

Speakers' Biographies

Rachel Reid – Skills for Care

Rachel worked for Local Government in Berkshire for 13 years, including as a Registered Manager with Reading Borough Council, before joining the Skills for Care locality team. Her role as Locality Manager involves working with key partners across the Thames Valley (and Nationally where appropriate) to support the understanding and implementation of requirements and best practice in relation to workforce development in the adult social care sector.

Rachel Lawrence – Oxfordshire County Council

Rachel works for Oxfordshire County Council and leads on Oxfordshire's adult social care workforce programme. An experienced commissioner, she has worked on the development and commissioning of a wide range of social care services in the county including the reablement service, crisis response, and intermediate care. She is also a member of ADASS's south east workforce group.

Larry Gardiner

Larry has long been involved in co-production of services.. He is currently Co-Chair of Oxfordshire Dementia Empowerment Group and Co-producer at the Social Care for Institute as well as being a key part of Oxfordshire's Workforce Programme Board. Larry has a particular interest in working with people who are making a real difference in the communities where they live or work and works as a facilitator, consultant, trainer and coach with people who are developing the ability to lead beyond authority as change agents, community leaders, charity trustees and as non-executive directors.

Meryl Rautenbach – Shrublands

Meryl is a Senior Carer at Shrublands Residential Home in Cumnor. She has extensive experience working in both community and residential settings. Her love of her work and interest in people make her an outstanding advocate for social care. As she says, "by understanding people's stories and history, you can never be bored"..

Neil Edwards – Sticky People

Neil Eastwood is an experienced social care provider, entrepreneur and analyst, with a First Class Honours Degree and a Harvard Business School education. Neil has spent many years gathering best practice social care recruitment and retention tools and techniques from around the world.



Think Care Oxfordshire

Julie Abbott – Job Centre Plus

Julie has worked for the Department for Work and Pensions for over 25 years. Her current role is Senior Business Sector Manager with a national lead for the Adult Social Care Sector. By working in partnership with external partners such as Skills for Care and National Care Providers she is able to bring sector knowledge to the whole of the Jobcentre Plus network helping to promote the sector as a career of choice.

Gary Bye – Life Path Trust

Gary has extensive knowledge and experience of the voluntary and community sector. As well as leading Life Path Trust through the ever changing social care world he is a strong advocate of people's right to control their own lives and supports the personalisation agenda.

He has worked for an inner-city youth agency providing advice, volunteer bureaux and community development before joining organisations that support people with a learning disability in 1983.