Leaders in Partnership

MEET THE PARTNERS

Jane Williams and Mairi Doyle

Jane Williams, Founder of The Magpie Project, signed up to Leaders in Partnership as she embarked on the new challenge of running a charity. The Magpie Project provides a safe place for mums and young children suffering in insecure accommodation, offering guidance, community and fun activities. Jane was partnered with Mairi Doyle, Director of Internal Communications and Wellbeing at Bupa, who volunteered to use her professional experience and mentoring skills to give back to the community. Finding in each other a dynamic and inspiring partner, the pair meet on a regular basis to explore the demands of running a growing charity.

MAIRI DOYLE BUPA

"Jane is truly inspiring. So many people talk about doing things but she actually just gets on with it. Her passion is infectious. A few times I've realised that the approach we've just talked through for Jane is something that I equally need to apply to my own leadership. Mentoring Jane has helped to resurface and reinforce some learning I've picked up over the years and so it's been a two-way process.

It's been wonderful and so encouraging to see how much Jane values our time together and to see the shift in her some of her thinking. You can achieve a lot in an hour if you are both well prepared and willing to be really honest with each other. I find our time together very energising. Jane has also taught me about the real challenges some people face every day – it has helped to keep my own challenges in perspective. Jane is particularly good at always having the mums and babies at the centre of her thinking. It's been a great reminder to me about always keeping the 'customer' at the heart of everything.

If you are thinking about volunteering, go for it. Think carefully about what outcome you want from each session. Jane comes with a clear agenda about what is important and what she would value focussing on in each session. That's very helpful. Care enough to offer robust guidance at times. This is not about tea and a cosy chat, this is precious time that Jane is giving up from running the charity and it's important to make it count."

JANE WILLIAMS THE MAGPIE PROJECT

"I have learned so much from Mairi, mostly about being true to my vision, communicating, playing to my strengths and being human. A lot of what Mairi has shared with me has gone against my preconceptions of what I thought I would have to do to manage a project. She has a really clear way of viewing things, is incredibly empathetic and has taught me so much about management through enabling others: through listening and collaborating rather than talking and insisting.

I have talked through the very difficult period of turning a volunteer run organisation into a more structured and resilient one with many more volunteers and staff members. Mairi has a wonderful combination of enough distance from the project to come with a totally new perspective, and a massive passion as a people person and a cheerleader.

If you are considering taking part in the programme - do it. Come with questions each month, an agenda and problems you want to talk through, so that you don't waste this massive opportunity. Being a charity leader can be lonely: feeling that you are responsible for everybody from mums and babies to volunteers, funders and trustees. Having someone who is just there - with no agenda - to support you, is absolutely game-changing. The most important thing is to be open to hearing what you might not want to hear. Occasionally Mairi says things like "No that is you, not them!" and it is absolutely vital, game-changing and makes us both laugh too! I would not have it any other way."