

we are all aware that we are professionals and there are boundaries. So right from induction, we talk to staff about what are ways we can connect with people and completely ourselves with people without overstepping boundaries. And the example I usually give is I don't talk to the people we support about my love life. I don't talk to them about my mortgage, my debts, but I will talk to them about the things in life that I love, my things that I'm passionate about, so music, food, things I love to watch, things I love to do, and and how I identify. I mean, it's perfectly fine for me to say, well, actually, I'm heterosexual and, and I don't think there's anything inappropriate about that, because, you know, it's how do how do we expect people in support to tell us all about themselves, to tell us every detail of their life, but we don't share anything of us with them that's in balance, that's and what we want, obviously, in in our work in social care, is for people to feel equal for people, and the only way to do that is to have a two way conversation.

Pia Rathje-Burton 06:03

Yeah, it makes complete. Makes complete sense when you say it like that. And I suppose how, how do you think that? Do you think that that has changed? Have it having that within your values and within your culture, has that changed how staff feel about being at work you know are thinking about retention, sort of, the culture, that kind of thing. How can you see that? I

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really can. I think what we get, the what the feedback we get from staff, is that they feel that we do care about their well being. We care they're not just a resource. They're not just a person, a body to go and support somebody that they they feel we care about who they are as a person. I think it makes them more willing to be open if they are having struggles in areas of their life. Talking about mental health here is very normal and comfortable. So staff are struggling if they're getting to the stage, we all know it's social care can be draining. And we support people at the very complex end of the spectrum, and working with somebody every day who may be presenting behaviors of concern, it can be very challenging and draining. And we try to make it really clear to staff that if you're getting to the stage where you're struggling or you're feeling that you're not responding in a way as professionally as you like, because you're emotionally worn out. Talk to us. Talk to us, and let's find you. So sometimes what we do is, it sounds like a weird thing, but staff will alm w [)3(5470.59 Tm0h(t i-5(e ca3h)3ce)3(8e59 Tm0h(8h).4e)3(vso5cia4 wil)s

them as an individual, if they've dedicated their you know, their passion and their love and their attention to the people we support them, they deserve the same from us. They deserve us to keep them safe as well. And I think being open and honest and having those open conversations across the organization just enables people to do that and and to not feel that

do with that? Yeah, you know, in my day, we didn't talk about those sorts of things quite

Pia Rathje-Burton 11:28

we went off sick and said we had, we had

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a bad back, yeah. And I think it's about having access to resources as well. So we keep, I tally of, local counseling services. We also refer people to the care workers charity where they can access counseling services if need be. But again, it's also about just finding the right person in the organization to talk to, because, although the line manager might be a really good line manager if they haven't got the relationship with them where they feel they can say what they really need, although they're worried it might come across wrong. You know, is there somebody else in the organization they feel more comfortable talking to? And it's thinking about sometimes it's thinking outside the box. You know, we have to cover the hours we need to provide the care we need to provide, but can we look at how we can do that? And that might be a shifting them to do something else for a little while, giving them a focus that isn't as challenging or as difficult, and just working with them through that and accepting that we all struggle. We've all been through times. You know, I've worked in social care. It'll be nearly coming up nearly 40 years, which sounds awesome, but I started when I was very young. I'm saying that because I'm really old, and and there have been times in my career where I've gone, can I keep doing this? Can I keep giving my all because I don't want to do it half heartedly? And I think that's the other thing that people miss out. Staff often struggle with their mental health because they don't want to do a bad job. They don't want to let anybody down, but it's hard. You know, they always say you have to fill your own cup up first. You have to look after yourself first. And I think people who work in social care often struggle to do that. They put everybody around them first, their families, the people they support, their children, their friends. When it comes to caring for ourselves, it's a hard thing to do, and I think that again, reminding staff that that's a positive thing, looking after yourself is not detrimental. It doesn't make you selfish. It makes you sensible, if I'm honest, yeah.

Pia Rathje-Burton 13:30

And do you think that because, because LDC care, unlike most of the sector, you're a very young workforce, and you got quite a equal balance in terms of gender. So you've got nearly 50% of your workforce are male, which is again, unusual. So do you think those that combines, of, you know, encouraging everybody to be themselves, really supporting mental health and really being aware of and supportive in terms of how people are feeling at work? Do you think that those are the sort of, kind of, partly the ingredients to to kind of, I know you don't do recruitment, but do you think that's kind of part of, part of the the, I don't know the answer to the question, Why? Why? Why do you buck the trend, why do you have a different what? Why does your workforce look differently to most other organizations? Um, maybe,

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like, it's almost like we talk about about people with neurodiversity, who mask who who try to cover their unique parts of themselves because they're worried they won't be accepted. And it's exhausting. It's so exhausting, if you talk to somebody who's neurodiverse about it, it's exhausting trying to contain that all the time and and often what that leads to is is, is meltdowns or breakdowns, because it's so hard to keep it in. And I think for myself, on a personal level, I am somebody who is outspoken, who is passionate, who is and has been my whole career. And there have been many times in my career, in fact, at one in one job, I was asked to be less Cheryll. Can you be less Cheryll? And I said, No, I can't be less Cheryll. And you employed me because I am Cheryll. And I think the thing for me that I love about working, where I work, and that makes me driven to give this to everybody else is that here I'm encouraged to be more Cheryll. I'm encouraged to bring all, you know, to bring all of those bits, because they recognize that the reason I am how I am is because of my passion for what I do. It's because of wanting to get it right, and the drive and all those things. And for me, it's, it's hard to explain, but in other jobs, I often felt tense, and I would go into meetings, and I would go into situations, and I would physically feel myself tense up. I would I would tense, and all of those things. I come to work here and I relax. I feel relaxed at work. I even if I don't feel very well, I want to go to work because it makes me feel better. I want to be around the people I work with because I know they care about me, and I know that I will have laughter in my day, and I'll have joy in my day. And that is a massive shift. And people sometimes talk to me and think I'm mad because I go, they go, Oh, I could work tomorrow. And I go, yeah. Because for me, going back to work is never a bad thing. It's a great thing. And I wish everybody could have that. I wish everybody, especially in social care, because what we bring into work with us and our feelings, they leak, for a better word onto the people we support. So if they're having a bad day already, and I come into work and I don't really want to be there and I'm grumpy or feeling stressed, that bounces off, and then nobody's having a good day. But if I come in and I bring my joy and I share my joy with their joy, or I share my joy when. Not feeling joy life's better. And that sounds so silly to say to some people, but that's how I feel, and that's how we feel at LDC, and I honestly do believe it's why the people we support do so well, and are able to work on their emotional regulation so much more easily, and are able to do things that people believe they could never have done. So

Pia Rathje-Burton 20:25

we wanted to talk to you a little bit about your CQC assessment that LDC had in early 2024 and you were one of the first services, I think, in your area in Kent to be inspected. What did you learn from that assessment?

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So I think initially, not to be brutal, but the first thing I learned was that CQC still weren't quite sure how they were doing it and what it looked like and how it was going to work. Yeah. And

the inspectors that came in were great. The inspector that came to see us was great, but clearly said that they'd had limited experience of using the new framework on a learning disability service, and had no experience of work using it on a learning disability service for individuals as complex as ours. So and that was clear when they sent us a request for information from the then assessor post. A lot of it related to what I would say was older persons, care services. So they they were asking for things that we wouldn't have, dependency tools, visitor policies, things that wouldn't relate to our service at all. And it and we had to go back and say we don't have any of those things because that doesn't match what we do. I think it was nerve wracking because we didn't really know what it was going to look like. And everybody was, you know, everybody was holding their breath to see how the new inspection process would work. Well, what I would say is that actually, in terms of the experience on the day and most of the inspection, to be clear, it wasn't much different from previous inspections we've had. It's still the same thing. It's still about you sharing with them what you're doing and how that makes the regulations and irrelevant of whether they're using KLOE's or quality statements, the regulations stay the same. So it's just, you know, and and it's about sharing your passion and sharing what we do with them.

Cheryll Champion 22:31

good work you've been doing that meets a regulation that meets a quality statement, give it to them.

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And were you actually as specific as that? Yes, here is this, here is this thing that we've done and it links to this quality statement. Were you actually as specific as that when you when you have those discussions for them,

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we were and we did it the same way when we had to send over documents afterwards. So obviously we had to send over a lot of documents after the inspection. We did exactly that. We created a spreadsheet. We numbered each evidence, piece of evidence, we linked it to quality statements, and sometimes it was multiple quality statements, not just one, and then we put a box at the end which was impact. So what impact has this made to the people we support, to the organization, and we gave it them that way, and the assessor actually said to me, it made her life so much easier, because she wasn't having to dig through reams and reams of documents to find what she needed. She knew exactly where to look for each quality statement and at what

Pia Rathje-Burton 25:30

that's a really clear way of doing it, isn't it, doing it as a spreadsheet and actually linking it? I think that's a fantastic bit of, bit of a top tip. I think, I think, because, I think, if you're you might, you know, and I've seen lots of people having folders and all sorts of sort of thing, but still quite difficult, as an inspector, I can imagine, to actually see what you're trying to get at and actually link in it that way and on a spreadsheet. And then you can go off and go, oh, I want to see a bit more about that. And then having a have a bit more of a look at whatever, whatever the evidence actually is. We're creating, like a spreadsheet for them.

26:04

It also shows them that you know what you're talking about. Yeah, I'm evidencing. I know what the quality statements are. I know what we are doing to meet those quality statements. And I think that gives the inspectors a reassurance that you're working in line with the regulations, that you're working in line with CPCs quality statements, because sometimes you you know, if you're asked a question, you're like, I don't know how to evidence that that makes the inspector question your knowledge, and all of those things. If I'm saying to you, I know that this piece of work needs to this. I know that I've got something that covers all of the quality statements you're reviewing, you're showing them that you know what you're doing, yeah, that competency,

Pia Rathje-Burton 26:48

isn't it sharing? Yeah, definitely. And have things sort of obviously, that that inspection was, you know, nearly a year ago, you know, have things sort of changed in terms of how you do your auditing, how you're preparing your managers what, what did you sort of kind of learn afterwards or reflect on afterwards? So

27:05

I think the big thing for us is that that spreadsheet we we did as part of the inspection, we collated it as part of the process. What we've done now is we've put that spreadsheet in place constantly, and we encourage our managers to when they do something or we do something as an organization, we collate that evidence immediately. So we upload it to our online SharePoint system. We record it on the spreadsheet which quality statements it links to, and then we upload the evidence. My view is I don't want to be doing that on day of inspection, if I can help it. And it also means that you capture stuff. So if we had a manager, for example, who did a great piece of work with somebody, but then they left the organization, often you lose that, that little bit of evidence. So we don't want to lose any of that evidence. We want to make sure we've got all of it, all of the time, and sometimes it can be a niche piece of work which hits something that nobody else is doing. So it's really important to capture all of that. So what we do know is it's an ongoing process. So for all of our locations, we have an ongoing record of good practice, positive things, learning, where we've taken action as a result of it going wrong, all of those things, case studies, all of it, and we constantly upload that. And then myself, as quality and compliance manager, I go through it, and sometimes I'll pick up on another quality statement it links to that a manager may not have picked up on. So I make sure that's in there as well. And then the view is, when they do come to inspect, we literally just go, where's ta da? There you go. There's our evidence. And we can then focus during the actual, you know, assessment process on showing them face to face, the great stuff we're doing, and I'm not worrying about the backup of the documentation

Pia Rathje-Burton 29:00

sounds great. And just reflecting back on your time as a CQC inspector, what are the things that you sort of learnt that you're using now, I've referred

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to before, but I think the knowing the regulation and and knowing how you are meeting the regulation, I think often, I obviously worked with a lot of different inspectors over my years at CQC, and some would have a very clear view on how they think something should be done. But it wasn't just necessarily linked t

the bug bear in my life is if I have to go back and do something again because I did it wrong the first time. And I've learned that by doing it in slots, taking a break, you know, having a breather, whatever that breather means to you. For me, it's going our guys work on reception. So I go down and talk to all the people we support because that refills me. That gives me my joy back then I come back and face the next bit of work.

Cheryll Champion 36:27

Yeah, really good, really good advice. Yeah. So you've given lots of tips throughout the course

spending time together, and That enjoying spending time together was something that that Cheryll really talked about, and it came across, I think, so passionately in what she had to say.

Pia Rathje-Burton 42:07

Yeah, absolutely. And you could really use those, you know. So they created their care workforce pathways, and they were created by by TLAP, who were present, people who were drawing on care support in social care, so you could really take those values and then use them and interpret them within your own organization, and then kind of mapping, you know what? How are we making sure that our values and the culture that we have within our service kind of follows this and what are the unique things in ours? Because obviously, not every service in every place is the same, but having them as those universal values, I think, is really helpful, and being able to use them, they're there, they've been created for you. So, you know, that seemed like an obvious thing, that if you haven't already checked them out. I would recommend having having a look at that care or workforce pathway and look at those values.