'Rewilding our Workplace Cultures'

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In this Blog, we plan to explore using the metaphor of 'Rewilding' how our Workplace Cultures are settings in which when the underpinning principles of 'Rewilding' are applied can grow, develop and thrive as nurturing, replenishing environments. We argue that Rewilding is not about 'neglect' rather it is an intentional, skilled act, drawing on an evidence base focussed on sustainability, nurturing and growth that supports eco diversity. In the same way we believe that creating workplace cultures that enable innovation in person-centred practices to grow requires the same level of intention, commitment, understanding, reflection and learning which is enabled by skilled facilitation and is lived and experienced by all.

We both hold an interest (rooted commitment) to the importance of the natural world. We were able to start connecting our thinking to 'Rewilding' and 'Workplace Culture' through sharing and learning on the 'Leading and Facilitating the Development of Person-Centred Care and Cultures' residential programme commissioned jointly by Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust and the former Norfolk and Waveney CCG and delivered by NICHE at the University of East Anglia[1].

Workplace Culture

Workplace Culture is the setting where care is delivered and experienced. Drennan defines Culture as, 'how things are done around here'[2]. Our Workplace Culture cant be captured in a single Policy or Guideline, instead it is reflected in our behaviours and attitudes and the importance we place on all parts of our workplace where care is delivered and experienced. Importantly the setting where we interact and work with each other. We may have a written Vision Statement or Charter, however it is the shared values, attitude's and behaviours that help to grow a sustainable workplace culture that creates the 'best' for all that is reflected in our lived actions – we not only talk about our actions we live them too!

A number of high profile reports and investigations have brought to the fore the centrality of 'culture' to quality of care, leadership and overall workforce satisfaction. The COVID-19

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[1] https://www.uea.ac.uk/documents/96135/10286253/NSFT_+NICHE+Residential+Programme+-+Final+Report.pdf/49b5a15a-3bf2-e769-6d5b-0f687b60b99c?t=1700145579361

[2] Drennan D, 1992, Transforming Company Culture. London: McGraw-Hill, p9

pandemic has shone a light on the importance of workforce 'wellbeing' and the importance of workplace cultures that are person-centred, safe and effective[3].

Authors have presented frameworks and models that advocate different theoretical approaches. We are not arguing that one is 'better' than the other, rather the importance of developing a shared understanding informed by our collective beliefs that supports the growth and development of person-centred workplace cultures and authentic lived actions that enable person-centred practices to grow, thrive and flourish.

Rewilding

Rewilding is a holistic approach to conservation that seeks to revitilaise and restore ecosystems by allowing natural processes to unfold with minimal human interference. At its core rewilding aims to return landscapes to a wilder states, promoting biodiversity, balance in ecology and resilience to environmental change. The concept of rewilding has gained momentum in recent years as traditional conservation efforts have often fallen short of addressing the complex challenges facing global ecosystems. This has turn lead to rewilding becoming increasingly difficult to describe with a single definition.

Habitat restoration is crucial to rewilding projects. Degraded habitats ecosystems are rehabilitated to provide suitable environments for a diverse range of species. This may involved removing new and invasive species, restoration of wetlands, replanting of native crops and the creation of wildlife corridors to reconnect fragmented environments and recreate habitats. Restoring structure and in turn function and species connectivity , rewilding aims to support both the recovery of flora and fauna. Restoration of key ecological processes plays a central role in rewilding projects, reintroduction of key species that have been lost or their populations vastly reduced aims to re-establish natural dynamics that human activity has disrupted. The reintroduction of lost species plays out in a cascading effect that has influence on other species and the ecosystem as a whole.

The concept of rewilding also places emphasis on the importance of minimal human intervention in the management of ecosystems. Rather than relying on traditional conservation methods that often involve invasive management and control, rewilding advocates for allowing natural processes to govern the dynamic within the ecosystem. This does not mean abandoning human involvement, rather adopting a more hands-off approach that prioritises the restoration of natural processes and the capacity of the ecosystem to self- regulation. This places emphasis on the need for rewilding projects to planned with intent.

While rewilding holds great promise for biodiversity and conservation and the restoration of environments, it is not without its controversies and challenges. Concerns about potential conflict with human activity, such as agriculture and urban development, as well as questions about the feasibility and ethics of reintroducing certain species, must be carefully considered and addressed. Furthermore successful rewilding requires long-term

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[3] Cardiff S, Sanders K, Webster J, Manley K, 2020, Guiding Lights for Effective Workplace Cultures that are good places to work, International Practice Development Journal, Vol 10, Issue 2.

commitment, professional interdisciplinary collaboration and community engagement to ensure the coexistence of humans and wildlife in the shared landscape.

Emergent synergy in themes – 'Rewilding our Workplace Culture'

To rewild our workplace cultures that will flourish and grow requires intent (to make a difference), facilitation and a vision to make real opportunities for person-centred cultures that are effective. Rewilding and creating workplace cultures that enable innovation doesn't come about by neglect they require a shared vision and purpose that is owned and nurtured by all. Creating effective workplace cultures that are person-centred requires the lived value of inclusivity and collegiality in which all are included and valued requiring a commitment to practice – centred (embedded) action that enables and empowers all that is critically informed through reflection and ongoing critique.

Leadership and shared governance plays a central role to rewilding our workplace culture in which a culture is created that questions and supports in equal measure and uses every opportunity to learn therefore developing greater insight and understanding which leads to improved effectiveness and better person-centred outcomes. Having a vision is central to this, however being aware of unintended consequences is key. For some, rewilding may be perceived as about losing control – a neatly manicured garden in which the eco system is controlled and tightly managed is the opposite to a rewilding approach that may not be neat around the edges however importantly will require as much effort and intent to maintain its health. We pose the question, *'what is healthier, the neatly managed garden or the rewilded area that is supporting a thriving eco system to grow and develop?'* Some people may decide that rewilding is not for them similarly an effective workplace culture that is person-centred may be at odds with personal values and beliefs in which they believe that as the 'professional' they 'know best'.

We argue that that by drawing on the metaphor of 'rewilding our workplace culture' all can thrive, grow and develop leading to increased effectiveness in our workplace cultures that are person-centred and effective. We recognise that at times this can require a leap of faith and trust in 'what can be'. We also recognise the importance of a vision that is embedded in the practice setting and how important it is to give people the 'permission' (if permission in its many different forms is needed) through not only 'saying' but 'doing' in which the culture and context of practice and learning supports, innovation, development and person-centred transformation.