many different things, certainly around the recruitment space that we can be looking at and looking at differently, adverts, for example, making sure that we use that diverse, all inclusive language, that we've got a good balance of male and female coded words within the adverts. Again, they're things that you really have to think about, and you have to look at these things through a different lens, but what they do is that they have really quite a significant impact, and it's all about just reducing those barriers that people may come across. What we do know is, if you look at the vacancy rates within the social care sector, and you look at the number of people who are neurodiverse, if we could attract just 1% more neurodiverse individuals into the social care sector, those vacancies that we have as as a sector would be significantly reduced. So it's both the right thing to do, but also the skills that people bring with them, the creativity, the innovation, the often higher levels of empathy and resilience because of experience that they've had, their skills that we want and we need within the

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 Rathje-Burton 31:07**

I just want to take you back to when you're talking about the audio, application forms and those things. So the thing, first thing that springs into mind is that ex register manager is, how on earth, am I going to show that to CQC? You know, you know they would be expecting a star file with an application form, and how am I dealing with that? So, yeah, are you practically done some of those things to make sure you're complying at the same time as as being supportive? Yeah.



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 just adapting the processes slightly so we're still getting that evidence, but it's perhaps not in the normal way that that a CQC inspector might be used to seeing those things. Yeah,

**Pia Rathje-Burton** 32:37

it's really interesting. And the other thing I was going to ask you was, so we know that some managers listening to this, who are not part of a group, who are perhaps individual, and you know, perhaps are thinking, as Wendy said earlier, trying to think of ways that they can do, are they sort of kind of any resources or people to follow on social media or anything like that, that you kind of think, well, That's where I would start by, by sort of, kind of starting to educate yourself. Because I think if it was me, I'd think I know nothing about this. I need to really expand my mind, and then I can start talking to my staff, and then I can start making changes as a result.

33:15

Yeah, so it's a really good question, because it's such a large topic. So there absolutely is the the person that I mentioned who kind of sparked our motivation around neurodiversity is a gentleman called Theo Smith. He has no relation to me whatsoever. We just have a common surname, and he has written a book with a lady called Professor Amanda Kirby, called 'Neurodiversity at work'. Now Theo has a background in social care as well, so he has that understanding that is a brilliant place to start, in terms of knowledge around neurodiversity, but specifically looking at it through a workplace lens, he also has podcasts and blogs, and he's definitely somebody to follow on social media. There's another book which I find, I found really impactful for me, which is called 'Neuro Tribes'. Can't remember the name of the author, but it's about the history of autism specifically, but it does bring in other neurodiverse elements as well, and it's a very good kind of background book, but it really, really makes you think, and makes you kind of think from an individual's who is neurodiverse point of view, if you're not neurodiverse yourself. So there certainly two things that I'd suggest. We are really, really open to sharing what we're doing around neurodiversity, so we don't see this as something that we should just keep within Berkley. We are, by no means the experts, and we are on a journey, but that's part of the reason we're doing this, this podcast, is we want to share, and we want to share what we're doing. So the other thing is, just get in touch. Get in touch with me on LinkedIn. Popping me, pop me, an email. So we will share what we're doing. We will share resources. We very much see this as something that, as a sector, could really impact us as a sector, really, really positively.

**Pia Rathje-Burton** 35:12

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 it, really, and we don't want to put any barriers, absolutely anybody applying for a job as well, before we go to sort of find because I just want to ask a little bit about the podcast. So I'm always intrigued by by podcast listening, and in your case, podcast for creating. So you have start as a as an organization started a podcast. Why did you do that? Obviously.

36:01

So

36:03

it, it was one of those, I think I had the idea in some random place, in some random meeting, and gave one of my team members a call. And next thing you know is, is we've got a podcast, because they are absolutely fantastic. My team at kind of, yeah, taking something and running with it. I think it was twofold. Really. It was a way to communicate with people, internally and externally, about topics that we felt were really important to us, but also as a learning tool. So, you know, our podcast is it's called Be together, life in care podcast at Berkley. It's available on Spotify, but also we host it internally on our learning management system, and we do a lot around advertising that internally. So it's that communication tool, but it's also the learning tool. And we we have different team members who host the the podcast and And equally, who are involved in the podcast, and then we have some external guest speakers as well. And we've we've done everything from sustainability, neurodiversity, we've done quite a lot around mental health at work. I think our more recent one is around overcoming obstacles so so from a kind of coaching point of view, myths and facts about social care. We've got all sorts on there, so they're things that are either important to our staff or that we see can be a great learning tool for people, but it's available to anybody to listen to, and we're always on the lookout for people who want to come on our podcasts and talk to us about things they're passionate about as well. Ditto, good plug.

**Wendy Adams** 37:46

We all, we all love a podcast that's amazing, and you've talked about so much stuff. I don't know how you fit it all in. Along with the running a service and supporting people and

**Leah Smith** 38:00

doing that. We have a great team. Wendy, we have a really great team. And you know, whilst it's me here talking to you today, actually, there are so many people involved in this project, and I think it just it's touched so many people. It means a lot to people, and where you have that level of buy in, and don't get me wrong, it's taking a while to get there, but now that we've got the level of buy in, it's just sort it's flying, which is, you know, it's brilliant, which

**Wendy Adams** 38:30

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

**Leah Smith** 41:24

bottom floor. Now

**Pia Rathje-Burton** 41:27

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 excellent opportunity to really, kind of expand our minds and hopefully inspire some managers listening to this to make some changes in their services. So thanks so much for today. Thank you.

**Leah Smith** 41:50

Thank you very much. Guys. Take care. Bye, bye. You.

**Pia Rathje-Burton** 42:03

So that was a really interesting conversation with Leah there Wendy. It

**Wendy Adams** 42:07

was fabulous, wasn't it, she had so much stuff to talk about. Yeah, it's

**Pia Rathje-Burton** 42:12

a, it's a really, it's really interesting, because just a couple of years ago, I I'd never heard anybody in social care talk about neurodiversity supporting staff in that way. And all of a sudden, I suppose, as the rest of society, it's suddenly become one of those things I get lots of managers talk to me about. So, you know, when I heard Leah talk about it, I just thought, this is going to be a fantastic topic. And she didn't disappoint. There were so many things. And I think obviously Leah works, you know, in HR, you know, in a sort of fairly large group of care homes had lots of staff, and so she talked about her team, and if you were just on your own, if you are the register manager, you're doing the HR, you're doing all the things. You might seem a bit overwhelming. I can't do all those things, but I think she has some really great tips, just to kind of get you started, you know, just thinking about, you know, having those conversation with your staff team, looking at your practices, thinking about your current workforce, but also your future workforce. What are the fairly small adjustments you can make to make a huge difference? It's really interesting. I thought,

**Wendy Adams** 43:18

yeah, definitely, definitely so

**Pia Rathje-Burton** 43:21

skills for care. We have value based recruitment, which is, you know, the the way we really recommend that people do recruitment in terms of thinking about people's values, and they are a part of the website. If you have a look at the website, so if you go into the website I'm on, this will be in the show notes as well, but just for your information, go into recruitment support, and then choose value based recruitment, and then go to attract. And if you go right at the bottom of the page, there is a whole section on the things to think about, and some of the things Leah's already talked about. But there's some tools there, so there's some best practice examples, just lots of ideas that you might be able to use and think about yourself.

**Wendy Adams** 44:07

I really liked what she was saying about how she'd worked with all of the staff, those who were neurodiverse, and those who maybe aren't to create a culture, and how important that culture is. And

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-Burton 45:28**

Yeah, absolutely. And I think just thinking about how, you know, listening to people, and then, you know, making changes result, and think we're thinking about how that's affecting the culture. And I really like the fact that she was talking about recognizing that some staff who are not from a neurodiverse background, maybe, maybe kind of thinking, Well, what's going on? This is all a bit new, you know, you know? And then she actually said, Well, we would, we've done, done some awareness sessions for and it's actually been delivered by people who have experiences. So it's really, really embedded, and that really kind of translates into that culture. And I think the toolkit explains that really well in terms of how to make changes and really making sure that people have that buy in. And she was talking about that a lot, wasn't she? Yeah, definitely. So that's it for this episode. Thank you so much for joining us. Remember all the resources and the things that Leah talked about about as well the resources you talked about will be in the show notes. Bye, for now. Bye, you.