

C4: Once Upon a Time – Storytelling, Culture and Inclusion

Author: Emma Allen, Equality & Diversity Project Manager, Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust



Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.....

At Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust we take a culture driven approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Our Vision identifies the importance of listening to people's stories so we can learn and improve quality together and we are committed to designing and delivering services with people at the heart of everything we do.

Stories make people feel connected; they can influence, motivate, persuade and inspire; they can entertain, move or shock and they are a vehicle for assimilating and understanding information.

“After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world”
Philip Pullman, Author

London School of Business researchers found that when people hear statistics alone, they remember only 5-10% of what they have heard. When stories are used to convey the same information, retention jumps to 65-70%. Stanford University Professor of Marketing Jennifer L. Aaker agrees, stating, “When data and stories are used together, they resonate with audiences on both an intellectual *and* emotional level”. When we use the whole of our brains like this, information becomes much more memorable.

Using personal and emotive stories has been a very successful way of embedding equality and diversity activity into daily life at Lancashire Care. We have used storytelling to educate, build communities of purpose and drive behavioural change and we believe that our staff experience diversity in the workplace through meaningful conversations and sharing stories.

Our Appreciative and Collective Leadership approaches have both listening and telling of stories at their core and as this Poetic Principle is engrained into our culture, we are able to exploit it to ensure truly inclusive leadership at all levels of the organisation.

Some examples of how Lancashire Care uses stories to create a more inclusive and engaged workplace:

- Recording and sharing patient and service user stories in a wide range of media
- Telling stories to illustrate the drivers behind new legislation and policy
- Holding Schwartz Rounds where staff can listen to and tell stories, learn from one another and make connections
- Leadership Programme with storytelling as a core tenet
- Inviting Experts by Experience to speak at events
- Always events to co-design services with the people who use them
- Promotion of library services and Shelf Help books
- Appreciative Inquiry 4D events to generate positive innovation and diverse perspectives
- Scenario based training
- Quality Improvement Framework methodology
- Equality and Diversity Champions sharing personal stories as role models

The quest for a truly inclusive organisation is a good fairy story metaphor – an epic journey with treasure to be won by the brave heroes who dare to take on the ogres and dragons of intolerance and denial!



And they all lived happily ever after!

The End