



Leading with kindness



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Introduction

The way that we think and talk about kindness has changed. During a global pandemic that has shifted perspectives about what we value as a society, the importance of kindness has been narrated in a way that is more public and explicit. It was found in the 'spirit of lockdown' that inspired #KindnessMatters campaigns and 'community is kindness' posters up and down the UK. But it has also become more prevalent in the way that organisations – from local governments to small businesses and everything in between – have articulated their core principles, values and behaviours.

It is increasingly evident that relationships are at the heart of improving outcomes for organisations and improving wellbeing for individuals and communities. There is a growing recognition that it is often not what we do but how we do it that matters to people. For organisations of all types, approaching this understanding through the lens of kindness could radically change the things that they prioritise and the way that they operate.

In October 2019, Carnegie UK brought together a group of leaders from 16 organisations working in different sectors and spread across England, Scotland and Wales who were interested in developing their thinking and practice on kindness. This group was called the 'Kindness Leadership Network' (KiLN) and its primary aim was to provide a space to inspire, support and challenge its members to make practical changes to embed radical kindness in their workplaces and services.

Alongside this, it was hoped that creating a coalition of organisations that were visibly discussing and experimenting with kindness as a way to deliver better outcomes would encourage others to do the same: that the example of KiLN would inspire a growing movement of 'kind organisations'.

KiLN has learnt about what is possible when kindness becomes an operating principle for organisations

If we had known at the time of the first meeting that our work and lives would soon be subsumed by the COVID-19 crisis, we might well have done something entirely different. And yet, despite its profound and wide-ranging negative impacts on people's work and lives, the pandemic has also made things possible. It demanded that communities and organisations alike adapt at pace, in a way that was guided by listening and understanding.¹ It demonstrated how kindness can make a difference to people's lives and wellbeing, even (and perhaps especially) in the most challenging circumstances.

- Within KiLN, we noticed that this seeded a shift in thinking: conversations moved from describing the change that was needed, to discussing how to sustain what was already happening. How can we hold onto the positives that have emerged in response to COVID-19?
- How can we evidence the difference that this is making to people's lives?

It is hard to untangle the impact of COVID-19 and the influence of organisations' membership of KiLN. The former allowed organisations to fast-track radical changes, which might otherwise have taken years, in order to meet the immediate needs of people and communities. The latter provided a network and a knowledge base that gave KiLN members the confidence to grasp the opportunity. The more important question is what comes next.

After 18 months of disruption, disconnection, and distress, there is hope that the UK might be emerging from the worst of the public health crisis. This brings both opportunity and risk. As businesses open their doors, as colleagues are welcomed back to workplaces, and as public services reopen,

remobilise and set about tackling backlogs, all of these organisations have a choice. They can choose to return to the same, familiar structures and processes – to 'get back to normal'. Or they can aspire to rebuild something different, something that builds on everything that has been learnt about what really matters over the last 18 months. This is a critical moment, because we know that what was happening before was not delivering the best outcomes for everyone (Wallace, et al., 2020), and we know that the decisions we take now could shape the ways we work for many years to come.

This report shares what KiLN has learnt about what is possible when kindness becomes an operating principle for organisations. It tells stories about why kindness matters, and how it can help organisations to deliver better outcomes for staff, individuals and communities. And it draws out a set of common themes that allowed organisations to embed kindness in their response to COVID-19 – a list of positive changes for organisations to hold onto and build on beyond the pandemic.

These changes were consistent across the different sectors and geographies that comprised the network, and as such offer a framework for practical action for organisations everywhere. By sharing this collective learning, we hope to inspire all those who right now are making critical decisions that will inform the culture and values of their organisations for the years ahead, giving them the confidence to lead with kindness.

The report therefore finishes with a Commitment to Kindness, signed by each member of KiLN, and open to any organisation that is striving to put kindness at the heart of what they do. We recognise that radical kindness is one of many ways to achieve better outcomes and improve wellbeing. But over the last year we have seen its salience and its unique power to capture people's imaginations. If you are reading this and thinking that kindness resonates with your work, we invite you to endorse the Commitment, to use it as a guide with which to sustain and deepen your organisation's focus on kindness, and in doing so, to join a growing movement of organisations working to embed radical kindness as a way to improve the lives and wellbeing of everyone they work with.

¹ This shift has been documented elsewhere by Carnegie UK (Coutts, et al., 2020) and others (Accounts Commission, 2021; Kaye & Morgan, 2021; Robinson, 2020).



The Kindness Leadership Network

Building a Kindness Leadership Network

At the launch of KiLN, Carnegie UK stated its ambition to move kindness 'off the page'. Work by Julia Unwin (2018) and the Kindness Innovation Network (Ferguson & Thurman, 2019) had highlighted the limitations and barriers to kindness that are built into organisational systems, structures and cultures. KiLN aimed to move beyond conversations towards practical action.

In October 2019, Carnegie UK invited leaders from 16 organisations to participate in a programme of practice-based learning. These leaders were people who were already on 'a kindness journey' who might benefit from opportunities to share learning and challenges, as well as from exposure to ideas from different sectors. At the outset, members were asked to outline what they wanted to achieve in their own workplace through being part of this network, and what they would need (from Carnegie UK, from other KiLN members, and from further afield) in order to achieve that. Out of this, a programme of meetings and activities began to take shape.

KiLN positioned its work around the concept of 'radical kindness' which has been developed by Carnegie UK and others (Anderson & Brownlie, 2019; Davies Hayon, Broadwood, & Cox, 2021; Ferguson & Thurman, 2019). This understanding goes beyond more traditional notions of kindness to recognise the impact of structural inequalities: that some people are more likely to experience kindness than others, and that some people's needs are greater than others.

Embedding this understanding into the fabric of organisations that are held to account on delivering services that are fair, transparent and efficient is challenging and disruptive. Radical kindness demands that individuals within organisations are given the trust and support to listen and to act flexibly and responsively. It requires a shift in both organisational culture and structures.

The first five months of the network's journey were spent building relationships and establishing a shared understanding about kindness and a shared purpose. At full-network meetings in October 2019 and March 2020, it became clear that the twin challenges of risk and accountability, and measurement and performance management, were forefront in people's minds. These shared priorities led to the formulation of an approach that would compromise a shared statement, which aimed to give people within organisations 'permission' to put kindness into practice, and work to develop an approach to measurement that would enable organisations to demonstrate the impact of using kindness as an operating principle.

12 leaders committed to a journey to embed radical kindness in their organisations

Adapting to COVID-19

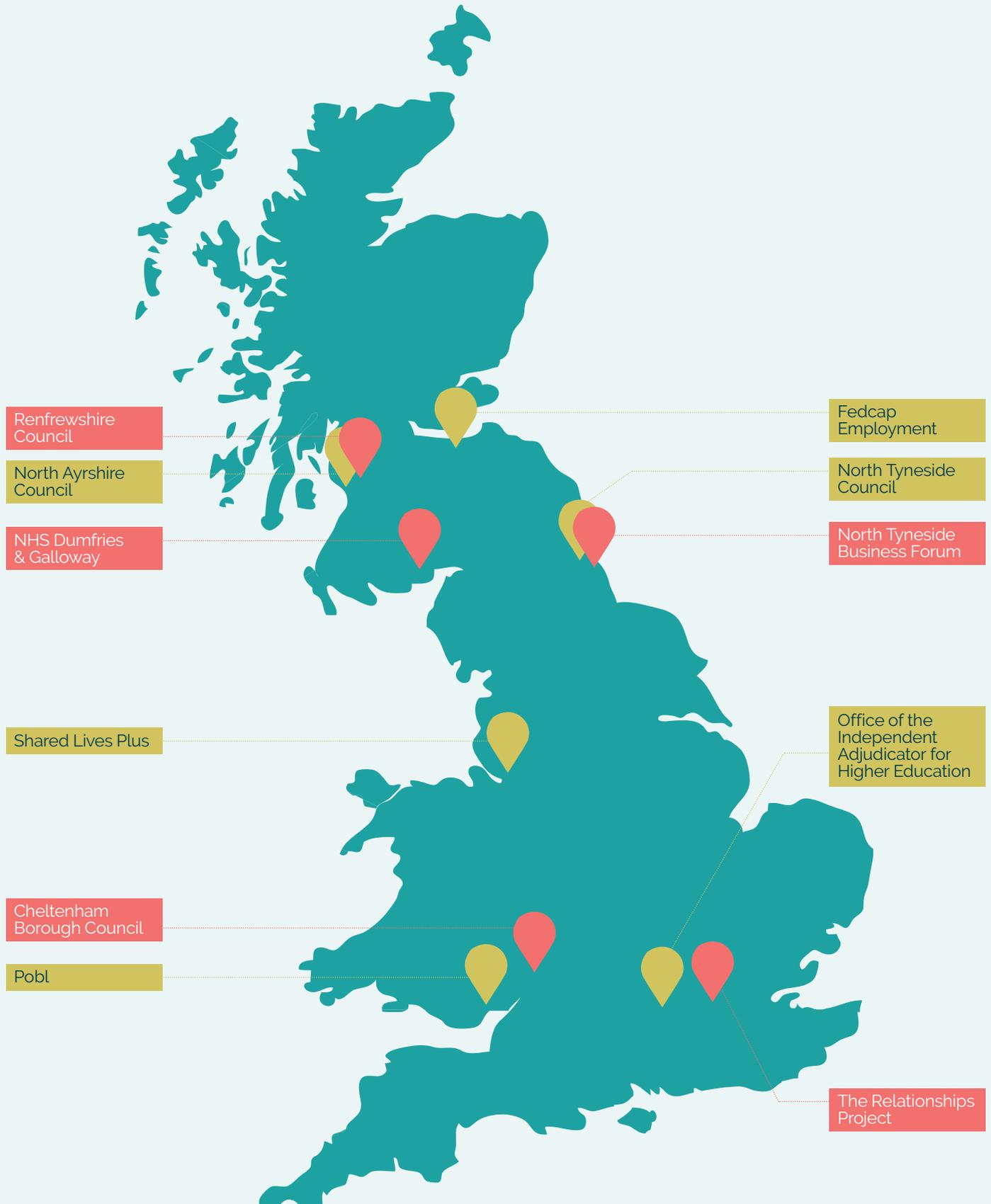
Even as this workplan was being formed, COVID-19 was beginning to take hold. By April it became clear that travelling across the UK for a programme of in-person meetings and activities was no longer possible. Moreover, as many KiLN members were redeployed to support the COVID-19 response, with all the workload intensity that characterised the initial phase of the pandemic, it was clear that in the short term it was not appropriate to demand more of people's time.

After a three-month pause, Carnegie UK reconnected with KiLN, giving members the option to disengage with the process or to reconvene to think about a new way forward. Out of the original 16, 12 organisations (see map on page 7) were interested in continuing the journey – and indeed rather than viewing KiLN as an additional burden, saw it as a much-needed space to pause and reflect on what they had been experiencing. This need for 'reflective space' for those working in extreme intensity and uncertainty is consistent with other findings to emerge during COVID-19 (Bailey & West, 2021; Coutts, et al., 2020; Thurman, 2020). Members of KiLN also highlighted the particular emotional burden for leaders who are committed to looking after the wellbeing of their staff.

Alongside this, KiLN members had noticed that organisations – their own and others – had responded to the pandemic in a way that was underpinned by kindness; and given the speed at which things were changing, there was a sense that it would be vital to capture learning 'in real time'. People were motivated to understand what was changing, and to demonstrate the impact that this was having, in order to be able to grasp the opportunity for change post-pandemic.



The Kindness Leadership Network



What we did

- Understanding what changed: Carnegie UK conducted a series of interviews over summer 2020, which allowed KiLN members to reflect on the changes they had noticed in the initial phase of the pandemic, and how this had enabled organisations to embed kindness in their response to the COVID-19 crisis. These interviews were followed up with a group sense-making session in September to bring this learning together into a set of common themes.
- Communicating the difference this made: In June 2021, a second round of interviews were held, which aimed to understand the impact of kindness on wellbeing outcomes for staff and communities. Data from these interviews were used to produce two digital stories that aim to communicate the value and importance of kindness – for people within organisations and people interacting with organisations – in a novel way.² Alongside this, excerpts from the interviews are woven into the following section of the report, providing illustrative examples of how embracing radical kindness as an organisational value can change things and improve wellbeing outcomes.
- Understanding approaches to measurement: At the same time, Carnegie UK worked with Simon Anderson and Julie Brownlie to develop a guide to measuring kindness, which aimed to support organisations to understand and evidence the impact of an approach that was led by kindness. The 'measurement challenge' is one that has come up consistently in Carnegie UK's work on kindness and in the wider relationships field (Lawrence, 2021): [Getting the measure of kindness: A guide for organisations](#) (Anderson & Brownlie, 2021) is published separately and contains a range of questions, tools and approaches for organisations to consider.
- Committing to kindness: And in Spring 2021, all of this learning crystallised into a [Commitment to Kindness](#) that offered a structure for organisations (within KiLN and beyond) to sustain and deepen their focus on kindness.

Despite everything that has changed since the formation of KiLN, it is notable and perhaps reassuring that the final outputs look not dissimilar to those that were discussed and proposed in 2019. What has changed in that time is the confidence that comes from the practical application of these approaches in organisations' responses to COVID-19. Radical kindness is no longer something that is talked about in theory, but something that people know to be possible.

²The digital stories use data from seven interviews to produce composite narratives that tell a single story. In doing so, they aim to communicate the most important elements of interviews with KiLN members: instead of telling individual stories that are rooted in specific contexts, they present a 'bigger picture' that, it is hoped, will feel relevant to a wider number of viewers. For an example of the use of composite narratives in interview-based research, see (Willis, 2019).



What has COVID-19 taught us about kindness in organisations?

On 23rd March 2020, the announcement of a nationwide lockdown forced many organisations to change overnight. Even though people had been putting together plans in the weeks preceding, the speed of change was remarkable: local governments redeployed staff, relocated services and established community hubs; health and social care organisations halted 'non-essential' procedures and implemented an array of infection control measures; vital face-to-face services moved entire operations online, whilst at the same time trying to mitigate the sudden acute reality of digital exclusion.

Within KiLN, members began to notice that changes that 'would have taken years' had suddenly become possible because of the scale and immediacy of the crisis. Organisations were forced to adapt at pace to meet an array of different needs among their communities. We heard that staff were given time and permission to listen to individuals and given trust and autonomy to act flexibly and responsively according to need. And we heard about the difference that this was making for the wellbeing of staff and communities alike.

However, this sudden shift in approach was only possible because organisations stopped doing certain things, and in that space allowed something else to emerge: in essence, the balance shifted to rely less on tried and trusted processes and more on the skill and intuition of people. In the context of these early experiences of adapting to COVID-19, it felt vital to capture what was happening and to understand what was changing to allow a response that was characterised and underpinned by kindness. A year later, during which much has changed, it feels just as important to remind ourselves about what was strong in the initial phase of the crisis, and to apply this learning to the important work of rebuilding organisations with kindness and the wellbeing at the centre.

Over the course of June 2020, Carnegie UK listened to the experiences of KiLN members from across England, Scotland and Wales, who worked in business, employment support, healthcare, housing, local and national government, the ombuds sector and social care. Across this wide range of perspectives, was a remarkable degree of consensus on the key shifts that had allowed organisations to change the way they worked, and which leaders wanted to sustain beyond the crisis response. Because of the cross-sector nature of KiLN, conversations did not hone in on technical changes, but rather identified broader themes that were experienced across different environments. As such, the six themes that follow aren't a blueprint for change, but they do offer clues as to what is needed to unlock radical kindness for organisations everywhere.

Woven in amongst these six themes are a selection of reflections from KiLN members, taken from a further round of conversations in June 2021, that articulate the difference that kindness can make for individuals, organisations and communities. Together, these two strands of experiential learning point to what organisations have to do to embed radical kindness, and how this could improve the wellbeing of staff and communities alike.

Finally, in reflecting on these early experiences, there was a clear recognition that the impacts of the pandemic were not shared evenly. Certain communities were disproportionately affected, certain people were far more likely than others to experience kindness in their communities, from mutual aid groups, or from statutory services. By seeking to understand the positive changes, KiLN did not overlook this reality, but rather aimed to understand how organisations could enhance this culture change into the future, using kindness not as a sticking plaster but as a way to tackle the inequalities and injustices that COVID-19 had laid bare.

The six themes that follow aren't a blueprint for change, but they do offer clues as to what is needed to unlock radical kindness for organisations everywhere

1. A more holistic approach to personal wellbeing

KiLN members shared how the crisis had given staff the permission to prioritise the needs of individuals, rather than the needs of the organisation or service. Several organisations started doing 'welfare calls' to check how people were; others began making time within existing consultations and interactions to listen to people's experiences and needs in a way that went far beyond the drivers of organisational targets and funding requirements. Although having such conversations about mental health or providing support with digital technology did not fit neatly into existing performance management systems, making time for human interactions had allowed staff to build more trusting relationships and develop a more personalised approach to support, which had a positive impact on both service delivery outcomes and a sense of fulfilment among staff.

"A phone call came in from someone very distressed who was about to be evicted from their accommodation having apparently broken the Covid guidelines. Usually, we would tell them that we are not an emergency service and put them in our queue. But they told us how they had been struggling with mental health issues, with nowhere else to go so being a time sensitive issue we decided to break protocol and make this our priority."

2. Caring about staff

This approach to wellbeing also extended to staff: with universal disruption to work and family life, there was a widespread feeling that organisations had sharpened their focus on staff wellbeing. Alongside specific initiatives and 'spaces', such as the staff lounges that were (re)introduced in healthcare settings, people spoke more generally about the empowering effect of being trusted to manage workloads alongside

caring responsibilities, and about transparency in communication and a desire to listen. Although there were clear tensions between the messages about wellbeing and the realities of workload intensity – and wider conversations about burnout, trauma and mental health – KiLN members as a whole spoke about management and leadership genuinely striving to understand how the pandemic was affecting people, and to ensure they were caring for staff whose job it was to care for others.

"Unfortunately, people died, people experienced all sorts of really tough things and that's really hard when you're not used to dealing with calls like that. So, we supported the staff, and encouraged those who had dealt with a tough call to go for a walk or even just log off and we would contact them later or the day after to check in and see how they are doing."

"We introduced our 'Wellbeing Warriors' initiative and that has really helped to remove a lot of the formality for staff members who have found themselves in difficult situations – whether it's through family or work or whatever it is – and who need someone to talk to. These are non-managerial staff members who volunteer to be a point of contact for anyone struggling. Aside from this, I think people have tried very hard to check in with each as opposed to just communicate for work purposes."



3. Turning off targets

In many places, organisations felt that they had been able to change their approach and enhance their focus on kindness and wellbeing because of the relaxation (and in some cases suspension) of performance management systems. Taking away the demands of restrictive targets allowed flexibility in activities and eligibility criteria, and reduced internal pressures within the system. Several organisations spoke of not having to turn people away because they didn't fit their contract or remit, and were thus better able to deliver their mission; others noticed that the removal of KPIs actually allowed them to perform better in certain areas (for example, improvements in customer satisfaction). Alongside this, whilst recognising workload intensity, people also spoke of the energy and fulfilment derived from knowing that they had the autonomy to help people in whatever way was required.

"I think what we're giving people is a taste for a slightly different way of working. We've got to look after ourselves and if we can do that, it will make us more resilient and through this, we have been able to recognise that sometimes it's not desperate that you work from nine o'clock in the morning till five o'clock. If you take a longer lunch break, and then you go walk the dog or you do other things, but you still get the same amount of work done, just in a different way, then I really struggle to see the benefit of forcing someone to sit at their desk all day just for the sake of it."

4. Working together

Easing the pressure on targets also gave organisations the freedom to work together, without the constraints of narrow objectives and priorities. United by a sense of common purpose, hierarchies fell away, organisations worked across silos and in partnership with others, sharing information and resources to best meet the needs of people and communities. This collaborative approach extended to working with communities too, increasingly spoken of as 'equal partners' in the COVID-19 response. Several KiLN members recognised that it was communities that 'led the way'; and that the strength and speed of the community response had seeded a more enabling approach towards working with community organisations, mutual aid groups and volunteers.

"Dealing with complaints, almost by default, we often find ourselves acting as the intermediary between two conflicting parties, both of which we technically support and that we aim to support in an impartial way, but in the past, sometimes resolving these issues has been difficult. I think strangely enough, the pandemic has allowed for more understanding and patience between both parties and in many cases has allowed for easier conflict resolution."



5. Recalculating risk

Another key shift that allowed organisations to embrace kindness was a change in their approach to risk management. Because there was such a clear understanding of the significant risks to physical and mental health for those who were not supported, this engendered a more balanced approach, whereby organisations did not seek to eliminate risk, but rather placed trust and resources in the hands of practitioners to enable them to make judgements about how best to support people. This environment allowed organisations to support community activity without being encumbered by bureaucracy; and it gave frontline staff the autonomy to make individual connections, and respond in a human way – in essence, to act in kindness.

“Allowing receptionists to have the ability to make decisions about what required immediate attention and what they were confident could wait was extremely important. Obviously, the whole sector was completely on its knees by this point and although it might sound slightly unkind, having to prioritise people who need help, it would be even more unkind to simply open the flood gates and make already exhausted staff deal with it all.”

6. Person-centred technology

A common thread across these conversations was the role of technology could play, in certain situations, as an enabler of kindness. While lockdown closed off so many of the physical settings in which relationships are formed, the sudden acceptance of digital technology as a core part of service delivery also unlocked new possibilities. For some KiLN members who covered large geographies, removing the expectation of face-to-face meetings allowed them to spend less time travelling and more time building relationships. And while many services were negatively impacted by the loss of human connection, in certain situations there was recognition that the possibility of providing remote support had allowed people to deliver a more person-centred service – working with individuals to design an approach that met their needs, rather than the expectations and requirements of the service provider.

“This might sound funny but when we all started working from home, we introduced daily morning meetings and just being able to see into each other’s front rooms, seeing each others dogs and family, really had a positive effect on relationships between us all. Most of us had already met in person, but it helped to humanise us all on another level.”

“I understand why an in-person appointment would be the preference of a lot of people but being in a rural area, introducing video and phone consultations was the kinder option for a lot of the people that we support. It ensured that we were able to see everyone who required an in-person appointment while also often saving people sixty-mile round trips for a problem that could be solved with a phone call.”



Before COVID-19, one of the most oft-cited barriers to kindness was time and space. Particularly in service delivery settings, people often said that they simply did not have the necessary time or resources, and so where kindness was present, it depended on individuals 'going the extra mile'. Yet, during the first phase of the pandemic response, in a situation where people were perhaps more stretched than ever before, this was not the case: people were able to make time, they were given permission to act in kindness and, indeed, in many places this became embedded in an organisational approach.

In this context, it is critical to understand what it was that made kindness possible. The themes that emerged from KiLN suggest that it was less about time, and more about space. Kindness was enabled by a greater degree of flexibility in organisations' systems for accountability, which created room for individuals within the system to exercise autonomy, adapting their approach to respond to emerging needs, rather than being bound by targets and outputs. In the most challenging circumstances, the organisations that formed KiLN felt instinctively that the only way to deliver the best possible outcomes for their staff and for people and communities was through embracing kindness. This feels particularly important to remember at a time when leaders are beginning to make decisions, under difficult circumstances, that will shape the future of their organisations. Resources help, but financial constraints in themselves do not preclude kindness.

This narrative is not about creating a dichotomy that asks organisations to choose between targets and risk management, or kindness and relationships. Rather, it is about enabling organisations and the people within them to find the right balance. As was highlighted so compellingly by Julia Unwin (2018), leaders need to be able to speak in both the 'rational lexicon' and the 'relational lexicon' equally. The COVID-19 pandemic forced organisations to depart from a situation where decisions were dominated by the 'rational' considerations about resource allocation, value for money and performance metrics, and move towards an equilibrium in which individuals could appraise the costs and risks, while still retaining a focus on other values like dignity and respect.

Kindness was enabled by a greater degree of flexibility in organisations' systems for accountability

Now, 12 months later and with much of the optimism from the initial response having faded over a long winter and several cycles of lockdown, there is a risk that the pendulum will swing back. This practical learning from KiLN presents an opportunity to revisit what was strong in the initial response to COVID-19. In doing so, it is not suggested that organisations operated without flaws, nor that everyone in society benefited from a sudden increase in 'organisational kindness'.

KiLN members acknowledged that there was much work to be done across these six themes:

- How do we enhance our approach to listening, so that everyone in our communities experiences kindness?
- How can we embed radical kindness across our services and look after the workloads and mental health of our staff?
- What is the right balance of flexibility and accountability?
- How do we know that this is making a difference?

But the experience of COVID-19 has provided a snapshot of what things could look like and what could be achieved if organisations were to take the very best of the crisis response – the common purpose, the partnership, the creativity: the kindness – and embed it in the way that they work. And so, KiLN has worked together to develop an overarching framework that would guide members and other organisations in doing that: a Commitment to Kindness.

Our Commitment to Kindness

We know that kindness matters. Across different sectors and jurisdictions, all our evidence and experience tells us that people's lives and wellbeing improve when they experience human connection. But we also know that embedding kindness into the systems and culture of our organisations is complex and challenging.

The Kindness Leadership Network (KILN) came together to explore how to do this. Over the last two years we have developed a better understanding of what it takes and what it means to embrace kindness as an operating principle. Through reflecting on our practice during the COVID-19 crisis, we know that it is possible; but sustaining this into the future demands that we change the way that we do things.

Therefore, as members of KILN, we have committed to working towards the following goals. The actions that flow from each of these will depend on the type of organisation and where they are on their kindness journey. But if you share our belief in the power of kindness to improve outcomes for people, communities and organisations, we invite you to join us in this Commitment to Kindness.

1. Listening

We will create time and space to listen, to understand what kindness means for everyone in our community.³

2. Understanding

We will build a shared understanding of what kindness means within our organisations, and consider how to use recruitment, appraisal and

other HR processes to promote the types of attitudes, behaviours and culture that we want to see.

3. Permissive

We will give people in our organisations the permission to put kindness at the heart of their everyday practice, recognising that this often requires acting flexibly and responsively.

4. Systemic

We will identify where systems and processes (our own and those we work with) get in the way of kindness – and we will work collaboratively to change these.

5. Reflective

We will create time and space for reflection: to share challenges and celebrate successes, but also to reflect on how we are, because we know that a culture of kindness is built on the wellbeing of the people in our organisations.

6. Learning

We will develop ways to measure the difference we are making, and tell an authentic story of change.

³“Our community” refers to everyone that an organisation exists to work with, support or provide services to.



Join a growing movement

There are many different ways that organisations might seek to improve wellbeing outcomes for staff and communities, and we do not put forward the Commitment to Kindness in opposition to these. However, over the last 18 months in particular, we have also seen that kindness has a unique power to capture imaginations as people look towards rebuilding and renewing. And so, if you are reading this report and thinking that it resonates with the journey that you and your organisation are on, we invite you to endorse the Commitment, to use it as a framework to enhance your organisation's approach to implementing radical kindness, and to join a growing movement of 'kind organisations'.



Each organisation will need to work through this in their own way, but examples of how to endorse the Commitment to Kindness are:

- Submitting the Commitments to the Board or other governance structure for discussion and approval
- Embedding the Commitments into existing values frameworks
- Publicising the Commitments on websites or newsletters
- Holding your organisation to account by reporting on the actions taken to put the Commitments into practice and the difference they have made in annual reports or other governance documents.

The Commitment is based on everything that KiLN has learnt from experiences that span a range of different sectors and geographies. The strength of this shared experience and the consensus that was achieved in shaping it gives us confidence that the Commitment to Kindness will be relevant for organisations of all kinds and in all places. But it also tells us that, in order to make real progress, organisations would have to work effectively across all of these six goals. And so, in extending this invitation, we are asking organisations to sign up to the whole Commitment – not just the bits that feel most comfortable – and to develop a set of actions that enhance practice in each of the six areas.

The Commitment to Kindness is not a toolkit that will be easily implemented to achieve a quick result: it is an overarching framework that asks organisations to work over a long period of time, constantly challenging themselves to change and improve and, ultimately, deliver better outcomes for more people. The actions that flow from 'committing to kindness' will vary according to where you are, what you do, and at what stage you find yourself on this journey. In essence, it provides a good set of questions drawn from practice-based research that organisations should be asking themselves, and asks you to do the work.

It's also not a kite mark. We want you to promote your commitment and share the learning from this journey with others, because we recognise that this is an

important part of building a movement for change. But its primary purpose is not as a public facing tool, but as a way to embed and develop an organisational commitment, and for organisations to hold themselves to account internally.

That said, we have learnt that this is not something that you can easily do alone. As well as the learning generated about the practice of kindness, KiLN has reminded us about the importance of finding co-travellers. The level of engagement with the network and the value that members placed on having a safe space to share ideas and experiences echoes findings elsewhere about the importance of forming networks of peer support to sustain momentum through the complexities and challenges of transformational change (Haslewood, 2021). It is hoped, then, that the Commitment to Kindness will also provide a focal point for organisations and leaders who are on this journey to connect with each other and sustain a growing movement for kindness.

For Carnegie UK, this is the product of a five-year endeavour to explore the role of kindness in improving wellbeing, and the implications this has for policy and practice. In that time we have seen a huge amount change: conversations about kindness now emerge in places that never felt possible. Through the work of KiLN, we also have a much better understanding of where we must focus our efforts in order to fulfil the vision and promise of radical kindness, which is crystallised in the Commitment to Kindness.

But we also recognise that this is work that we cannot do ourselves. And so, we are offering this Commitment to others; and we invite you to use it to take action that embeds kindness as an operating principle across all of your work. At Carnegie UK, as we embark on a new strategy in which kindness is articulated as one of the four organisational values that will guide our work on wellbeing for years to come, we will be doing the same.

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Carnegie UK

Andrew Carnegie House
Pittencrieff Street
Dunfermline
Fife, Scotland
KY12 8AW

T +44 (0)1383 721445

www.carnegieuk.org.uk

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