

Hi Dave & colleagues, and Michelle & colleagues,

NWADASS Workforce Integration Learning Project

My name is Kath Smythe. I'm a change consultant and coach working with NWADASS. I work in the spaces where people and organisational change come together because that is where I believe real, lasting change happens.

I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself so that you'll get more of a sense of what I'll bring to our working together and I hope, how that can bring value to you.

I've delivered change in the public sector for more than 25 years, from a diverse range of professional perspectives and from senior strategic level through to front line. This gives me an unusual radar enabling me to understand change through a range of lenses.

Like most of us, I've had my challenges in life and it's changed and shaped me. I used to be a fixer, charging in on my white horse, sorting problems out before riding off to fix the next thing that was wrong. The problem with being a fixer is that when you move on, things tend to go back to how they used to be. I learned that we can't "fix" people; people have to change themselves and our role as change makers, is to make sure they have the right things in place around them. It's no different in organisations.

This evolution in my thinking helped me re-connect with my life long interest in human behaviour (I have a degree in psychology) and started my journey of immersing myself in diverse theories of change, and learning from others locally, nationally and internationally about the latest evidence about how best to make change happen. I believe that fulfilment in life comes from never stopping learning and I'm continually learning from podcasts, audio books and the national networks that I'm active in. I've come to see myself as part of a growing international movement of people who recognise that if we want to get great results through the work we do, we have to change how we work.

I think I'm maybe quite unusual because while I love exploring research, models and theories of change, I've a really pragmatic head on me and I'm always thinking about how they translate into practice. I am more naturally drawn to more relational, humanistic and systems approaches to change but I'm not looking for the panacea. I don't exclusively subscribe to any one theory of change and enjoy bringing diverse thinking and approaches together to create new, innovative ways of thinking about change.

I'm delighted to have been commissioned by NWADASS to capture and enable the sharing of learning from programmes that have successfully achieved aspects of real workforce integration. I'm looking forward to understanding how Tameside has achieved real integration. I've seen lots of information that has been produced already to share the learning from Tameside – and it's great. And, it still leaves me with lots of questions. Questions about the stuff that happens below the surface that we don't tend to talk about so much and sometimes aren't conscious of ourselves. Things like the relationships that mattered, the thinking that shaped our work, what people were hearing, and talking about and how they were making sense of the changes that were happening. All the evidence tells us it's this stuff that makes the biggest difference to whether change programmes are successful.

I'm so looking forward to working with you on this project. I see this as a three-way learning relationship and believe that we'll all learn new things along the way. I'll work with you to capture the learning from how you've successfully implemented blended roles in Tameside and I hope that you will help me to understand how to help you to make sense of how change happened. I'll bring my experiences, knowledge and learning about why change happens to help you to make sense of what mattered most. I'm hoping that together we'll unlock new insights, explore the things that really made the biggest differences, and make sense of why this change programme has been so successful so that Cheshire West – and other places – can accelerate implementation where they are.

This is by design, different, courageous and a little bit out there and we hope will result in learning that really makes a difference to everyone who is involved. Ultimately we want to capture learning, ideas, thinking, capabilities and methodologies in ways that help others to take the learning and use it to inform their own transformation journeys.

I'd really like an early conversation with you to better understand what you are hoping will happen as a result of participating in this project and how we can shape a methodology that will achieve that.

I look forward to talking with you soon.

Kath