

sort of making sure that, you know, there are opportunities to engage. So for us, you know, linking with volunteers and voluntary organisations is really, really important. And I think as volunteers as well, it's the voluntary opportunities that we can put in place for people we support. One of those supporters was fantastic Archivist for our organisation. So we've got these wonderfully detailed boards that detail the history of the organisation over 70 years, and he was key to putting all of that together. Yeah.

Wendy Adams 03:27

That's brilliant to hear. And you've talked about volunteers and the links to the local community. How do you recruit volunteers?

03:38

I think it's having previously worked for and lead of infrastructure organisation. I think quite often providers aren't always aware that there is a volunteer Bureau, a council for Voluntary Service, or an infrastructure organisation that exists purely to have all of those connections and networks to those sorts of voluntary groups, volunteers, and faith based organisations as well. So actually having that on your doorstep, they've done all of that legwork for you. So you know, briefly, it's also about recognising that quite often, it will be a sort of handful of key individuals who are connected to people who are connected to people, you tend to find it's your individuals who sort of volunteer and lead key institutions, key organisations, in groups like rotary groups, etc. Those are the ones that are the ones who know people who know people. So they will very quickly put you in contact with key individuals and have roots getting information out very, very quickly. So using those resources that are on your doorstep, rather than trying to sort of start from scratch, I think is probably the key.

Wendy Adams 04:54

It's clear that the volunteers have made a huge difference to your service, but I'm guessing that may also have been challenges in in this process as well. Are there any challenges with using volunteers that you've experienced?

Paul Tolley 05:09

Yeah. And certainly, our level of monitoring went down during the pandemic, I think. So getting that momentum back up to speed is certainly a challenge. We've got more work to do there definitely. That, you know, getting volunteers back in, and sort of engaging in ways that we've never done before. So, you know, just always challenging ourselves to say, well, actually, how can we do this differently? Whether it's working with animal charities, locally as well, you know, what, allotment groups? How do we work with those guys so that we can support the people we support far better?

05:47

Yeah, suppose is for sort of registered managers who might be listening to this who think, Oh, well, I haven't really engaged with volunteers before, kind of just rather than thinking, Oh, that's going to be a lot of work. And I appreciate what you were saying you kind of can't just say they are free resource. So I'm going to, you know, just put an advert out, and they're going to come in and do it, or you kind of have to invest, don't you really to get to get but then once you've done that, you're actually going to a increase the community presence and the Community Links, because I think is really important. But

also you're going to be able to offer some things that you perhaps can't offer now, is that kind of what you're saying.

06:22

So maybe just that added value? If so, and I think it's sort of taking the time. And that's the luxury at the moment, isn't it, just finding the time to sit down and think it through and say, well, actually, what are we really trying to achieve, and whether to go down that route of actually building partnerships and links with existing voluntary groups, or directly trying to recruit an individual volunteer for a particular role or purpose. And I think, if you if you go down the partnerships route, you'll find I think that you'll get even more payback. Because again, it's that awareness, and that the starts looking at connection into parts, the local community that perhaps you're not already reaching.

Pia Rathje-Burton 07:03

Yeah. And that partnership working seem to be really important to you as well. Yeah.

07:09

Yeah, absolutely. And having, I suppose, in my previous role, realised just the volume of volunteering, voluntary organisations, groups that exist on a daily basis, and their power to get things done, is a it's absolutely so you know, unmatched, so often you sort of realise that it's the voluntary groups who will just get things done without worrying about bureaucracy without having to sort of, you know, run through a huge sort of tome of sort of your policies and procedures and all the rest of it and just get things done. And there's, there's a huge amount of power in that we have to be careful as providers, obviously, around how we engage and how we work with individuals. But you know, that that energy that is there that is untapped quiteoften, is really, really powerful.

we support already link with those partners, those organisations, those institutions, and how do we use that, whether it's the local colleges, schools, but also whether it's local church as well. The church was really, really important to a number of people we support, but particularly through the pandemic, I think, you know, taking the time to sort of map that if you like, and appreciate it. And also, I think, you know, takes time to actually just recognise it and say, actually, through all of this, we did a fantastic job, we supported all of our people. But actually, you were key to that journey as well. I think sometimes we don't take that step of just sort of mapping out how those organisations groups, businesses in town, you know, like I say, we've got a very inclusive town, which is lovely, lovely to see. That actually do we take the steps just to say, something that we support really enjoys coming in here and the fact that they, we know that they can come in in here anytime and get, you know, get to engage, we just think that's really brilliant, we just want to celebrate that. And sometimes it's approaching it in a very different way, maybe it is just about doing a little recognition, almost like a recognition award approach to it. And sort of just having the sort of top 10, you know, organisations groups, partners in the town that make a difference to the people you support, and just start from there and try and build.

wards in the hospital. We have a whole range of those activities, and so rewarding for the people we support. But it's just taking the time to acknowledge that and I think celebrate it. Yeah.

13:27

Just changing tact a little bit. I wanted to ask you about workforce data. It's very different. So how do you use workforce data within New Directions?

13:41

Sure. I opened my mouth at a recent nominated individuals West Midlands session. And I was quite surprised, actually, that there were a number of new nominated individuals in the group who weren't using the workforce data, they weren't using ASC-WDS. And so because I sort of opened my mouth and said, how we use it, I then got asked to do a presentation to nominated individuals quite recently. It's something we've used since I came in. But to be perfectly honest, we were doing the bare minimum of really just putting the data in there so that we could claim against workforce development fund, and if I'm absolutely honest, but I think it's I think, through the pandemic, and also sort of think recognising that that data is so powerful when we're all putting into it, that there is actually a collective responsibility to put in as much information as possible, because that's the information that's being used to lobby around wages to lobby around, you know, resourcing the social care sector better than it is currently and has been for the past decade or so. So for me, we put more information in there, but actually we use that information primarily to look at turnover and our retention rates and actually have that benchmark and compare and contrast. So It forces us to not just compare with what the regional rates are. But it also forces us to look at our trends and data and say, Well, okay, we started doing this differently is that making an effect is that having the desired effect is it you know, meaning that we've got fewer people leaving the organisation. turnover is a big, big trend data sort of issue for all of us at the moment, I think. And I know we, for years, our turnover was sort of less than half the regional average. And it's great to have that because then you know, what you're doing well, but all of us, I think, now are facing that. That challenge where, after two, three years of sort of working through sort of pandemic conditions, with less funding coming through, and minimum wage increasing, I think social care worker rates of pay, are being driven closer and closer to minimum wage levels. And that we're seeing in terms of staff turnover, individuals leaving, and you find that you are swimming to sort of standstill, you know, it's a lot of time and effort being spent by providers now on recruitment, being able to analyse that data to be able to share that information in really succinct ways to be able to feed back not just the local authority, but central government as well. If I look at the 17 individuals we've recruited into the organisation over the last six months, we had to go through 144 applications to get them 17. That's a huge amount of time and energy spent. And we do it, we absorb it as organisations, we absorb that time energy cost. But sometimes we just need to be able to lay it out there and compare with the previous six months and the year before that, to say, this is what we're seeing. And this is the trend. If this carries on in the same way, we'll get to the point where we don't have the capacity to deliver outstanding care.

16:55

So you're really sort of using it strategically, aren't you really to say strategically, but also practically, for you doing? You're kind of using it both? Because I think, thinking as a manager, in particular, if you have a small service, obviously, you're part of a big organisation. But if you have a small service, you

think Well, I kind of know what's happening, but actually being able to see black and white, you know, this is this is exactly what what we have, the more data you're putting in, the more you can get out. And what you're saying is that you are kind of you, you're you're starting to use it a lot more because then you can, it's not just because you can claim some some training funding. And that's, that's, that's amazing. But it's also for your own organization's purpose to be able to say, actually, this just shows us loads of information about the our workers and what's happening with our workers in terms of how long they're staying with us. And, you know, if you know, if they have some training that does that make a difference. If it recruitment from this place, does that make a difference? All those things that you can kind of go Okay, we've got to do more of that. Less of this.

17:58

Yeah, exactly that and I love data. I'm a bit of a geek. So I enjoy sort of, you know, seeing those numbers and the pattern, but what, what it then does is it gives you that in to have the conversation with staff with managers to be able to say, Okay, we're now spending, I can see that we're spending twice as much

geographically is then just a little bit, you know, just far enough away that they're not your competitor, but close enough that it's conveniently geographically close enough. So you know, I think that that's where the relationship starts, or maybe even sort of say, well, okay, I'm, we did, we did it with a with a provider in Warwickshire, who achieved outstanding and actually, their focus is primarily around

the same wasn't the same type of service and suddenly seeing something and going, Oh, my God, we can we can take a bit of that and we can develop it and we can improve the service that we've got is just amazing. And, and I suppose it's just taking that time and the trust in that other manager that this is