

Harnessing Talent and Bright Sparks from the Start

Hello - I am the newest FVS Trustee recruit.

If you happen to search for me on the FVS website – you won't find me there yet – I'm writing my bio! In this very short time, I want to share a little bit about:

- who I am
- how I don't have answers and solutions but how I'm using your inspiration and what you have taught me to try to create new opportunities.

I have a long career of working with the voluntary sector charities and local government in Surrey in frontline and service transformation/improvement roles including working with families whose children have SEND. I've had the pleasure of working with many of you in the room today.

Then a cool thing happened to my job just before I left - I did my job so well I got to do other people's jobs too! I'm sure many of you will recognise that too. At that point I realised I needed to step out and focus on the increasing caring responsibilities within my own family.

You see the thing is I just couldn't leave it there! - Thanks to all time and passion you invested on projects that try to make a difference and for all the learning - it's this learning, the valuable leaving gifts that I received, that I want to share with you today.

Gift Box 1: Gift label "Endings, Explorations, New beginnings"

open the box to reveal the **Lego kit** "gift" - the importance of spending time on exploration & design

- like Lego it's the building/design that's as important as the end product.
- mix it up – bring colour
- (show the instruction book) if you look at the rule book you get the same design - bend the rules sometimes you get better design.
- look for opportunities to challenge assumptions of an old idea, learn from your mistakes as you build.
- make sure you're not missing anything – parts are as important as the whole.
- you can't expect anything to change if you keep designing the same thing over and over.

Box 2: Gift label "Get right what we need to focus on"

open the box to reveal the **magnifying glass** "gift" - what do we need to focus on? With all the projects I have been involved in – I've noticed some common themes:

- The Local Offer (information) is hard to navigate
- Advice and information are important and needs improving
- Early identification and support (of SEND) is needed

- There needs to be a transfer of skills and knowledge between parents, school and professionals in designing any offer (from the start)

Box 3: Gift label “Start with a big idea, but scale it down”

open the box to reveal the **globe** “gift”

It’s often said, “don’t raise expectations - will want the world and only have limited resources”. But we need to think big and recognise the potential from the start. Start with your big idea (aspirations) but break it up into bite-sized chunks to quickly deliver value, however small. Scale it down and focus on every nook and cranny to make sure everything is working, and the foundations are right.

- You can aspire but break it down into the achievable.
- Even if you achieve a bit of it, it will quickly achieve value from the start.
- People will say “manage expectations from the start” – this is self-limiting, let’s start with our aspirations and what we want to achieve. Let’s have an “enabling” discussion.

Box 4 Gift label “Keep rooted and don’t stray from the business purpose”

Open the box to reveal a **pretty potted flowering cactus** “gift”.

Lose touch with the business purpose, and its longevity will take a significant hit and what you set out to design will not be useable.

I see the role of FVS as being one to keep the focus on understanding, questioning, refining – all of these things help to keep the business purpose firmly rooted around positive outcomes for families.

And finally, growth is exciting and challenging, but it certainly isn’t comfortable.....

What I have described here are the cornerstones of enterprising schemes and sustainable projects and these have come from you.

So these gifts they’re not going to be sitting on a shelf like some old carriage clock given for 25 years of service gathering dust - these gifts are now being used to generate new possibilities as I work with a local primary school, parents and the wider community to develop an inspiring social enterprise - a community café hub model. This includes a targeted offer where families and children can meet, share, help to design and develop activities that support well-being and learning and is linked to a wider offer that connects with the local community (community health, older people, young parent/carers) and promotes self-care, good health and well-being.

So, I’m hoping that you will be part of this exciting journey as we make use of all the wonderful skills and talents that we have within Surrey to design and discover what’s possible for our children and young people and families.