Workforce Development Group| 16 May 2024 | 13:00-14:00

Actions from last meeting	Actions from this meeting
• *Care England to respond to the LPC consultation to inform 2025/26 NLW rates - **Complete***	• *No actions from May meeting.*

Welcome & Introduction

Ioan Bishop (**IB**), Policy and Parliamentary Lead at Care England, welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Supporting this meeting:

- Quentin Millington (**QM**), Consultant and Coach, Marble Brook
- George Appleton (**GA**), Head of Policy at Care England

IB noted that **GA** was leaving Care England and thanked him on behalf of the WDG.

Meeting Notes

QM noted that workforce development is about change. Noted many of the changes going on around the sector, including in relation to regulation, technology, funding and models of care. Noted that there is a burden on organisations to navigate these factors to operate in a way that satisfies as many people as possible.

QM noted the challenging nature – physically, mentally, emotionally - of working in social care. With this, we quickly arrive at the question of culture.

QM noted that he wants to reframe culture as 'a means of securing cooperation' around some of the bigger questions and to deliver change across an organisation.

QM noted a traditional understanding of culture as "the way we do things around here". Culture is also associated with values, "the things we say we care about". Often, values are used as an aspiration.

QM explained that what is often missed in this equation is the beliefs that people hold. These beliefs drive peoples' behaviour and in turn the outcomes for our organisation. Noted that beliefs evolve for a group based on what has been successful in the past. Beliefs also slow down change we are trying to bring about.

QM noted that culture is about working with people's beliefs to bring about workplace development.

QM noted that, traditionally, when we want people to do things we set goals, monitor performance and subsequently reward or punish people. This may work in simple jobs, however setting the rules and objectives is dependent on the skill of managers to predict scenarios. In a complex environment like adult social care, there are too many variables.

QM noted that, given the need to manage risk and look after the people we support, we tend to lean towards rules. However, rules don't cover every eventuality and can give a false sense of security when managing risk.

QM noted that bureaucracy curbs peoples' autonomy.

QM suggested harnessing culture as a means of getting things done. Rather than setting something as a rule, you want a culture where a) people believe something is important and know why it matters, b) people talk about it; it becomes part of the day-to-day conversation, and c) as a result, it becomes regular practice. This system also allows for reasonable exceptions.

QM noted that you have to be clear about the value you want to create. Break big concepts – e.g. 'person-centred care' – into behaviours, such as listening, meeting individual needs, etc. This needs to be written down in language that people understand.

QM suggested some ways to develop culture:

1. Having more conversations. You need to provide safe spaces for good dialogue. This will lead to culture and beliefs developing over time.
2. Training managers in facilitating conversation. Managers may prefer rules, but in the long run structured conversations will be more useful. Elements to a useful conversation – What happened? How do we feel about it? What does it mean? What can we do about it?
3. Provide support for people's anxiety. Change generates anxiety, so people need forums to raise these concerns and get answers.
4. Don't demonise the past. The world changes and values do as a result.

IB enquired about members' approach to culture in their organisations.

Member said that they have a fairly flexible approach. Colleagues are encouraged to share any issues that might make them late, for instance. Noted that strict time keeping is important where appointments have been arranged, so they can't be as flexible as they would like.

QM noted that the important element is for staff to understand why they need good time keeping. With this, punctual behaviours will develop.

Member noted that they struggle with establishing a consistent culture across multiple locations. Noted that the leader in each environment is extremely important to setting the culture.

QM noted that there will be core things that matter to everyone across the organisations, but each location is likely to develop their own unique culture. It's important to be clear on the fundamentals and give leeway to allow locations to develop organically.

Member noted that they have worked hard to get members of staff to see culture as something they "own". People need to see how they fit in and contribute.

Member noted the importance of not demonising the past and promoting a "learning culture".

QM noted the importance of a "culture of curiosity" where managers are interested in asking questions and finding out what's happening on the ground.

Member noted that they have introduced more values-based questions in the recruitment process.

QM agreed that was a good idea in recruitment; if an individual doesn't buy into a core principle for your organisation, they highly likely won't be the right person for the role. Suggested reviewing values on an ongoing basis as a part of performance management.

IB enquired about where culture / values sits among members' organisational priorities.

Member noted that it is very important, however it is more complicated than in other sectors. Challenges include retention, low pay, and the demands of the job. Noted that it was difficult to not have bureaucracy in a care home setting.

QM noted that telling stories allows people to learn quickly about what matters in an organisation.

Member enquired about whether there is a difference between 'culture' and 'environment'. Noted that she has seen an artificial positivity that negatively affects staff, for example overly positive WhatsApp messages every morning.

QM noted that if culture is real it will be reflected in lots of places. A happy WhatsApp message may be genuine, or it may not. Ultimately, you've got to map everything back to practice.

Member noted that team members see through false positivity. Good culture has to be lived and breathed.

IB enquired about the things that have worked well for members in generating a positive culture.

Member noted that in their previous role, their values were led by residents. These values were fed into the recruitment process and eventually into a values 360. Values were discussed at the beginning of every meeting – e.g. 'how have you demonstrated this value in the past four weeks?'. Noted that this was very effective for staff.

Member noted that they refreshed their values and shared them with team members via an anonymous survey. This was effective and team members are aware of the organisation's values.

IB enquired about the role that national and regional stakeholders play in determining values at an organisational level.

QM noted that culture is like a series of concentric circles; culture at an organisational level is impacted by culture at a regional level, which in turn is impacted by culture at a national level. It follows, then, that there is a role for national organisations in setting culture across the sector.

Member noted that Care Character had been very useful for their organisation.

Member noted that, in their experience, culture change has worked well where leaders have been courageous and willing to speak out about the way things are operating.

IB noted that members wanting to get in touch with Quentin can do so via email (quentin@desk.marblebrook.co.uk).

AoB

No AoBs raised.

End of meeting.