

Disruptive
Innovators
Network

DIN their words

Anita Jones

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Anita Jones, CEO of Freebridge Community Housing in Norfolk, was introduced to DIN by a fellow CEO.

An existing partnership became an effective partnership with several neighbouring housing associations after using a DIN method to unpick their existing approach to collaboration.





What was the problem you wanted/needed to solve or improvement you wanted to make?

The next chapter at Freebridge is how we work more collaboratively, setting a strong foundation in place which we could keep building upon and deliver tangible performance and value outcomes. Whilst we were working with a number of other housing association partners, things were not moving forward perhaps as much as we would have liked, and we didn't really know what was getting in the way. Did we have different ambitions from the partnership?

I then attended a DIN session in London where there was an example of the main four supermarkets and they used a facilitator from the World Wildlife Fund, which seemed quite random to me at the time! However, they used the session to work together collaboratively to solve a problem, find a solution and forge forward – and BINGO! I thought that this was exactly what we needed; if they could do it, so could we.

What made you decide this was a priority area to take on?

The business is still trying to ensure it has brilliant basics, but it's my job as CEO to be looking ahead for any potential future challenges and I found that increasing our collaborative working was going to be a vital element for the future for Freebridge.

At a strategic level, I wanted to formulate the next chapter of our strategy from lessons learned and to explore higher levels of collaboration with like-minded partners. It's really important to our future, and our industry. By working better together we can amplify our impact and better serve our respective communities.

How did you go about it?

I spoke with the other CEOs and suggested we get a facilitator to help us work out what it was that we wanted to get from our partnership, and how we were going to get there!

Happily, they agreed. So, we did just that, and along with our board chairs we developed a whole new understanding of what collaboration looks like for our next chapter. We can see there is no one size fits all and that it is okay for different partners to have different asks or levels of involvement. This awareness was shaped on the back of independent challenge and that's really exciting in driving our collective mission forward.



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