



Jan's Weekly Update

Jan Ditheridge, Chief Executive

Issue 252 — 31.08.2018



I had very sad news yesterday - someone I worked with many years ago in A and E in London sadly passed away this week. She lost her tough battle with Cancer and spent her final few days in a Hospice.

I haven't seen Chris for a long time - we weren't friends out of work although we did catch up from time to time through mutual friends. However as I heard the news I felt a real sadness. Obviously for her, her family and friends, but also because I was, I realised, connected to her.

We had worked very closely together - she was my F Grade (if you're too young to remember grades ask one of your team) on night duty. She was a London girl - always upbeat, no nonsense and everyone loved her. She didn't always do everything by the book and as the team leader I sometimes had to help her through that - but she was always there through some very tricky nights pulling the team together, looking after the new and often very young doctors (and we weren't old!) and keeping our heads up when we were inundated with poorly people.

She taught me to stitch wounds, do scaphoid plasters (very hard) and maintain my compassion when I thought I had none left.

When I left it was her job to buy my leaving gift - she bought me this massive yellow candle in the shape of a sunflower. Everyone thought it was hilarious because it was not to my taste, but I still have it because it was bought with great kindness and thought.



Why am I telling you this? Well because I wanted to share this with you but also to remind us that the positive relationships we make at work will stay with us forever. Nights in a London A and E were really hard, exciting and exhausting, not something you could do forever - but one of the best jobs ever because of the ability to make a difference and the support and camaraderie from people like Chris.

I see people just like Chris in your teams every day - saying it as it is, working tirelessly for patients, pulling the team together when it's tough and making sure everyone smiles or laughs at least once a day! I've always tried to have a Chris in my team ever since...

And to prove my point...

The Chairman (Mike Ridley) and I met with Marjorie Austin, Community Matron for Shrewsbury and Atcham, after our Board meeting yesterday.

We had been talking about the project Frailty at the Front Door. This is an initiative to see people before A and E, in the hospital, to see if with a few interventions we can get them home without an admission, which we know if not absolutely necessary can be harmful especially to older patients. Marjorie is front and centre of this project, alongside the other Community Matrons, working with many other professionals to ensure patients get what they need and where possible stay at home.



It was really good to hear about the project first hand and the difference it's making - but what really struck us was Marjorie's energy, enthusiasm and range of expertise and skills she deploys every day for patients and to support many teams. She has a very busy caseload but the can-do approach just shone through.

It motivated me and the Chairman to think how we can share the message, about how much difference people like Marjorie, and the rest of Community Matrons with the support of the District Nurses, can make to the quality, and actually probably add to the length of life, of people with complex health needs or living at the end of their lives.

This great work often goes unnoticed and could be under-valued which is why we ask you to record the work on RiO for example so we can help show what you're doing.

Marjorie did a brilliant job of shining a light on the value of Community Matrons and positively helped me understand how I can support them in the meetings I go to.

The first thing I did after our conversation was make sure our development team know Marjorie and the team are there and that they should be contributing to the wider Care Closer to Home project to develop our services for the future.

It's my job and your leaders' job to make it as easy as possible to show the world the great work you do to ensure you're valued, you can influence change and continue to be funded and where necessary attract more funding.

We need a bit of help to do that in the form of your activity being recorded — well done district nurses: 100% this month! We need your involvement in new Service design and getting the real story out there about what you do, just like Majorie did.

Until next time...

Jan Ditheridge
Chief Executive

