

Ben Miller (S3 Ep3)

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SPEAKERS

Ben Miller, Wendy Adams, Pia Rathje-Burton

P Pia Rathje-Burton 00:07

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

W Wendy Adams 00:12


and I'm Wendy Adams. So today we're talking to Ben Miller. Ben Miller is the registered manager of the outstanding rated multi award winning nursing home called Castleford house in Gloucestershire. Ben started his career in care, working in the nursing home as a care assistant. He later trained as a Mental Health Nurse returning to Castleford House, and becoming the registered manager in 2016. Ben himself is also award winning, receiving the best for recruitment and retention award at the care home awards in 2022. And the caring support West care home Manager of the Year.

P Pia Rathje-Burton 00:53

So I've been following Ben on LinkedIn for quite a while and always really interested in seeing his post and following his journey into improving his service. So when the locality manager in Ben's local area suggested to have him on the podcast, we just thought it was a really, really good idea. And just as a coincidence, Ben and I met at a conference a few weeks ago before recording this and having heard him at the conference I just thought this is gonna be great. So I'm really, really looking forward to checking in some more so on with the show. Welcome, Ben to the care exchange.

B Ben Miller 01:36

Thanks for having me.

 Pia Rathje-Burton 01:37

Great to have you here. How are you today?

 Ben Miller 01:40

Yeah, I'm really well, thanks. Looking forward to this. I finally I've been a longtime listener. So this is almost like a dream come true.

 01:46

Ah, that's lovely. I'm not sure we've had anybody say that before. That's really nice. That's made my day. We had an introduction there lots about Castleford house, your journey, how you kind of, you know, went away, oh, started there. And then went away to do you do nurse training and kind of come back? And then obviously, obviously, but then having that, then you achieve that outstanding rating by CQC. What was sort of kind of the key things that you did in preparing for that CQC inspection, because you had a couple of years between your good, good inspection and then getting the next having the next one? Yeah, so

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the story in short, was, I was given the manager's job at Castleford house in April, 2016, but wasn't due to take over until June 2016. And in the May, one of the other homes in the company was rated overall, outstanding by CQC. I took over as manager, we were inspected in September 2016, got five goods, but I didn't think that inspection report reflected me as a manager, because I'd only just taken over. So I looked at the inspection report from the other care home. And I just thought this is I want this, I want what they've got, I want that rating. We've got an amazing team, the things we do were fantastic. And this is an opportunity to showcase that and get the team the recognition they deserve, and prove that we're one of the best care homes in the country. So we had after we had the inspection report, come back, I had a what can we do to be outstanding meeting with people invited people in, didn't get as many people as I liked. And I spent the next three years or so trying to drill it into people, this is what is going to set us apart from everywhere else. And there was a lot of things we did a lot of people a care home managers or care setting managers should be aware by now that a lot of it is not just enough to be outstanding, you've got to evidence it. So I spent a lot of time every time I did something that I thought that's amazing. That's outstanding. I screenshotted it, typed it out, took photographs of it, put it in folders, or categorise the folders. And when we were actually inspected, she didn't actually look at any of the evidence that I provided. I tried every time every time I was with her. I was kind of like with my folders, had them all laid out and printed. You want to have a look at this now. And she'd be like yeah, in a bit. I'm looking at something else. So it was a testament to the team that we had that we were able to get the rating and it was very close because on the end of the first day but a two day inspection the end of the first day she left and said got something here but not sure what it is not sure if I can put it In writing, but there's something special. And on the second day, I had I residents, I had team members, relatives, Operations Director all in my office. And that was kind of saying to them, like, Guys, give me something in here to give to this inspector, tell me what I can tell her that she can tell a panel that makes us outstanding. And everything was there. In terms of what

what we do, we had people from very failed placements, who couldn't cope in other similar care settings, but come to us and settled, we had outstanding activities. We had just an amazing ethos. My recruitment and retention changes were starting to kick in the team was improving significantly with every new recruit. But there wasn't a lot you could all you could put in writing. And in the end, when she left, we kind of went that's probably good. I felt that I had enough in the well led category myself to get us an outstanding and well led And luckily, our activities pushed us over the edge in responsive into outstanding. But once we got the report, it was amazing. The response was fantastic team were overjoyed. Now, when I was a carer, and a nurse, I didn't really know a lot about CQC, I didn't really get involved with it so much until I kind of stepped up to Deputy management and especially a manager. So one of the things I tried to do was educate people. Because I didn't want an inspector coming in and people flunking out, you know people being nervous, scared saying the wrong thing. And so a lot of the induction processes just reassuring people you could get inspected. If Miss Becker sits down with human speech, it's fine, don't worry about it. calm, cool, tell the truth. Don't know what they're asking you, it's fine, I'm not going to I'm not going to shout at you for not knowing something. And it paid off. Once we got the report. My aim was then this is great. We've got an overall outstanding, but we haven't got five outstandings. So now the aim is to go up and try and improve. And I'm quietly confident if we were inspected now, you would see a much better to team and home and quality of care. Just everything would be a lot better than that inspection in 20 2019. It was.



Wendy Adams 07:20

So it sounds like what you're talking about is about achieving outstanding is almost like a cultural change. It's not just about the inspection itself.



07:31

Yeah, I, someone asked me this a few weeks ago when I said, Are you ticking a box to achieve these outstandings? Are you doing things just for CQC's benefit? And I'll be honest, initially at the start 2016 to 2017 probably, I'll be honest, a lot of it was what can we do to make CQC take notice of us. And that was hard because I was hyper vigilant about everything, and I'd go home and go, we've done something, what can we do to make sure CQC take notice of this and it was almost like a ticking a box. We were doing things meticulously. I changed It just got boring and tedious. And in the end, I just did away with that. And just if something was there, great. But it was a lot of it. A lot of our inspection especially was was the team on what they did and how they were. And how calm cool collected. They were around the inspector, the evidence they were able to provide a lot of it was just basically if someone did something well, I'd say to them, remember that we get inspected? Tell the inspector. And yeah, I'd say my activities especially I was very lucky, my activities were very on board and what I was trying to what I wanted and why I wanted it. And if you read our report, the activities were glowing. And then it gives me good evidence and to go back to my care team out of this report and say to them, or they got it they they were one of the main reasons we've got outstanding. You guys are amazing. Now when we get inspected next time, you guys your turn to shine, it's your turn to provide all the evidence that that you guys are outstanding in caring, for example, it may be effective. So yeah, it is it is very much a cultural thing. And that starts with our induction going all the way up to people who've been here for for 20 years plus and yeah, like I said, I'm very confident if

you came in and sat down with any one of my team, they would be able to identify what sets us apart from everywhere else why we're outstanding, and why we should be outstanding in other other domains as well as the two we got the outstanding rating.

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Wendy Adams 09:37

And it's fantastic to hear you talking so passionately about the evidencing. I think that's one of the things that often registered managers struggle with that they do lots of great work in their service and everybody's doing some some really great support for people. But the bit that they struggle with is about how to evidence that and I think you've given some great examples. But one of the other things that you seemed to be alluding to is the importance of detail. And actually looking at the small things is, is that attention to detail important?

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10:11

It's really important when we've been told as a care home since I've been there in 2006, that a lot of what we do is very subtle. And that started before I was before I was even there is built on, you know, we're a care home. So people don't need to be going out and doing extravagant things to prove that we're outstanding. A lot of it is, if I sat, I sit back and look at what we've got. Now we've got 38 residents. And when I did the math that night, 20 of them have come from failed, failed, inverted commas, placements, where other settings, whether that's home care, whether that's another care home, or another setting hasn't been able to manage their needs appropriately. And they've had to come and live with us. And we've been able to improve their quality of life in some way, shape, or form, whether that's they were very distressed or agitated, or aggressive, or we've been able to reduce those behaviours, whether that's they were just extremely bored of the quality of care wasn't as good. And that sort of thing is, it's hard to evidence because it's very deeply ingrained in what what we do, and how we manage these things, almost natural. So it is hard to evidence, that sort of thing. However, when the inspector comes in, kind of go, and we'll look at his Mr. Jones, just making a name of Mr. Jones, he was at this care home. And he was acting like this, since he's been with us, we've done this and now he's like this. Yeah, I mean, I can reel off examples. And hopefully, I'm willing to bet a lot of my team will as well raise the bar more than other care settings.

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11:55

And I suppose that team is really interesting, you're saying about that, that people, everybody, everybody in your care home, understand what CQC is, and understand what it is that they are doing that's special, and therefore understand how it they have an equal responsibility to, to be part of that. And if CQC, and be able to give examples that you are saying to them, what you've done today is outstanding. Remember that and when you CQC comes,

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12:27

yeah, they need to be involved, they need to be involved in it more than me, because I'm when an inspector comes in, I don't want to be hovering over them, you know, hovering over the inspector nervous and worried that someone's going to say or do something wrong, and CQC

aren't the enemy. I mean, I've heard some horror stories about nightmare inspectors, but they're, they don't need to be treated like the enemy. And if they come in, and you're defensive, and or don't need to look at that and or whatever, they're going to get suspicious. And that's going to set everyone on edge, you need to be calm, everyone needs to be calm, chilled, relaxed. set the tone, ideally, we'll want to speak to the inspector, and I say to them, you should want to speak to them, because you should be able to tell them all the amazing things that you do. You know, it shouldn't be nerve wracking. It shouldn't be you know, going to be interrogated, they're probably going to want to ask you how long you've been here for. If you've got any problems or concerns, if you ever raised any problems or concerns, do you know what safeguarding is, do you know what the Mental Capacity Act is? And what makes this home so great. And if you can tell her, or him the majority of the answers to those questions. That's it. There's no, there's no problems or issues. And I mean, I'm very lucky, I think I've got a brilliant inspector, we're the only home to my knowledge that she's inspected, it's been rated outstanding. She tells me that when I speak to him when I see her, but she's she's great. And I think a lot but a lot of that is when she comes in, she's not being met with defensiveness and worry and anxiety, try and make it as chill as possible, or come home and have some alcohol afterwards is to just to relax. But generally, it CQC inspection shouldn't be a time of worry and anxiety. It shouldn't be something that should be celebrated. Here's someone coming in to look at the amazing things that we're we're doing. That's that's how I look at it.



14:21

Yeah, absolutely. So just going back to your talking a little bit about recruitment retention. So I know that in sort of kind of 2017 18 you kind of realised you had an issue with recruitment, retention, and you sort of kind of needed to find a solution. And I'm really intrigued about what you did next, because you didn't just kind of do more of the same what you're doing. You kind of went out and started to do research. You're kind of looking lots of places what what was the things that you did with research or you know, what was the things that you decided to do differently that other managers may not be thinking about doing in terms of, of looking outwards.



15:05

Yeah, I need to stress research wasn't, you know, I didn't kind of grab my thesis or dissertation or anything like that I just went out and we have a problem, two problems or three problems, actually, the problem was recruitment, retention and culture. And all of that was was interlinked. So we were, I mean, what I was doing was a lot of what a lot of other places will relate to, I was taking on people who probably didn't deserve to be taken on because we were short staffed, I was fast tracking people through inductions, even though they weren't ready for it. I was given I was coaching people who weren't ready to induct people or mentor people to do just that. And then sat back and wondered why people weren't lasting. My good team were leaving. And we were short staffed a lot of the time. And I went out there. And it was pure luck really I started I was on LinkedIn. And by pure fluke, somebody mentioned a podcast called The road to outstanding. So I started, I hadn't listened to podcasts before, I wasn't much of a podcaster, I didn't really have much time for it. But I started listening to a couple of episodes. And a couple of things, I cant remember what my first episode was a couple of things that were in there, made a bit of sense. And one of them was about onboarding new staff. And I just, I started searching initially for things that could help me in social care was very disappointed at

the time to find that there wasn't a lot of social care podcasts or, or books or anything like that. So I just reached a bit further out and started finding other things that I could listen to, and then read in my spare time that might help. And there's, there were so many things that over time, I took on board, and there were a few there were a few podcasts, especially that really spoke to me. In 2020, there was a podcast called the High Performance podcast that changed got me through the pandemic and changed a lot of the way that I that I think, but I mean, I went on to I was on LinkedIn, and Facebook, on various threads of managers, groups and things looking for looking for people who offer free advice. And there was people who was doing free webinars, for example, about how to market your team on social media on Facebook. And there was yet it was, there was so much it was I was I was this I'd listened to Adam Grant, who's an American work psychologists, I think he is about how to about and listening to the examples he was giving. And I broke my problems down into two problems. One was leadership, and one was marketing and advertising. So then I started listening to marketing and advertising podcasts and webinars so that I could work out how best to advertise jobs to people, and onboarding people. And I did an ILM in Advanced Business Management to see if what I was doing Well, to improve my learning, but also to see what I was doing could work. And part of that qualification was to do a project and I base my project on recruitment, retention, induction and onboarding. And that started me down a very slippery slope of completely revamping everything we had about recruitment, retention, and literally everything right from the way we market all the way up to the way we do supervisions on people who've been here for years. And it, it's evolving. Now, I still listen to it, or listen to a podcast or read a book. And something I'll be there making notes, and I'll go right, well, we do this for induction. This person says they've done this, this is work. So next time somebody starts, I'm going to try doing this and see if see if that works. And it's just a constantly evolving cycle. And I'm of the opinion now that if we just take recruitment and retention, social care, and a lot of other sectors aren't in a recruitment crisis, we're in an education crisis. And we're seeing this a lot because it's not that people can't recruit. It's they're not taught how to recruit. They're not trained, how to grab the attention of these people who are out there now who, who who are looking for jobs, because the way the demographics change so quickly. It's not just then enough to go on and D let's say and advertise a job, you've got to advertise a very specific way that makes it that grabs people's attention. And it's those little nuances that people aren't being shown how to what to do how to do it. And I've taken to my LinkedIn and I do I need to get better at it because I don't I keep forgetting, but I do I do. I put advice on my LinkedIn about recently, it's been about social media, and how to how to do posts on social media. Previously to that I did some tips on recruitment and retention of people, I did my top six tips. So it's almost like I've taken, I've taken all this advice and this learning from places, and I'm trying to recite it out to other people now to help them with with these problems, because it kind of comes naturally to me now, a lot of what we do, don't get me wrong. Sometimes we struggle with, you know, we have we struggled to recruit a kitchen assistant, let's say for a few months, but for me that for me a few months is an issue for some people, I'm sure they've been trying to recruit people for a couple of years now with with, with issues. But for me, I like that challenge, because that means I've got to be even more innovative in finding a way to grab the attention of, of these people don't have that problem now, because I've filled the vacancy. And yeah,



21:01

I was just gonna say we were I know, You've spoken extensively about your your the changes you've made to recruiting and retention. And when we will link that you're doing a particular webinar a few months ago, we will link in the show notes to that. But just going back to some of

that sort of kind of research. You know, listening to podcasts, reading books, reading literature, has that made you a better leader, if we sort of put the recruitment and retention aside has it made you a better leader do you think?

 21:29

Yeah, absolutely. And the hardest part of that people have is making an the biggest excuse that people have for this is making the time they don't have the time to do it. When do I have time to listen to an hour long podcast? When do I have time and while I'm busy firefighting, to sit down, listen to a 40 Minute Webinar. When do I have time to sit and try and read a book? Well, you've got to make the time now what I started doing well, during the pandemic was I started listening to the podcast while I was going to do like an hour walk every day, listen to a podcast. Great, it was it was great learning great exercise. And it just got me away from everything that was going on as well. So that was a that was that was a really good break. People said they don't have time is a poor excuse, the resources that everyone needs in social care to improve any aspect of their, of their their setting, whether that's culture, leadership, recruitment, marketing, anything, it's out there. And it's either free of charge, or the highest cost is the cost of a book, whatever you need, it's in there. And if you go into it with an open mind, and a learning mindset, some of the things that I've learned and used to develop my skills as a leader, since I started doing all of this has been I'm a completely different person. now than when I was back when I took over as a manager, going up to you know, when we had our recruitment crisis in 2018, I'm a completely different person, manager, leader, everything, because because of that, for the better, and yeah, I it's one of those that it's it's therapeutic listening to the director or CEO, or the high performance podcast or work life or something like that, it, it makes me excited for work, because I get to listen to all these amazing things going on in other great places, or even people who are struggling, and have managed to claw their way out of it. And I get to go into work and try and implement some of these things, these things that I've learned either into my own practice or help use it to help other people. It's, it's fantastic. And yeah, as I said, not having time to do it as it is a really poor excuse.

 Pia Rathje-Burton 23:46

Yeah, drive to work or something can't be you can definitely

 Wendy Adams 23:49

yeah. And I love hearing about that, because I speak to lots of managers. And I think there's often still this idea that the only way you learn is by attending a training course. And I think you know, what you're describing is there are so many different ways that you can get new ideas about how to improve your service, how to develop yourself as a leader that don't involve going and sitting on a on a training course in a room somewhere. And that's, that's great to hear. Yeah,

 24:18

everything's a learning opportunity. I mean, it sounds really sad. My wife's my wife started watching Blue Bloods I didn't know the programme with Tom Selleck and and even then I'll be

watching Blue Bloods I didn't know the programme with Tom Selleck and and even then I'll be sat there watching Frank Reagan being police Commissioner of Police apartment in New York City and I'd be there going, what would I do in his shoes and even then, it's like, it's a learning opportunity, you know? I wouldn't have said that, I would have done that differently. And even things I'm a big sports fan watching the last dance by the Chicago for the Chicago Bulls was fantastic. And yeah, there's so many things you can watch and them enjoyable also are great for great for learning and development. And it's, it's fantastic and I encourage people to have experiences don't need to listen to listen to music on the way into work, put a podcast on or put something educational on.

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Pia Rathje-Burton 25:08

Yeah. What are the other things you've learned?



25:12

Most of most of what I learned actually is about induction and, and cultures. So our induction is very rigorous. There's a lot of supernumerary time involved. But basically, we look at people and we set very strict limits on things like sickness, reliability, work standards, the questions they ask. And if they don't fit, if they don't fit a certain mould by the time they reach certain points in their induction, we get rid of them. Because which sounds really harsh. But the end of the day, they're caring for the most vulnerable people in society. And I'm not prepared to take a risk on something going wrong, poor standards of care being provided safeguarding that sort of thing, because obviously, she's a really nice person, just because she's had, just because she's had 10 days off in the first six weeks of induction doesn't mean to say that we should fail her induction, well, actually, it does, because that proves that person's unreliable. And it's only probably going to get worse once your induction is finished. So a lot of things that I learned was about building cultures, and relying on teams, and how you need to have that camaraderie, Team spirits, and everyone needs to rely on each other. And yeah, there's several podcasts and documentaries, the last dance, the high performance podcast that I've listened to that have really ramped that home for me.



26:32

And I thought particularly listened to a few of them. And it's particularly the football managers that they have, I have a lot of things too, that you can compare to.

B

Ben Miller 26:41

It's interesting, it's interesting, you say that, so I didn't do it. Because I've just my son, my son started playing football, and I got roped into coaching his team. So I've had to do a I've had to do a course, a coaching course. And the the transferable skills that you get from care home manager to football coach, they're startlingly similar. And yeah, I do often compare the way that I manage my, my care home, as almost like a football manager, you know, I'm, I'm, I'm the manager of the team. And you know, that the team that something goes wrong, that's my responsibility. If it goes, right, it's the team. And yeah, so it's interesting. It's interesting you say that?

P

Pia Rathje-Burton 27:20

Yeah, absolutely. I don't know much about football, but it's really about about the football managers, and they're probably the ones I've enjoyed the most have been the football managers. Because I just, you know, you really can hear what they're saying about culture about, you know, you know, being respectful about teamwork, about, you know, attention to details, making sure people looking, looking respectable, respectful to each other, and everybody has an equal an equal part and a team. And if one is a weak, weak, point you straightaway, you'll know that and you will, between everybody, with respect, I just want to move on, you've talked a lot about the changes you've made in your service. How do you, how do you make sure that everybody's with you, because you, we can hear you are somebody who, you know, coming up with lots of ideas, you know, even when you're not at work, you're like thinking, I'm gonna change this, I'm gonna do this. How do you get everybody? With you?



28:17

Yeah, when I, when I started, as a manager, I would have these ideas and go out there and go, right guys, we're going to do this, and 50%, maybe even higher than that, it would fail. And a lot of that was because I'd have these ideas by that I'd write up an action plan for them, I'd pass them on to everyone and go, right, this is what we're gonna do. And then I'd expect everyone to do it, go but review review in a month and go, Why isn't this working? And a lot of that was because one I didn't follow through and two on the team did not buy in, they were doing something because I told them to do it. A lot of people, if you ask them don't like change, especially if it's forced upon them. So they would do it for a little bit. And then they would just revert type. They didn't have any kind of I've got other things to do. I don't have time to stand over everyone making sure they do this thing. So they would revert type. I'm scratching my head going, Why didn't that work? So what I do now is I try I get people on board. So a lot of for me getting an idea to being implemented is actually a much longer process. Because rather than me having an idea writing an actual plan out and going right guys, we're going to do this. Now I've got to identify people who I think would be on board with this, or would be able to able to take even further and would be able to oversee it. And that might be a case of just talking to people. We did we've done a force prevention project. And I had I had some ideas for it, but I was never going to have to follow through because I wanted to create a team of people basically that we're going to look at our falls in the home, because during the lock during the lockdown and the pandemic, early part of the pandemic, we had a lot of falls, we had, our falls quadrupled, it's scary. So I wanted to build like a task force almost look into why this happened and what we can do about it. And rather than just kind of great that I advertised, it's identified a couple of people and said, I think it'd be really good for this, and got them to go out and pick people as well. And by the end of it, now, I'm, I'm not even a part of it anymore, really, they meet they, they put plans in place, they police it, they oversee it, I get to sit in an office and reap the benefits because our falls have gone down by nearly 50%. bit bit more. So I don't have as much to do with that anymore. And that's because you've got a team of people, and there's only five of them. I think that they police themselves to look after themselves, they held, they held meetings, I sometimes minute them just to stay just to stay involved. I do the Falls audit, just see that I am aware of how many falls we have and things like that. But they they're the ones that come up with the ideas that decluttering they're chasing at people with accident forms and getting information and looking at why that person fell there. When how what can we do. So it's important to get just to get as many people involved as possible. Sometimes

change happens naturally, I'm, I'm really good. In my opinion, if someone comes to me and goes, this is a problem. I'm good at sitting down with them and going okay, so what what do you think should should happen with this, and I've helped them formulate a plan, they'll go away. And if they don't do anything about it, when they come in and moan about it, next, they'll go okay, well, you've had a chance to do something and you didn't. But a lot of the time now people will go out there and go, right? I'm not happy about this. So I'm going to change it. And to change the question comes comes naturally. And we've had things that have people have come up with ideas. And it's changed the home for the better, you know, various bits of equipment. For example, slide sheets, somebody wasn't happy that a lot of times we had to roll people slide sheets on them. So I helped them i So I researched, built in slide sheet system, we've got the two different types. And then I'm doing it to name names. So I won't name what types they are, and all of that and helped the person nine people identify who would benefit from these the most which residents would benefit from these when and encourage them to show others in the team how to use them. And now we've got a system whereby when they feel somebody else needs these needs these, I buy them for them. And yeah, it's that that's progressed naturally, rather than having a team of people who are struggling moaning about slidesheets and stuff. They I help them come up with the ideas themselves. If I'd have gone out there and gone, right, we're going to try the we're going to have these new slide sheets, let's say nothing probably would have been done about it. Because I'd have gone right find people who need slide sheets and I'll buy them. And people probably wouldn't have wouldn't have bothered because it would have been change and a hassle. So yeah, it's about for me, it's about getting people involved, getting people invested. And those people need to be able to police what's going on so that we can support them as well. So if hypothetically someone wants to change, something that I feel is the better if action plan, they've gone, they've done something and people aren't following that. So when they come back to me and go, it's not working, because these people aren't doing it. Okay, I'm gonna go out there and find out why. And our support team and tell them this is actually what we're going to do. So stop acting like this, or else, we're gonna have a problem.

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Pia Rathje-Burton 33:45

Absolutely. Let me just move just quickly before before we sort of kind of rounding rounding up. So I just wanted to ask you about social media. So you use social media a great deal. What what are the things that you're seeing? Well, how do you think other managers could use social media more effectively? Or you could touch on it a little bit early on, but what are the things that people could do to use social media more effectively?



34:17

That could be a whole new podcast in itself. So I'll try and be brief. I mean, basically, what what annoys me with people with social media or care settings, let's say with social media, is a set up these posts or these pages, and they do it half heartedly without much thought much care much attention, putting their posts sporadically with poor photos, poor content, poor grammar and spelling, and then wonder why they get a little to no engagement. When the why they advertise jobs. Nobody applies for that. And what we have is a what she calls herself a social media queen. So I identified somebody who was going to be great for social media. I I gave her the job of overseeing our social media. So basically, she's head of lifestyles. So she's obviously forerunner for taking photos and making sure that then they do events and trips and things like

that. And she's normally there when these things are happening anyway. So it's natural. She's young, she was when she won't appreciate me saying this, she was very young, when we started doing this, she was very, when, when we started doing it, so she knew all the terminology, all the way down as well to even like the best time to post to get the most engagement. You know, if you post it nine o'clock on a Saturday morning, you don't get as much engagement, it's when you post, it's five o'clock on a Monday afternoon for whatever, I don't know why. But that's the way it works, apparently. So having someone like that, to manage the social media was was a big deal, because she treats it like her own social media, you know, is is a very personal thing to her. So I do before, before a post goes up, I veto all the posts. So I've got to, I've got to check all the photos and make sure that they are all appropriate. I've got to spell and grammar check the post she's written before it goes on. And then she posts it at the time that she sees fit. And that that that improves our engagement. Absolutely, significantly. In terms of my own social media. If you've got my Facebook page, for example, a lot of it is just it's just work is just sharing the Castleford page, or anything that I've done in relation to being a care home manager plus the odd football banter, but that's about it. My LinkedIn, I try, I'm trying to use now to share good share best practice and educate people. So a lot of my LinkedIn if you do follow me on LinkedIn is is I said, when I remember to update it is hints and tips about things. Normally topics that I feel that have come up recently, in my professional life. Like I said, it was recruitment and retention. Now it's social media at the moment, probably be something else, maybe cultural or something, and in a few more weeks time, sprinkled in with a few of the amazing things that that we do at Castleford house, but it's it's social media, in my opinion, is what could be the difference between a home that's struggling using a lot of agency, empty beds. And a home that is outstanding full, filling, vacant filling staff vacancies has a waiting list, the amount of people who will come and look for a placement for their loved one, and say, I saw you on social media, and what you do is amazing. And that's why we're here. Is it at least at least two enquiries a week I get



37:39

that? Sorry, say I saw some research, I can't remember the person who did the research, but he did done some research in staff that apply for jobs and social care. And the percentage of men of staff applying social care, you know, who are the check the service social media profile, either before the interview, it was something like 90% or 80? Probably it was, it was surprisingly high. And I suppose if you then do that, as a member, as a potential member of staff, and you see a service, there's you know, and it could be at home care, could be a care home, do loads of things, lots of kind of, yes, so and so's achieved a qualification, you know, well done, all those things you think are that i quite fancy working there. Or if you just see somebody who's posted twice a year, and it's, you know, it's been always snowing today, you know, you kind of need to have it on your list of things to do, if not every day, every other day. So you're continually on there to say to say that, that you're and I think if you're if you're listening to this, and you haven't got a social media do have a look at Ben's Castleford House and Ben's LinkedIn, because you do, you're very generous with sharing lots of ideas, particularly like that you had a long, long list of kind of how to take photos, how to how to select the right photos, but I don't know if your we've got time to go into it. But you know, fascinating just to think about how important what it is you're portraying, and you're displaying to the world. How important that is. Anyway, Wendy, I interrupted you.



Wendy Adams 39:21

I was just gonna say I was really interested to hear what you said about using one of your team to do some of the work around social media, because one of the things I hear a lot from managers is they say, Well, I'd really like to do more on social media. But I'm not very confident. I don't you know, I don't have my own social media, therefore, I don't, I don't know how to do it. Yes. I think that was a great example of using the expertise as part of the team. Which is, which is great.

 39:49

I wouldn't, I wouldn't have time to do it. So if I if I did it, you'd get one post a week, something like that. And that's if I really tried to invest. I mean, I'm not social media is not really My thing, I've invested a lot of time in learning about how to market and advertise on social media. But in terms of, you know, I'm not I'm not the one going out on trips, you know, if you go on our Facebook page, they went to Western Super Mare last week, I was I wasn't there. I was, well, I was I was, I was in my office doing work. So, you know, I'm not in a prime position to take these amazing photos and write up the post and one thing, you know, we try and put quotes in from people so that we can evidence that they've had a great time, for example, I'm not there to hear those sorts of things. So yeah, you need to have people who are going to be out there and doing doing it during the care during the trips during activities doing amazing things. They're the ones that need to be managing this. Yeah,

 Wendy Adams 40:41

absolutely. Brilliant. And you're absolutely right. We could we could talk about this as a whole other podcast.

 Pia Rathje-Burton 40:48

Do we come back? Yeah, just just

 Wendy Adams 40:50

moving on. One of the things we have been is we have our time for care slot in every episode, where we ask our podcast guests about what are they what is your most time saving tip that you could share?

 41:08

I thought long and hard about this, because you've had some really good ones. And I've written down lists for prioritising delegating, stepping back from situations, the one that I thought of just as we were about to just as I was about to login, which has been vital during the pandemic for us. And it saved me an awful lot of time, is get yourself and your team a good app to communicate with, we use Slack. I'm sure you could use whatsapp or Facebook Messenger or something like that. But having the ability to communicate to the majority. And by majority, I mean, about 95% of my team, from sending one message in Slack has been an absolute

godsend. I can't imagine if someone tests positive right now, I can send one message to notify the majority of the team that they have to COVID test. For the next five days. For example, I don't have to go into work and phone round people. I don't have to stick unsightly signs on the door that show we got people with COVID here, I can do it all quietly, calmly and sensibly. And there's loads of other benefits to it covering shortfalls. notify people when they've got when they're training on. It's it's changed a lot of the way that we work and it's saved on communication books and phoning people around. Yes, I would obviously recommend to people to get themselves a good communications app.



42:35

So I don't know a lot about Slack but you can do things in topics, can't you? Yes, yeah. Even between WhatsApp, because WhatsApp, you just have a staff group and everything you go on there. Where slack, you can have a topic, which is covering shifts or you know, activity, the things I'm proud of today, or you know, you can have different topics, can't you?



42:54

Yeah, so we have we've got variety of channels, every departments got its own channel, we've got an emotional support channel, a COVID channel training staff shortfalls, then with this variety of channels. But yeah, it's just been it's just been a godsend, you know, because I said during I mean, the best thing was when the government were announcing the lockdown, we were all on there, just messaging and people were saying, Oh, my God, I'm, I'm crying because I'm not gonna be able to work because the schools are going to be shut, and people were just saying, Oh, no, it's fine. We'll cover your shift, we'll get through this. It was just, it was great. It was it was hard. But it was great to see as well. People weren't at home kind of suffering alone, worrying, or not being able to reach me because they'd have to phone me or something like that. Whereas now they can. And WhatsApp great, but what I don't want to do is hope that if you go on holiday, and has to have my family WhatsApp, me, and then check and see that I've got a loaded message for work on there. I could just mute slack, turn it off and instal it or wherever and not have it impinge on my personal life. So it's, it's fantastic. That has changed. It's changed a lot for us how we work?



Wendy Adams 43:57

That's a really good idea. So our final question, this episode is going to be the last episode of 2022. And if you were reflecting back on the year, what's the one thing you've learned that you'd want to pass on to other managers?



Ben Miller 44:15

For me, it would be my two things, first of all, is that this is an absolutely incredible sector to work in. It's so rewarding. It's gratifying, if it's done, right, it's just yeah, I wouldn't change this for the world. The second thing is, it's not about you, it's about your team. You can't do anything on your own. So don't make it about you. They you whilst your job is hard. They do a lot of hard work as well. And they'll know if they'll know if you're if you're if you don't mean the

gratitude, the appreciation they give you if you're faking it, it needs to be all about them. And if you support them, you'll find They still support you, as well. So you don't it's not about you don't have an ego.

P

Pia Rathje-Burton 45:05

Great, brilliant. Thank you. Brilliant, so much to, as you say, we could almost do another episode, this week that we have lots of things we want to, I would have liked to ask you more about and maybe we'll come back and ask them more another time. But thanks so much for your time, Ben had been insightful, and I've learned a great deal. So really, really good.



45:37

Wow, Wendy, that was such an interesting conversation with Ben, goodness me had a lot to tell us didn't he. Indeed,



45:45

it was fantastic.



45:48

It's so interesting to talk to somebody who is so passionate about what he does, and he's really just embraced his managers role was, you know, his life's work, isn't it? Yeah, you



45:58

have so many great ideas, and so many,



46:01

you know, I'm a bit of a searcher myself, so I completely get what he was saying about, you know, listening and looking outwards, and just thinking about how can I develop myself, and it was almost like a, you know, he listened to that first podcast, and it just opened his mind to the fact that there was so many things out there, you know, there was so many other leadership, podcasts, and so many other, you know, marketing, all the things that he'd learned and then taking the things he'd learned, and then use that in his service to make improvements. And sometimes one thing that didn't work, and that was fine, but just, you know, you know, and I just love that I absolutely love when finding that golden nugget of bits of advice in a in a podcast or in a book and just taking that and then thinking this is going to make a huge change in my, in, in my service. And that's why we started this podcast really was that we wanted people to do that. Just that. And I just thought God, excellent that he's, you know, and looking outside the sector, I think is always good. There's so much you can learn from other industries. And, you know, I have to say, I hadn't discovered high performing podcasts before. But the, as I

said, in the, in our conversation, the conversations they had with football managers, just, you know, many of them just blew my mind, I just got if I was managing a service now what I'd be going, Oh, that's great, that's great. I want to use that I want to use that I would, I would, you know, uh, you know, I still loved it. But I would have loved that even more as a as a manager in social care. So definitely linked, we would link to that in the show notes, as well as the webinar that he we spoke about that he's recorded, in terms of developing yourself. And I think that's really what he's done with all that research. We Skills for Care have have just quite recently launched some leadership modules that are 11 in total. We call them introductory modules for managers, because they could be part of any sort of induction package for a new manager. But I think that you could use a lot of these. So they 11and covering 11 different topics. And you could take, you know, oh, I want to learn a bit more about effective communication, for instance, and then just do module four. And then spending time well, not just doing it, I think that the important bit is afterwards thinking, what are the things I can change in my service as a result of what I've learned in that module? They are, you have to pay for them. So they are 15 pounds per module. But if you're if you're claiming Workforce Development Fund, you can actually claim 50 pounds per module and the reason why we say there's that 35 pounds different is exactly for that for your time, embedding your learning and using that. So you know, always kind of look outwards and finding ways to improve yourself and therefore your service.

W

Wendy Adams 49:08

Yeah, the thing that occurred to me as well was, Ben talked an awful lot about the importance of evidencing for CQC. And that made me think about the good and outstanding care section on our website. Because on that section, we've got a number of resources, including the striving for outstanding checklist, and the striving for outstanding action plan. And some of the things that that Ben was talking about, about thinking about reflecting on what you need to do to achieve outstanding and how to evidence that I thought there could be really useful tools for managers. If they're thinking about how do we how do we develop and move our service towards outstanding but of course, we've also got the new one our Virtual Learning Module that's available. And again, that might be something that managers would want to think about whether that might be something that would help them consider a little bit more about what they need to do if they're looking towards becoming outstanding, because that talks through the snare about being paid for inspection, improving ratings, but also about how to deliver Outstanding, outstanding care. Yeah,

P

Pia Rathje-Burton 50:30

I felt really interesting when he was talking about that, how a lot of his work, you know, obviously he was doing evidencing, but actually a lot of the work he was doing with that was about changing his team's mindset, wasn't it? Yeah. That they they felt prepared that he spent lots of time talking to staff saying, This is what CQC is, this is what would be expected of you. Just be really proud of what you're doing. You know, and I thought, that's really good advice.

W

Wendy Adams 50:57

That was such a passionate message to give to staff, isn't it about, you know, this is not just about CQC coming in, it's about having an opportunity to talk about things that we do well, in

our service and that we're proud of?



51:10

Yeah, absolutely. Brilliant. Yeah, no. Yeah. And we could probably go on so many other little bits that we would want to to highlight. I really hope you've enjoyed this episode. With Ben. If possible, do follow the care exchange. Therefore you get notifications whenever we have a new episode launched. And you'll then find out about the next episode. Thanks very much. Bye. Thank you. Bye.