

“Once upon a time, there was an employer that was the envy of all those around. The care the staff provided was the best available to service users. The staff also had the care of a trade union and an effective voice in their work. Everyone was happy.



A new leadership team was formed and they were not happy. The new leadership studied the work of employers in other countries and wanted to change everything about the organisation without really knowing what to do. While detail was lacking, the long term aims were clear - to introduce a franchised model of working into social care. Essentially turning this great company into the McDonalds or Subway of social care, putting at risk the fantastic reputation the staff had built up over many years. A new private limited company was formed to embrace this promised land of profits and wealth that would surely follow.

Experienced and long serving staff seen through the weakness of the plans and warned the leaders of the dangers that lay ahead. The warnings were that rather than enhance the already great levels of care, they would reduce the time our front line staff could give to enhancing the lives of the people we support. The plans would introduce additional responsibilities and administrative tasks, reducing the time available for care. All this extra work for little or no extra pay yet the leaders have been awarded thousands.

The new leaders didn't like being challenged and told the staff who disagreed that they 'should either be on the bus or that they should get off the bus'. Many staff left and those who stayed around to challenge the new leaders were either sidelined or dismissed - including the trade union who were de-recognised.

Everyone was sad but the new leaders continued to travel the world telling everyone how great the new idea was. Meanwhile, staff tried their best to try and work out how the idea would work in practice. For months the teams operated without appropriate IT support and training but soldiered on to deliver the service that the people they support deserve.

Some time later, the experienced staff were gradually proved right and the new leaders failed to heed the warnings. No new work was coming in and the local authorities were asking 'where are the examples of the enhanced care you promised' and 'why are you more expensive than your competitors'?

Unfortunately the new leaders had no evidence to provide the local authorities as there was none - only spin - and the local authorities had heard enough of that. The care was no better than the already great care that was provided before and simply saying something was better over and over again wouldn't make it happen in reality.

Meanwhile, the trade union had been having meetings up and down the country listening to the views of the staff. More and more people joined the trade union and the CAC decided it was indeed 'likely' that the union had a majority support amongst staff. The new leaders were feeling more and more isolated as all their claims and promises were turning to dust.

The union continued to campaign to ensure all staff enjoyed union recognition while the new leaders concentrated efforts to exclude the union and deny workers an effective voice. Meanwhile staff did their best to continue to deliver the high levels of care and positive outcomes for the people we support.

*The sad thing is that this could all have been avoided but hopefully the story has a happy ending....but that ending will be down to you. If you want staff to have a say in the future of Cornerstone, **join UNISON and vote for trade union recognition in the upcoming staff ballot!***

