

# The care exchange - Series 1

## Episode 3: The chicks were heaven sent: Marlene Kelly

**Hosts:** Pia Rathje-Burton and Ali Rusbridge

**Pia Rathje-Burton 0:07**

Welcome to the care exchange the Skills for Care podcast for managers in social care. My name is Pia Rathje-Burton, and I'm a Skills for Care locality manager.

**Ali Rusbridge 0:16**

And hi, my name is Ali Rusbridge. I'm also Skills for Care locality manager. In the care exchange podcast series, we're talking to leaders and managers who work in social care. We want it to be a good opportunity to hear about their experiences and the tips and learning and knowledge they want to share with other managers.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 0:33**

So the reason we decided to create a podcast was that we really want to celebrate the role of managers and social care. We also wanted somewhere where managers could listen to other managers and pick up some good ideas. The care exchange conversation is a monthly podcast, so make sure you click on the subscribe button, so you get notifications of the latest episode. If you are a manager in social care, this is the podcast for you.

**Ali Rusbridge 0:56**

Today we're talking to Marlene Kelly. Marlene's, a registered manager of Auburn Mere, which is a residential home for older people in Watford.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 1:06**

So we both saw Marlene, when she gave evidence at the health and social care, Parliament Select Committee last summer. And she gave such a passionate evidence about the role of it, as the manager who wanted to talk to her and find out a bit more so on with the show.

Thank you for joining us, Marlene, how are you?

**Marlene Kelly 1:31**

Yeah, I'm good. Thank you.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 1:33**

So I'm really excited to talk to you today. So just wondering if we could start off by you telling us a little bit about your role.

**Marlene Kelly 1:39**

Okay, so I'm the manager of Auburn Mere, which is the residential care home, it's based in Watford. We're registered for 37 residents. And some of those residents living with dementia diagnosis and some of them aren't. So it's a mixed home. It's more like I said, it's 37, which is more for older people services. And I've been at their home for 14 years. 14 years in August.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 2:08**

Okay, and how was your journey into that role? You know, how did you get there?

**Marlene Kelly 2:12**

I think like most registered managers that I talk to, then I worked my way up through the roles. So I started as a support worker, and I worked my way up from there. Before Auburn Mere, I worked at a charity for seven years. And it was amazing experience, it provided me with lots of opportunities. And I

first. So it's more of the feeling and not the place. And we've worked really hard to try and create some feeling of community there. So and I think with families coming in and people of all ages that defi

Yeah, I definitely think it has. Because before, before, we were like a home that was always full with a waiting list of people to move in. And now we're a home where we've got, you know, vacancies at the home, because we sadly lost residents and because people aren't very sort of enthusiastic at this time about moving into residential care. So I think it's sort of a way of reassuring people, actually, you know, it's not as bad as how the media is portraying because because the pictures are very damaging. And the way that that care is being portrayed isn't, isn't great for the industry, and especially not for independent, like, we're an independent home. So we're not part of a large group or anything, so it's important for us to be able to put across how the home would feel. But I would say something about, like, how it's managed is because when I speak to other managers, they say, you know, like, it's really hard work and, and the thing is, is that social media can be really hard work for me, because I'm rubbish at it. But for my administrator, she's, she is all about social media, and she knows how it works it's like her second language. That's how she communicates that's, you know, part of her life. And I think, you know, it's about looking at your team and finding that person. And, you know, they're often millennials who have just grown up with it, and they know, they know this stuff. And so I think sometimes you've got to pick the best person for that, that role and trust, I think long as they understand, you know, how you want the home to feel and the culture of the place, then then, you know, putting that into pictures is their job and that's what they can do and they're very good at writing the little blogs that go underneath them and so at first I checked everything but over time, the staff have



so the residents were in our isolation. But the amazing thing that the chicks did were comfort the staff team massively. So like, with the eggs were delivered, and then they started to hatch over this period of time where we were really struggling. And so we got to cuddle these little chicks. And then the residents that couldn't be, you know, that couldn't be isolated, because, you know, it wasn't possible for their mental health. And then they were able to look after the chicks for us. So it just it was it was like, they were heaven the chicks because they arrived, we've got and we'd ordered them we were furious, because we couldn't cancel them once they've got them. And then actually, they provided us with great joy. And I think that I think that sometimes, you know, the best experiences come from the things you least expect. So yeah, I think it was, it was a great benefit for us, as well as the residents.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 16:01**

The joy of chick ey? Like, so you are the chair of a registered manager network, how has been being part of the network been, you know, beneficial for you, both before the pandemic, but also during the pandemic?

**Marlene Kelly 16:17**

And I can remember when I started my job that I didn't know another registered manager. So remember what that felt like. And it was really isolating. And although you go to network meetings, you often sit next to people of all different levels, you very rarely meet other registered managers. And then when you do, they're often based quite far away from from where you are. So for me, then I just, I just think there was just such a great benefit to not feeling so isolated. And I felt the registered managers really understand how other registered managers feel more than anybody else. Because if you speak to people outside of social care, very few know what registered managers does as a job. And so when you sit with somebody who is almost like, I don't know, you know, they go through the same experiences, they face the same challenges, there's this real understanding of each other. And, and I found that a great benefit before the pandemic. And I also felt a lot of the time as an independent organization, that, that you're doing a lot of the same work, you're writing the same policies, they're writing your, you know, you're setting up the same raters you're doing. And it's really important to be able to share with each other some of that stuff. And I remember asking at the beginning, and people being really closed about what they charged, or how much they paid their support workers, and nobody really telling you anything, and, you know, certainly for the network that I chaired, and we've tried to be really open and honest with each other so that it just saves time, it makes you more efficient. And, you know, it's just a kinder way of working, you know, you're all in competition, but there's plenty of people to go around, and you can all help each other. And so we've come again, sort of tried to create a little community where we can share information and for me, then, you know, certainly people in the network have helped me with like, safeguarding issues, and I prepared some one of the girls helped me prepare once for something for a coroner. And then at the same time, I've helped them with interviews and disciplinaries. And, you know, so we've been able to sorth be



deserve that. But I think it's you know, it's important to be able to talk to others about the struggles that



**Marlene Kelly 25:51**

Um, well, I'm not really like a storyteller. But, you know, I'm, I am a really massive advocate for working in social care. And, and I did this from college. So I went, I went to work somewhere at 18 with people with learning disabilities. And over over time, I just learned so much from the people I supported along the way. So like, I learnt so much like from even now, like, there's members of my team that I look at, that have skills that, you know, I'm in complete awe of, you know, like, they, they've got something inside them that is, you know, just just amazing to me, and, and, you know, skills I could only dream of having and, and then I get to work with people, and I've worked with lots of people that have managed to stay positive, regardless of the challenges they face. And I think, you know, like, if you don't know, somebody who's like, deafblind, and still great fun to go to a nightclub with, or you don't know, who somebody who, you know, is in a wheelchair, and only communicates with their eyes or something, but can still tell you a bad joke, or, you know, you don't really understand that, and I feel really like I do tell people that I feel very privileged. I do tell people that. And, you know, like, my friends would hear me say, you know, that I felt privileged to do what I do.

**Ali Rusbridge 27:28**

That's great. So it's really your, your whole work experiences, a story of that, you know, how amazing people are and saying positive.

**Marlene Kelly 27:36**

Yeah, and also, you know, like, I feel really privileged to have a job where you can do something like, like, so maybe on a Monday, you are supporting somebody at the very end of their life, and you're working with their family, and to make it as peaceful and as comfortable as you possibly can. And then the following day, you're throwing a fireworks party and making cupcakes, you know, like so so it's, it's, you know, that very varied a role, that, you know, each day is so different. And, and it is really challenging, it is really hard. But there definitely is that element of privilege. There definitely is.

**Ali Rusbridge 28:21**

That's great. And you're you began to answer my next question to a certain extent, but what do you really, really like about what you do? And we put the two reallys in because the stress on the second one, you know, What's the best part of your work?

**Marlene Kelly 28:34**

I think I think it's that I think it's that it's, it's not boring, you know, it's never boring, and only commun 575.5 Tm0 g0

**Marlene Kelly 29:35**

I think for me, the, the thing is, is that through the pandemic, you sort of can I don't know how to describe it. But first of all, when I go into work, I think about actually the first thing I'll do is the thing that's likely to keep me awake at night. It kept me awake at night, you know. So that's how severe a priority the first thing is, you know if it's so so I try and resolve that niggling issue before I do anything else. So that's the one thing that I do. And then I think I am very clear about the impact of things. So now when I'm looking at like a pile of work to do, the thing with the most impact is at the top, and then the least at the bottom, so that often means that the sort of papery type work, you know, gets left, or the massive pieces of work that you can't really see any great benefit of somebody's just requested it from you. Then there goes on bottom of the pile and the things on the top of the pile, and there's things like maybe something a family needs support with, or certainly if there's anybody struggling with a situation in the community, or, you know, if there's anything we can help with, then they go to the top of the pile.

creating an environment where there's a feel for communities, good for your residents and your team. And it's good for the network's to have that feeling of community and the families. And I just think that's something that has a lot of meaning for me, especially now. So yeah, I think that would be it.

**Ali Rusbridge 33:52**

Thank you that's really great.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 33:54**

And that comes across really strongly that sense of community, how important that is to you. So I think that's a good choice. Thank you so much for taking time out, I know you've been really really busy this week. So really, thank you so much for for taking time to talk to us today. It's been so interesting. And And.

they're feeling, and how they, particularly pandemic has really been so hard for the managers in social care. The other thing I, you know, I'm gonna think about after this, this episode is really about her how important it is to her and her team to provide meaningful activity for the community meaningful activities for the people they support. You know, she, she really does believe in that. And I thought it was really interesting when she said, Oh, you know, if I could start from scratch, I would just employ a start by employing people, activities for it. And I just thought, God, what a refreshing and interesting thing to say and think about. Because if you are providing really meaningful activities all the time, and that's everybody's responsibility, then you are creating this atmosphere in this culture where that's, you know, that's vital, and people then feel better, and it goes back to their well being, isn't it? We do have some resources and meaningful activities, and we will have a webinar around that as well. And, you know, it's I think it's something to think about how do you make sure that during a pandemic, that those activities are meaningful and they are throughout the day? Yeah, really interesting.

**Ali Rusbridge 37:01**

I love the example with a chick I thought she was gonna have that as one of her three words at the end.

**Pia Rathje-Burton 37:09**

The chicks save the day. Thank you for listening today. Don't miss the next episode. Follow the care exchange by downloading the PodBean app. You can also listen and subscribe for your usual podcast streaming service. If you enjoyed the care exchange podcast please share with anyone else who think benefit from it. Thank you for listening.