

Leadership Mentor Bio's

Name: Melissa Hinton

Job title: Head of Social Care, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Buckinghamshire



A little bit about me:

I have worked as a Social Worker within mental health services in Buckinghamshire since 1999. I grew up in High Wycombe and have a real fondness for the Bucks countryside, landscape and people. I value living and working in the same area because it brings me a sense that I am contributing directly to the wellbeing of my own community. I like walking my rather naughty rescue dog Luna. She can lack doggy manners but makes up for it by being my trusty walking (and sofa sitting) companion.

A snapshot of my career:

I began my social care career in 1994 working in mental health residential rehab in Old Amersham. I qualified as a Social Worker in 1999 from Brunel University and after a short stint in a Drug & Alcohol care management team in Brent I moved to a substance misuse role within mental health services in Bucks. I was a Care Co-ordinator for many years before leading a social care review team and the carer assessment team. I became a social care Team Manager, and then Head of Social Care in June 2023. I became an Approved Social Worker in 2003 and continue to work as an Approved Mental Health Professional.

I like to motivate others by enabling them to see their own potential and by continually highlighting areas of achievement, large and small. These are tough jobs and sometimes the motivation to keep going can be hard to find. I take pride in the little wins and encourage others to do the same. I highlight good practice, perseverance and positive outcomes throughout my service. I talk openly about my own areas for development and reflect honestly where I have fallen short of expectations or made mistakes. I motivate others to take risks and try new things by challenging perfectionist thinking and valuing trial and error.

A personal value I stand by is honesty. My goal for my service and for people who seek my support is to create an open and honest culture where people feel safe to be open about what has and hasn't gone well. For me, honesty relates to being transparent and owning my practice and I expect and encourage others to do the same. I promote being honest about what we can and can't do, and about what we may need to thrive in the workplace. When talking about values I cannot ignore kindness as a core value for me. I was lucky enough to grow up surrounded by kindness and try to spread a little at any and every opportunity.

Others would say my best leadership quality is that I am approachable. Within my organisation many people have been peers throughout the years and as I moved into more senior roles, I have been mindful to balance the changing expectations of the role with a desire not to lose touch with the day-to-day challenges and triumphs of staff at all levels of the service.

My main strengths, skills and qualities that would benefit a mentee are: I have a wealth of knowledge about mental health, Social Work and related legislation. I remained in front-line social work for many years and learnt so much from the individuals I worked with about their experiences of mental ill-health and challenges of neurodiversity within a neurotypical world. I'm a good listener and can create a safe space for people to explore issues at their own pace. I don't shy away from difficult topics but aim to do so with compassion and balance.

My interests outside of work include: Trying to put some love back into my neglected Victorian house and garden. I spend a lot of time in north Wales where the hill walking is wonderful. I've cycled the Hebridean Way, as well as from Newcastle to Edinburgh and around parts of the Isle of Man. I have two daughters and as mentioned above, a dog who thinks she is Queen of the Park. I like cooking, reading and have fluctuating motivation for Yoga.

Anything else of interest: My parents were Quakers, and my grandparents were Buddhists who had strong links with the arrival of Tibetan refugees in the 1960s and the founding of the first Tibetan Buddhist centre in the West. I have a love of learning about other cultures and religions, and hearing about people's experiences of migration and multiculturalism.