**President’s Reception**

Good afternoon. It’s a real pleasure to be here today on ADASS’s President’s Day. I have had the privilege over the past year to work in Partnership with many of you here today to advance our ambition for the social care sector. The journey continues and we could not have had a more fitting leader to progress this journey than Mel Williams. Mel has been a great support to work with as VP over the past year.

 When I gave my speech to at the ADASS spring Seminar last year, accepting the role of President of ADASS I knew we had many challenges ahead of us in the coming year.

But I also knew that together we could drive positive changes in adult social care despite those challenges.

And we have.

We had just published Time to Act, the roadmap to transform care and support that Sarah McClinton had commissioned when she was President.

The Roadmap has successfully brought the social care sector, including people who draw on support, together around a vision and phased action to move towards it. The new leadership level Time to Act Reform group can now focus and align both action and policy advocacy. This includes immediate priorities for action and underpinning, medium- and longer-term work needed to create the conditions for the change we want to see.

Over the year it’s been adopted by leaders across the sector as the best blueprint for reform.

The roadmap, and Reform Group create an opportunity for much more

 focussed and aligned sector action and asks of government in support

of change. Two areas vital to creating the conditions for major change

 over time, early action/prevention and shifting public thinking to grow

 political priority for social care.

At Spring seminar, we heard from Hope Lightowler about her

experience of Shared Lives and the positive impact this has on her life.

Hope articulated what needs to change to empower people to live the

 life they want and how important it is to change the way the public think

 about social care by sharing stories about just how much of a difference

 social care can make when it goes right. Never more relevant, we are

 committed to continue the need to collectively seek to build a movement

 to redefine social care in the public’s minds.

Before I go out to summarise other priority activities ADASs has focused

 on this past year I want to underscore my commitment to a focus on

 “How” we work as an organisation by briefly outlining progress made

 with the core underpinning values of: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and co-production which is of course is an ongoing journey.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do.

 These values are the reason many of us were attracted to working in

social care and we can never relax our guard. Indeed, we need to go

further – in terms both of the support we offer to our communities and in

 how representative we are of those communities.

Through ADASS’s EDI action group we have shared good practice and

 learning from across ADASS regions and from partner organisations. In

 recent times we have been talking with SOLACE as we look to come

 together across local government with the LGA, ADCS and ADEPT,

 representing directors of place, to consider how we might move closer

 towards having top teams that reflect the communities they serve

through recruitment, retention and staff development opportunities.

Regarding co-production at last month’s Spring seminar we very much

 wished to move the conversation on from explaining what coproduction

 is to thinking about the positive outcomes of coproduction. Just as

 importantly it is important to highlight what ADASs has been able to

 achieve in this space. We have developed a partnership with TLAP,

 provided 20 funded places for people with Lived Experience at NCASC

 and have spearheaded with the support of sponsors the Big chat and

 lived experience sessions now embedded in NASC

Within ADASS we feel that it very important to embed coproduction in

 the sector throughout all that we do to help design and create care and

 support that works for people now and in the future. It should be integral

 to the way we work.

Local authorities work with people every day, they have a long history of

this and there are some excellent examples of coproduction which can

 help and support the learning of others in the health and social care

 sector, but we are all on a journey and looking to improve all the time.

Everyone can improve and no one has all the answers and that includes

 the work we do nationally in ADASS.

ADASS activity in this area therefore involves regional activity and a

 recognition of the journey LAs are on with co-production with people in

 receipt of care and support.

Last year ADASS Trustees agreed to fund a new approach to

 coproduction in partnership with TLAP.

This built upon learning from our coproduced event with TLAP in 2023

 where we explored what a coproduced approach could look like.

Initially our focus was on events and how we could think and do things

 differently to engage people with lived experience.

Our ambition was and remains to move beyond events alone and to

 advance our approach to also include the coproduction of ADASS policy

 in specific areas. We will be looking to involve as many views as

 possible from a variety of people from diverse backgrounds, regions

 and ensuring carers are represented.

This is useful segue therefore to the main priorities I had the privilege of

leading on during my tenure as President.

ADASS has been focused on our three priorities of workforce, carers and shifting to early support, closer to home.

On workforce we helped to secure more funding from the Government in the summer to stabilise the gap in resources for staff; we influenced change in the way international recruitment worked to retain the important benefits it’s brought while cracking down on criminal exploitation; and we’ve been supporting Skills for Care in the workforce strategy they’re building with leaders in the sector.

We are currently shaping clear asks for a new government around a

 better deal for the Social Care workforce.

On early support, closer to home, we influenced a shift in thinking inGovernment so that we’re now talking about how together we can prevent hospital admissions by providing early, preventative support rather than just about improving support for people returning home after discharge from hospital.

Last year, using evidence from our survey data we successfully pushed

 for earlier and greater funding over winter, which was delivered.

We focused on wider use of hospital discharge funding to avoid the need for admissions – which the minister acted upon.

We continue to advocate for early support and care close to home to

 prevent escalation of needs.

And on carers I’ve been working closely with carers organisations to support the work they’re doing to advocate for better support for the five million carers in England. This work also enabled a focus within the government acerating reform fund on informal carers. And part of that partnership has been the challenge we at ADASS posed last October for all LA’s and to other organisations working to support carers to tell their story about the great practice developing that’s making a difference to unpaid carers in your community.

I’m really proud of the result.

The Supporting Carers Hub that we launched at Spring Seminar is going to be a brilliant resource for all of us in the future..

It’s been a great success gathering great practice examples from across the country.

These are being captured in our new Supporting Carers Hub website.

With over 105 applications in total, we launched with almost 50

examples of great practice from across the country, including initiatives

 that focus on young carers and carers from minoritised backgrounds.

The hub is hosted on the ADASS website, but it’s been a great partnership between Carers Trust, Carers UK and our colleagues at Partners in Care and Health that has put this together. We are currently shaping our asks for the next government around carers, as it is also an area that Mel fully supports.

Our endeavours briefly highlighted are examples of the emphasis we

 have placed in the last year on our priorities for ADASS as we seek to

 enable the social care sector to be: “Fit for the Future”. I look forward to

 working with and supporting Mel as she takes forward the leadership of

 ADASS over the coming year.