



Royal College
of Midwives

The solution
series: 4

Making maternity services safer:

nurturing

a positive culture

The role of a positive culture

Organisational culture has been identified as a key factor in recent investigations and reports on maternity safety. There is a growing body of evidence clearly linking culture with safety.

Culture can be described as 'the way we do things around here'. Culture in health services is shaped by a number of factors:

- ▶ The expressed values of an organisation
- ▶ The early experience of joiners to the organisation
- ▶ The behaviours of leaders (adapted from King's Fund, current website)

The King's Fund has identified that staff have three core needs which must be addressed for them to thrive and flourish, which will in turn improve patients' care and experience. (Figure 1)



Figure 1: The ABC framework of nurses' and midwives' core work needs

The King's Fund has identified that staff have three core needs which must be addressed for them to thrive and flourish, which will in turn improve patients' care and experience. (Figure 1)

<p>Autonomy</p> <p>The need to have control over their work lives, and to be able to act consistently with their values</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Authority, empowerment and influence Influence over decisions about how care is structured and delivered, ways of working and organisational culture. The early experience of joiners to the organisation▶ Justice and fairness Equity, psychological safety, positive diversity and universal inclusion▶ Work conditions and working schedules Resources, time and a sense of the right and necessity to properly rest, and to work safely, flexibly and effectively.
<p>Belonging</p> <p>The need to be connected to, cared for by, and caring of colleagues, and to feel valued, respected and supported</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Teamworking Effectively functioning teams with role clarity and shared objectives, one of which is team member wellbeing▶ Culture and leadership Nurturing cultures and compassionate leadership enabling high-quality, continually improving and compassionate care and staff support.
<p>Contribution</p> <p>The need to experience effectiveness in work and deliver valued outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Workload Work demand levels that enable the sustainable leadership and delivery of safe, compassionate care▶ Management and supervision The support, professional reflection, mentorship and supervision to enable staff to thrive in their work▶ Education, learning and development Flexible, high-quality development opportunities that promote continuing growth and development for all.

The courage of compassion The King's Fund (kingsfund.org.uk)¹



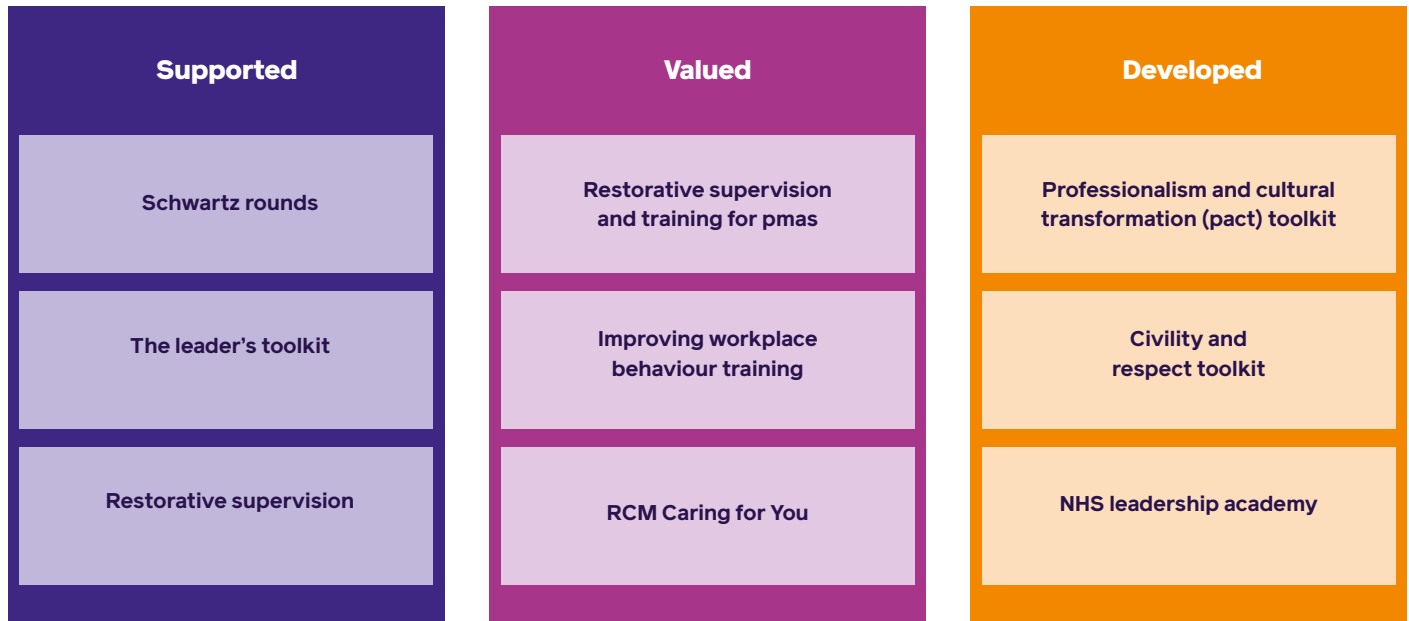
How do we improve our culture?

In order to provide compassionate, safe, effective, person-centred care in this increasingly complex environment and maintain resilience, staff need to care for each other as well as have self-care. There is growing evidence about how staff who feel supported, valued and developed can deliver better quality care with lower mortality rates, morbidity, and improved patient experience.²

Below are some examples of practical tools and exercises you can use in your organisation to ensure those core needs are met.



Practical tools to improve culture



You can find additional information and links related to the above tools on how to improve culture in practice in the 'additional resources' section of this document.



How do we measure our culture?

The first step in improving culture has to be a deep understanding and assessment of the current organisational culture. This will help to determine the best course of action and tools needed – one that is tailored to the local context, including staff and organisational processes.

The 2016 publication '**Results of the RCM Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey of Midwives, Maternity Support Workers and Student Midwives**³ describes the findings of our survey of RCM members about their health, safety and wellbeing at work.

The latest NHS healthcare staff surveys, can provide essential information to employers and leaders about staff experience across the NHS in the United Kingdom:

NHS England | Staff Survey 2020

NHS Scotland | Staff Survey 2022

Health and Social Care (Northern Ireland) | Staff Survey 2019

NHS Wales | Staff Survey 2023

Key improvements and deteriorations drawn from those surveys are highlighted on page 7.



Key improvements and deteriorations highlighted in the latest staff surveys

Key improvements

- ▶ Employer action on health and wellbeing
- ▶ Staff views on feeling equipped to do a job properly
- ▶ Opportunities for flexible working
- ▶ Opinions on recommending the NHS as a place to work
- ▶ Staff ability to provide good quality care

Key deteriorations

- ▶ Staff from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds continue to have more a negative experience of working in the NHS
- ▶ Lower confidence in organisations providing equal opportunities
- ▶ Rise in work-related stress
- ▶ A third of staff are considering leaving their jobs
- ▶ One in five are thinking of leaving the health service entirely
- ▶ Despite an increase in the number of staff agreeing that their organisation has enough staff for them to do their job properly – this represents less than two in five.



Organisational Culture self-assessment tools

Name	Global theme	Link to resources
Annual staff survey	Measures organisational culture	nhsstaffsurveys.com
Friends and family test	Measures satisfaction	nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/about-the-nhs/friends-and-family-test-fft
Manchesterpatient safetyquestionnaire	Measures patient safety culture	ajustnhs.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Manchester-Patient-Safety-Framework.pdf
Culture and leadership programme	Clinical governance strategy	kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/Suzie_Bailey%20pres.pdf
The safety attitudes questionnaire	Patient safety culture	bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-6963-6-44

(Simpson et al. 2019)²

It may take several years before a profound culture change takes place but starting with an assessment and ensuring the findings are shared with the workforce is a good starting point. Focussing on specific aspects such as leadership, competence, procedures, or teamwork can help to inform the process in a step-by-step approach.



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Updated: March 2024
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