

## Wellbeing sector stories: Compassionate leadership – Walnut Care Domiciliary Care Agency

So I'm Juliet Green. I'm a project manager with Skills for Care in the Workforce Capacity and Transformation team. I have the lead for our coordination and some of the delivery of our wellbeing work.

So I'm here with Melanie Weatherley, who's the Chief Executive of Walnut Care Domiciliary Care Agency and also the Nominated Individual. And we're here to talk about compassionate leadership.

So, Melanie, can you tell me your thoughts on compassionate leadership and wellbeing?

Well, my view on wellbeing, Juliet, is that it has to be what you do and the way you are, not something extra. And I wouldn't necessarily call it wellbeing. It's a way of working that shows kindness and compassion. You need to know what works for your team, how you can get it across to your staff, that you care about them and embed this into day to day working.

So how do you demonstrate compassion in the workplace? Well, we bring people into the organisation through values based recruitment and throughout the induction we promote person-centred care and compassion and how to walk in someone else's shoes and deliver quality care.

But we need to live and breathe those values as leaders and treat each other with the same care and compassion that we expect for the people we support. We want staff to feel valued and supported in the workplace and also with their personal lives.

Our staff are often going through really tough times whether that's relationships, family or financial challenges, as well as doing their jobs under extremely difficult circumstances.

As leaders, we need to give our operations teams the right support to keep this in mind and promote being person-centred, demonstrating our values and duty of care with each other, as well as with those we support.

Yeah, absolutely. And how do you support your managers?

As senior leaders, it's important we don't put too much onto our managers. They've got too much to do already, and they need extra support. When managers are under pressure, their own self care is often the first thing to slide. It's OK not to be OK and if someone is struggling it's okay to reach out and connect with others.

So what advice would you give to others about supporting registered managers?

Registered managers need support for themselves away from their manager and their staff team. So I say find an outlet whether that's joining in your Skills for Care Registered Managers Network or your local care association. Just finding others to connect with to be an additional source of support.

Find out about the support that's available in your local area. Connect with your Skills for Care locality manager and other colleagues. It's very important that you look after yourself and that you recognise if you're not coping and where to go for help and support.

The feedback that we hear from others is that it's really important to connect and that peer support is really important. So what about managers supporting other team members?

As managers, it's ok not to know the answer you need to know your limits if others are struggling. Don't take it all on yourself, involve others and signpost to experts. It's a bit like a moving and handling situation. I know when it's outside my expertise. So I would contact an OT or other experts, I don't do it all myself.

And it's the same with grief, trauma or mental health. Reach out to the support that's available. Don't assume that because you're the manager, you should know how to deal with it.

Yeah, thank you. And how do you encourage your staff to look after themselves as well as your managers?

That's a really good question. We try to engage staff in sessions about their own well-being.

Didn't really work, but we found that they're focussing on wellbeing for the people they support was much more effective.

Our staff aren't always interested in themselves and they are very resilient but as they learn about wellbeing for others, they might take some of that learning and apply it to themselves.

So, Melanie, it's been great. Thank you so much for talking to us.

So for our audience, what would you say your three takeaways are?

I think my three takeaways, Juliet, would be listen and give people space and time. Remember that small kindnesses go a long way and don't do it all yourself. Ask for help and support when you need it.