

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-Burt

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 can do

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.

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?

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 in the sky's the limit where we were. And what 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 T

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 th

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.

Pia Rathje-Burton

P

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 a big deal, because she treats it like her own social media, you know, 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 ~~try~~ ~~om~~ ing to ~~we~~ pa

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

said, in the, in our conversation, the conversations they had wiA

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.