

Exemplar Case Studies:

Nursing & Midwifery
Excellence in the
Midlands



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We are delighted to welcome you to our collection of case studies showcasing Nursing and Midwifery Excellence across the Midlands.

We are proud to be working in partnership with the National CNO Policy and Strategy Unit at NHS England to support national Excellence ambitions, establishing a collective leadership model and ensuring evidence-based approaches in the development of positive practice environments. Essentially, this work builds on the learning from the CNO Shared Governance: Collective Leadership programme and underpins the delivery of the CNO for England's Excellence programme.

In 2023 we formed the Midlands Nursing and Midwifery Excellence Network to establish a Midlands-wide collective leadership model with a focus on transformational leadership, research, and innovation. We are committed to creating a culture of Excellence, fostering positive work environments for our nurses and midwives to flourish, and ensuring delivery of the highest quality of care.

Through consultation and co-design with the regional network, we developed six pillars fundamental to embedding a culture of Excellence, namely: Local Accreditation, Shared Professional Decision-Making, Meaningful Recognition, Distributed Leadership, Continuous Quality Improvement, and Research and Innovation.

As part of this, the DEFiNe (Determining Excellence Factors in Nursing and Midwifery) study was commissioned to build on the national evidence base and ensure Excellence work is underpinned by robust evidence. Researchers conducted case study interviews with Excellence leads from thirteen organisations across the Midlands; it is the first time a comprehensive picture of Nursing and Midwifery Excellence has been portrayed across the region, which demonstrates our commitment to improvement work leading to healthy work environments.

This collection of 39 case studies showcases the inspirational work taking place across the region. Cases are organised and aligned with each pillar of the framework. Our aim is to share learning regarding what has been achieved, how this was made possible, and the benefits to our staff, our patients, and our communities. We want to share the principles of Excellence with all organisations, so we can learn from, recognise, celebrate, and inspire each other.

We are excited to continue to drive this agenda forwards and grow a collective culture of Excellence through shared learning.

Thank you to the members of the Midlands Excellence Network and our case study participants for all of your fantastic contributions.



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University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust

University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust

Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust

Chapter 1: Local Accreditation

Local accreditation is a framework for a comprehensive assessment of the quality of care at ward, service, department, or team level.

It is a set of standards for care, so areas of improvement can be identified and Excellence celebrated.

Assessment and Accreditation: Promoting practice ownership and celebrating success at Northampton General Hospital

Overview

Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust started their Assessment and Accreditation programme in 2015. They aligned their framework with the Care Quality Commission key lines of enquiry regarding how services are safe, effective, caring, responsive, and well-led. The Lead Nurse for Quality Assurance and the accreditation team assess the quality of care in wards and departments on 15 care standards. The grading structure includes red, amber, green, and blue designated wards, with blue being the highest level attainable. All 22 adult inpatient wards are accredited, with five wards at blue level.



Successes and outcomes

Development of bespoke tools

In addition to adult wards, accreditation has been implemented in Paediatrics, Outpatients, and the Emergency Department. The team is piloting a bespoke tool in Maternity and developing a tool for Theatres.

Blue celebrations

When wards and departments receive blue designation, they are recognised through blue celebrations in their areas. Teams have enjoyed blue cupcakes, blue balloons, and blue-themed team lunches.

Key enablers

- Newly registered nurses receive education on accreditation within their Preceptorship programme. Experienced staff undertaking leadership development courses also receive accreditation training.
- When areas of improvement are identified, local teams are supported to have open learning mindsets and improve through coaching and bespoke education sessions. They are encouraged to develop action plans together, so they feel empowered and have ownership their practice.
- Teams from blue-designated wards/departments compile and present a portfolio of their success to a panel comprising the CEO, CNO, Board members, senior nurses, and patient representatives. In addition to blue celebrations, teams receive a plaque and Ward Managers receive a trim with a special colour for their uniform.
- Local accreditation is valued as a framework that supports the quality standard within Pathway to Excellence®; it drives data to direct care staff and enables benchmarking.

Key learning points

- Training and coaching builds capability in local accreditation, fosters an openness to learning, and encourages staff ownership of their practice.
- When Board members and senior leaders recognise accreditation outcomes, teams feel proud of their successes.
- Local accreditation supports the quality standard within the Pathway to Excellence® framework by driving data to direct care staff and measuring outcomes.

“Our Assessment and Accreditation programme measures how we’re driving quality care forward and achieving excellence for patients... It aligns with our culture of distributed leadership and shared decision-making, empowering staff to own their practice... Our staff know it’s special and feel really proud.”

Accrediting Care Excellence: Measuring outcomes for improvement and celebration at Nottingham University Hospitals



Overview

In 2023 Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust developed their Accrediting Care Excellence framework. It consists of safety and quality outcome measures within four domains: quality metrics, clinical outcomes, patient experience, and staff experience, assessed during accreditation visits. The framework focuses on measuring outcomes, learning, improving, and sustaining change. The framework has been successfully piloted in 30 wards and departments; the team is updating the framework based on feedback.

Successes and outcomes

Strategic focus

The Accrediting Care Excellence framework is embedded into the organisation's quality and safety agenda. This has resulted in improved governance and assurance of the high care standards.

Key enablers

- By measuring outcomes, the framework enables the identification of opportunities for improvement, as well as opportunities for celebration where outcomes have improved. This approach enables learning and a focus on sustained change.
- Alignment of the framework to the wider quality and safety agenda demonstrates its value to improve care outcomes. Leaders have received the framework positively; they view it as an enabler of improvement work as well as a care quality benchmark, which provides assurance.
- Educational resources including a self-assessment tool are available to all staff.

Key learning points

- Local accreditation is a valuable tool to measure and improve the quality of care. By measuring outcomes, local accreditation enables the identification of opportunities for improvement as well as successes for celebration.
- Local accreditation improves governance and assurance of the delivery of high-quality care.

"[Local accreditation] provides opportunities for staff to showcase their improvements. It's an appreciative approach to identify and celebrate what they're doing well, and we can see a lift piece by piece over time... The most beneficial aspect is the standardisation of outcomes, which assures our patients that they're receiving high standards of care."

Clinical accreditation: Adding value to continuous improvement at Royal Wolverhampton and Walsall Healthcare

Overview

In 2023 Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust and Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust launched their Clinical Accreditation Programme. A team of senior nurses and members of Education and Patient Experience teams conducts unannounced accreditation visits. They assess wards alongside safety and care quality standards such as medication, tissue viability, nutrition, and hydration. They also conduct questionnaires with patients, staff, and students to gain further insight. Following assessments, wards can be awarded sapphire, emerald, or ruby gemstones. Phase one is complete, and all adult inpatient wards have received an accreditation visit. In phase two, the programme will be introduced to specialist areas such as Critical Care, Maternity, and Paediatrics.



Successes and outcomes

Focus on quality improvement

In a recent survey, staff reported that the Clinical Accreditation Programme adds value and facilitates a focus on quality improvement. Staff have embraced the mindset of being on an improvement journey.

Key enablers

- Senior leaders received advice and guidance from experienced organisations with successful accreditation programmes. This learning informed programme design and planning.
- Direct care teams were consulted from the outset and selected the gemstone designation of awards. As staff were involved in shaping the programme, they have received it positively.
- Feasibility testing of programme elements using QI principles were conducted prior to programme launch. Templates were tested and updated based on staff feedback.
- CNO support for the programme has shaped the culture; direct care staff and managers are open to learning from the accreditation process as part of their improvement work.

Key learning points

- For those beginning their accreditation journey, learning from experienced organisations provides valuable insight to shape programme design and implementation.
- When local accreditation is underpinned by quality improvement principles, staff are engaged, and senior leaders are supportive, staff value local accreditation as a part of their improvement journey.

“Through our culture of consultation, collaboration, and getting feedback... our staff, Ward Managers, and Matrons have been heavily involved in shaping the programme, which has helped the success of our programme... Through CNO commitment, this ripples to other seniors and teams and strengthens that culture of continuous improvement... Staff have embraced that we’re all on a journey together and we can improve.”

Quality Accreditation Framework: Driving improvement through dashboards and recognition at United Lincolnshire Hospitals



Overview

In 2021 United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust launched the Quality Accreditation Framework to improve patient experience and safety. The framework is based on continuous improvement principles and aims to standardise and measure the quality of care. It contains core criteria assessed through weekly audits, monthly audits, and unannounced visits by Quality Matrons. Following assessments, ward/departments can receive bronze, silver, or gold diamond awards. To track improvements a dashboard of quality and safety outcomes was built; the dashboard is reviewed monthly to identify areas requiring focused support. Across the Trust, twelve wards have achieved a bronze award with one achieving a silver award.

Successes and outcomes

Programme expansion

The accreditation programme initially focused on ward-based nurses and midwives; it has since been expanded to include allied health professionals in Diagnostics and Outpatient departments. The next phase includes adapting the model for the community hospital setting.

Key enablers

- Student nurses and clinical/non-clinical staff members have opportunities to be involved in assessment visits. This exposure provides valuable professional development opportunities, as well as multidisciplinary collaboration and appreciation.
- The dashboard is valued as a dynamic tool that informs quality improvement. It identifies opportunities for improvement, as well as progress to be celebrated. At 30, 60, 100, 250, and 365 consecutive harm-free days from pressure ulcers, falls, and infection, teams are awarded harm-free certificates, which are displayed to reflect care standards achieved.
- Through weekly accreditation clinics the Quality team support direct care teams to create a portfolio of evidence showcasing successful outcomes. Direct care teams present this to a panel comprising the Director of Nursing, Medical representative, Director of Governance, Patient Safety partner, and patient representative. Teams are immensely proud to showcase their work.
- All accreditation awards are celebrated with teams in their local area by the Chair of Trust Board, CEO, Director of Nursing, and Quality Leads. Each team member is given a pin and certificate.

Key learning points

- Dashboards enable the identification of improvements in quality and safety outcomes.
- When local accreditation is linked to meaningful recognition and successful outcomes are celebrated, staff experience professional pride and joy at work.
- Local accreditation provides professional development opportunities and promotes harm-free care.

“The panel presentations create those ‘joy at work’ moments. Staff get teary eyed, really proud and emotional, to be recognised for their hard work in front of the panel... It really instils pride in our teams.”

World Class Ward/ Department Accreditation: Improving care in partnership with teams and patients at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire



Overview

In 2019 University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust launched the World Class Ward/Department Accreditation framework which consists of 15 standards to measure the quality of care. An annual assessment by the Lead Nurse for Quality and Patient Safety involves observation, reviewing documentation, and speaking to staff and patients. An award system of white, bronze, silver, gold, or platinum designation reflects the standards achieved. As the framework is dynamic, standards are updated to reflect current national and local guidance, policy, and learning.

Successes and outcomes

Programme expansion

Accreditation standards have been developed for specialties such as Paediatrics, Maternity, and Critical Care, with work undergoing to include the Emergency Department, Theatres, and Outpatients. Allied health professionals are also aligning their quality metrics to the standards and planning to be part of assessments.

Improvements in standards achieved

Year-on-year the Trust has attained improvements in the number of standards successfully achieved and the level of award designations attained by wards and departments. These contribute to improved safety and quality outcomes for patients.

Key enablers

- The framework is clearly aligned to the Trust's continuous improvement methodology, UHCWi. This is reflected in a culture that views accreditation as part of the improvement journey.
- The accreditation programme is delivered in partnership with local direct care teams. Direct care staff and leaders are engaged in reviewing and testing the framework and updating the standards. Through this approach, teams are encouraged to have ownership of their practice.
- Patients are invited to provide feedback on their care, which shapes the assessment outcome. This reassures patients that their care matters and demonstrates that the Trust is focused on improvement.
- When wards/departments improve their award level, teams are celebrated with the CNO and senior leaders. Teams receive a certificate and take photos, which fosters a sense of pride and achievement.

Key learning points

- When local accreditation is shaped and delivered in partnership with local teams, direct care staff and leaders are invested in the process and outcomes.
- Through clear alignment with a continuous improvement model, the culture views local accreditation as part of the improvement journey.
- When patients are involved in the assessment, they are reassured in the quality of care they receive; this ensures the patients' perspective stays at the forefront of the work.

"We've stayed true to our UHCWi methodology and it's part of our organisational culture to improve in partnership with staff and celebrate improvement... Teams are proud to see improvement and understand it's a reflection of their work. It demonstrates the contributions of local staff to safety and quality."

A dashboard of quality metrics: Implementing a motivational model for accreditation at University Hospitals of Leicester



Overview

In 2019 University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust started their local accreditation programme which assessed the quality of care on wards using a red, amber, green rating system. In 2023 they built on their learning to introduce a new digital accreditation system in partnership with an external transformation company. This includes a dashboard with nurse-sensitive indicators, patient experience data, and nursing/midwifery staffing metrics; wards are rated as good, great, or outstanding. Five wards were selected as pilot areas to test the new system. The Quality Improvement team supports clinical staff to analyse dashboard metrics and undertake projects to improve outcomes.

Successes and outcomes

Multidisciplinary engagement

Allied health professionals have been engaged in planning the content of the new accreditation programme. They express that they enjoyed the opportunity to be involved and shape the new model.

Key enablers

- An externally-based subject matter expert shared valuable insights with senior leaders who then applied learning to develop the new accreditation system.
- The new accreditation programme uses a rating system of good, great, and outstanding. The ratings were designed to be aspirational and motivate teams to perceive goals positively.
- The new programme reflects an organisational culture which prioritises learning. Implementation has included staff engagement, training, and fostering positive mindsets towards improvement.
- Each ward is allocated a member of the Quality Improvement team to teach clinical teams how to analyse and interpret metrics, identify where they want to improve, and undertake improvement projects.

Key learning points

- External subject matter experts can provide valuable learning to organisations planning to develop new systems.
- When assessment ratings use motivational language, staff recognise and celebrate progress.
- Through a culture that values learning, staff are open to learning new ways of working.
- When staff are trained to analyse metrics, they can identify areas for improvement and use data to drive and demonstrate change.

“It’s not just about targets and high achievements; we encourage staff to focus on what they learned, how they did that, and how they improved... It’s about getting the culture right to engage and motivate staff.”

Care Excellence Framework: Keeping the patient voice at the forefront of accreditation at University Hospitals of North Midlands



Overview

In 2016 University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust established the Care Excellence Framework, a local accreditation system which incorporates care observations, staff interviews, patient feedback, and benchmarking. All wards are assessed annually and can achieve bronze, silver, gold, or platinum status. Additional unannounced visits ensure that standards are monitored and embedded into daily practice. The Care Excellence Framework is aligned to the national quality agenda, National Outcomes Framework 2022, Care Quality Commission quality statements, and organisational strategic priorities.

Successes and outcomes

Successful adaption and expansion

The framework is regularly updated to reflect current focuses. It has successfully been modified and adapted for specialties such as Paediatrics, Maternity, Outpatients, and the Emergency Department. In 2023 the Trust was shortlisted at the HSJ Patient Safety Awards for its accreditation framework.

Involvement from patient representatives

Monthly Care Excellence Framework meetings are led by patient representatives. They inform staff about the patient experience to provide insight about how it feels to be a patient. Patient representatives can also visit wards, provide feedback, and use their voice to shape clinical improvements. The group is diverse, and patients with physical and learning disabilities are represented.

Key enablers

- The Care Excellence Framework meetings, led by patient representatives, provide staff with a valuable personal insight into the patient experience. They also increase staff empathy and understanding to motivate teams to deliver improved care.
- Organisational culture prioritises openness and transparent processes. Teams feel safe to engage with assessments because standards are well-defined, and the process is aligned to Trust values.
- The accreditation programme is driven by the CNO and supported by Executives through clear alignment of programme aims to local and national strategic priorities.
- Successful accreditation outcomes are celebrated. Divisional Nurse Directors and Heads of Nursing visit wards to celebrate teams, and wards are recognised at Trust Board meetings.

Key learning points

- Patient representative involvement is key in keeping the patient voice at the forefront of accreditation. Patients use their voice to shape improvement, whilst staff with increased compassion have greater desire to improve outcomes for patients.
- Alignment with strategic aims and involvement of patient representatives has led to executive support.
- Teams feel confident to engage in accreditation when standards are clear, assessments are transparent, and processes are underpinned by Trust values.

“It’s about being accountable to the patient. The patient is very much the person whose title and feedback matters. Our patients are involved in visiting areas and providing feedback... We’ve giving patients a voice in making things better, because they’re at the forefront of everything we do.”

Chapter 2:

Shared Professional Decision-Making

Shared professional decision-making is a non-hierarchical approach to decision-making, where staff are involved in making decisions about their practice.

It is also known as shared decision-making, shared governance, or collective leadership.

Shared decision-making for QI: Providing staff the tools to drive change at United Lincolnshire Hospitals



Overview

In 2019 United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust set out their shared decision-making (SDM) framework. Nurses and midwives can join ward or specialty councils to focus on improving outcomes and experiences for patients and colleagues. There are 15 councils established, with a further three in progress. A recent focus on staff engagement has increased expressions of interest, with a waiting list of councils proposed.

Successes and outcomes

Supporting success in local accreditation and quality outcomes

Teams recognise that success in SDM promotes success in local accreditation and QI. Areas receiving recognition for accreditation often have successful councils undertaking improvement work; as a result, council members are often invited to present at accreditation panels. Councils also provide positive sources of evidence for the Care Quality Commission demonstrating how direct care staff drive quality outcomes.

Standardising patient pathways using QI

The council from the Greetwell Ward, a surgical ward with patients requiring specialist airway support, used QI methodology to standardise a safe transfer process for patients with tracheostomies. By using evidence and learning from good practice, the council improved patient safety and experience.

Key enablers

- The organisation recognises how SDM drives improvement and fosters close ties between SDM, QI, and local accreditation.
- A three-day training programme includes QI, library services, patient experience, and hospital charity. An organisational development day focuses on team building and developing a team charter. Councils are enabled to develop their identity, formulate their aims, and undertake QI projects together.
- Direct care staff perceive SDM is accessible; they do not require any pre-requisite experience or skills to participate, as comprehensive training is provided on joining a council.
- Twice a year, council members present their work to senior nurses at the Leadership Council. Through this forum, members develop their presentation and public speaking skills.

Key learning points

- SDM is an important enabler for QI and local accreditation. When direct care staff are empowered to voice ideas and make decisions, they drive improvements in care outcomes.
- Through a robust training programme integrating SDM, QI, and organisational development, councils are equipped with the tools to identify goals and lead change as a team.

“SDM has improved our ability to undertake successful QI work and improved our accreditation outcomes. It’s seen as an important part of driving quality... It gives staff bravery to make suggestions, empowers them to voice ideas, and gives them the tools to drive change in their areas.”

Shared decision-making to amplify staff voices: Promoting professional development and well-being at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire



Overview

In 2019 University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust established their shared decision-making (SDM) councillor model. The model gives staff collective ownership to improve practice and make decisions about issues which affect them. The Trust has themed, specialty, and ward-based councils, and membership is open to all staff.

Successes and outcomes

Pathway to Excellence® designation

In 2022, the Trust was the first university hospital in the UK to achieve Pathway to Excellence® designation across sites. As one of the Pathway to Excellence® standards, SDM was pivotal to this success.

Embedded through strategy

In 2023 the SDM model was purposefully built into the NMAHP professional strategy as its own domain, with clear growth ambitions to increase the number of councils each year.

Successful projects and award nominations

Councils have been shortlisted for national awards for their work. The Anti-Racism SDM Council was a finalist for the RCN Workforce Initiative of the Year Awards in 2023, for development and implementation of the UHCW Anti-Racism Toolkit. The ReSPECT SDM Council was nominated for an HSJ Award for creating and launching two ReSPECT e-learning modules. The Ward 52 Trauma and Orthopaedic SDM Council designed and piloted food preference posters, which received positive feedback from patients and families.

Key enablers

- A dedicated SDM Facilitator delivers training and onboarding for new councils. Councils are supported to drive projects that improve outcomes for teams, patients, and their families; these experiences promote members' professional development, leadership skills, and well-being.
- Each council member has protected time to engage in SDM activities, built into the e-rostering system.
- A monthly Leadership Council enables direct communication between chairs, senior leaders, and the CNO. Chairs share celebrations and support needs, and network with leaders and each other.
- Councils are showcased at celebration events, and members are proud to receive recognition.

Key learning points

- Dedicated facilitation and protected time are key enablers for council-led projects. These experiences improve members' professional development, leadership, and well-being.
- The Leadership Council enables direct communication between direct care staff, the CNO, and senior leaders, and ensures the voices of staff are heard.
- When councils are recognised and celebrated, they are proud of their contributions.

"We've placed staff at the heart of the decision-making process and improved their ability to influence change, to create positive practice environments for all. SDM supports increased staff morale and retention and improved patient outcomes."

Shared decision-making councils: Empowering the workforce and valuing the voice of direct care staff at University Hospitals of Leicester



Overview

In 2020 University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust developed their shared decision-making (SDM) councillor model. Councils are comprised of staff across a wide range of wards and departments, with members working on projects that improve safety and experiences of patients and staff. Over the past two years there has been significant focus to increase the number of councils, to enable more staff members have opportunities to use their voice and collaborate, explore ideas, and innovate.

Successes and outcomes

Growth of council numbers

The Trust has established over 90 different councils across sites. The organisation is very proud to offer valuable opportunities for direct care staff members to use their voice in decision-making.

Expansion of council membership

Council membership initially consisted of nurses and midwives. Targeted work to champion multidisciplinary team (MDT) involvement has been successful, and councils now have MDT members including allied health professionals and medics.

Key enablers

- Targeted work to promote multidisciplinary council membership has been key in demonstrating the value of SDM to the wider organisation.
- The CNO champions SDM and shapes a culture that values the voice of direct care staff. This influences senior leaders to view enabling SDM as part of their role.
- Councils are purposefully utilised as infrastructure to connect leaders to the opinions of direct care staff. Leaders consult with direct care council members to get their feedback on planned changes. Council members report they value this opportunity to influence change.
- Through experience-based learning, staff are professionally developed through SDM; the skills they gain are valuable for career progression.

Key learning points

- Through multidisciplinary engagement and inclusion, SDM is embraced across disciplines and the wider organisation as an effective approach to empower the workforce.
- Through transformational leadership and culture, senior leaders value SDM and understand part of their role is enabling councils.
- Council meetings are valuable forums for leaders to consult direct care staff on planned changes.

"It's been championed by our Chief Nurse, and our senior leaders really support it... We're building collective leadership from the ground level and empowering direct care staff. They've grown and developed confidence, and we've seen professional development of individual members and engagement of entire teams."

Shared decision-making for staff empowerment: Promoting inclusion and demonstrating value at Northampton General Hospital



Overview

In 2016 Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust launched the shared decision-making (SDM) councillor model. Direct care staff can take part in unit-specific, specialty, or themed councils; as a council, they are empowered to make decisions improving care delivery, safety outcomes, and the care environment, for the benefit of teams, patients, and their families. Council membership has expanded from nurses and midwives to include multidisciplinary colleagues.

Successes and outcomes

Improving the environment

The Neonatal Council successfully obtained funding through the hospital charity and used this to develop a breastfeeding room for parents.

Improving sustainability

To support the sustainability agenda, the Falls, Infection Control, and Tissue Viability Council introduced new incontinence products. They visited ward areas and delivered training to support product roll-out.

Driving Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

The Internationally-Educated Staff Council introduced Cultural Awareness Day to celebrate diversity. The council is actively involved in driving forward EDI initiatives within the organisation.

Key enablers

- An SDM Facilitator delivers training which includes principles of organisational development, QI, and leadership. Council members have protected time each month for SDM. These experiences provide professional development opportunities and support career progression.
- The CNO is engaged. The CNO chairs the bi-monthly Leadership Council, a meeting with all council chairs across the Trust, and feeds council activity through the committee structure into Trust Board.
- Each Non-Executive Director of Trust Board joins a council as a member; they attend meetings and participate in projects. This increases the visibility of SDM, demonstrates its value in action to Board members, and promotes a non-hierarchical approach to decision-making.
- SDM is widely celebrated across the Trust and embraced in EDI initiatives. Because the Trust values SDM as a methodology for staff empowerment, staff from different roles and backgrounds feel psychologically safe to voice ideas and contribute to decision-making.

Key learning points

- Training integrating organisational development, QI, and leadership enables councils to work together to improve outcomes; these experiences support professional development and career progression.
- Engagement from the CNO and Trust Board is key in promoting the visibility and value of SDM.
- Through a culture of celebration and inclusion, staff feel safe using their voice to make decisions.

“SDM has really influenced our organisation’s culture about the importance of staff empowerment ... When we show staff that we value their voice, it creates psychologically safe spaces so staff can speak up and be involved in the decision-making process.”

Strategic leadership in shared decision-making: Driving quality and supporting strategic objectives at Royal Wolverhampton



The Royal Wolverhampton
NHS Trust

Overview

In 2022 Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust commenced shared decision-making (SDM) councils. Across the Trust there are eight themed councils where nurses, midwives, and multidisciplinary colleagues address specific issues to improve patient outcomes. The organisation is focused on promoting the SDM approach to foster staff co-production and collaboration, encourage generation of ideas from direct care staff, and embed a non-hierarchical way of working.

Successes and outcomes

Multidisciplinary councils

The Trust has successfully engaged and involved multidisciplinary colleagues in councils. The Eat, Drink, Dress, Move, Improve SDM Council includes allied health professionals (AHPs), who are piloting a support worker role to prevent patient deconditioning. The Documentation and Digital SDM Council brings together nurses, midwives, and multidisciplinary colleagues to test digital systems. The Medication Safety SDM Council is raising awareness of services from the drugs and alcohol team.

Key enablers

- The CNO and executives realise the value of SDM in driving quality and improving patient experiences. SDM has been integrated into the Quality Framework, a strategic plan for delivery of excellent care from nursing, midwifery, and AHP teams, to set out measurable ambitions for growth.
- Leaders value the opinions of direct care staff and want their representation in decision-making. Because leaders have visibly engaged direct care staff to generate interest in SDM, staff have responded positively; they are motivated to use their voice to influence change.
- The Leadership Council brings together council chairs and the CNO; this provides opportunities for chairs to present their councils' progress and showcase their work. These meetings demonstrate to staff that their voice matters and provide opportunities for leadership development.
- Training includes principles and benefits of SDM, as well as templates for chairing meetings.

Key learning points

- Leaders drive growth in SDM through strategic plans and priorities.
- When leaders demonstrate they value the voice of direct care staff, staff are motivated to use their voice and engage in decision-making.
- Multidisciplinary councils promote collaboration between professions and teams.

"It's clear how SDM links back to our organisation's vision and goals, so we've had great strategic support... As a result, staff are taking the time to engage and they're positive, motivated, and passionate. They're working together, using a non-hierarchical approach to leadership. A lot of the best ideas come from direct care staff who see what the solutions are... SDM values our staff voice."

Chapter 3: Meaningful Recognition

Meaningful recognition is the recognition of nurses and/or midwives for their contributions and value, which promotes fulfilment and professional pride.

Awards exemplifying Trust values: Promoting pride in nurses and midwives at University Hospitals Birmingham

Overview

In 2022 University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust established its “Kind, Connected, and Bold” Awards. Patients, relatives, students, and colleagues can nominate staff members exemplifying Trust values and winners are selected monthly. Each winner of the “Kind, Connected, and Bold” Award receives a certificate from their managers and is celebrated within their teams. News is shared widely through Trust-wide communication channels. The Trust also regularly submits nominations for external awards, with several individuals and teams recently recognised.



Successes and outcomes

Award winners

Recent winners of the “Kind, Connected, and Bold” Award include the Clinical Academic Team from Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham and two educators from Good Hope Hospital.

The International Recruitment team won an HSJ Award in 2022 for their accelerated development programme, which provides holistic support for internationally-educated nurses, supporting them to receive appropriate remuneration based on their previous experience and expertise.

In 2024, the Trust won the Student Nursing Times Award in the “hospital placement of the year” category for the development of dedicated education hubs, which support student learning.

Key enablers

- Internal awards are directly linked to Trust values to demonstrate the golden thread between staff recognition and behaviours embodying the Trust values.
- Each winner of the “Kind, Connected, and Bold” Award is celebrated by their manager with their teams. Meaningful recognition is driven by leaders who encourage celebration so nurses and midwives across the organisation are proud of their profession.

Key learning points

- A Trust-wide award promotes Trust values, whilst external awards recognise successful projects with positive outcomes.
- Clearly linking an award to Trust values encourages the role modelling of exemplary values-based behaviours. This ties the golden thread between meaningful recognition and Trust priorities.
- Celebrations led by leaders and managers, with their teams, promote pride in nurses and midwives.

“The best aspect of meaningful recognition is the opportunity to recognise our staff. We have such a diverse workforce and we need to make them feel valued, so it’s important we say it: We are proud of our nurses and midwives and want to recognise them for providing good care.”

Recognition and inclusion: Improving staff well-being and morale at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire

Overview

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust offers a suite of internal and external recognition awards for nurses and midwives. The annual Outstanding Care and Service Awards, monthly World Class Colleague Awards, and thank you cards are available to all staff. The DAISY Awards recognise nurses and midwives for going above and beyond in delivering compassionate care. The Trust's DAISY portfolio has grown to include the Team and Leader Awards, with 94 DAISY honourees since 2019.



Successes and outcomes

CNO Special Commendation Awards

Due to the high volume of high-quality DAISY Award nominations, the CNO Special Commendation Awards recognise some of the exceptional testimonies received from patients and families. Awardees are recognised at a quarterly celebration event with their managers in attendance. These awards have received very positive feedback from attendees.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within the DAISY Awards

The Trust has explored EDI within their DAISY Award programme. This includes options for nomination forms to be completed in different languages, improving accessibility of the nomination process.

The International DAISY Day Conference

The Trust was showcased through a presentation at the International DAISY Day Conference in 2023. The Trust also hosted a pre-conference event on site, where DAISY honourees shared impacts of the award.

Key enablers

- As nurses and midwives were engaged and consulted from the outset in shaping the awards, they were open to recognition. Direct care staff are also represented on selection panels.
- Award ceremonies are led by the CNO and attended by senior and local leaders. Role modelling professional pride and celebration increases the impact of the awards within teams.
- Dedicated staff manage the DAISY Award programme, ensuring meaningful recognition is prioritised. The programme also benefits from robust partnerships with the hospital's Charity, Volunteers, Patient Partners, and Communications teams.

Key learning points

- The involvement of direct care nurses and midwives in consultation and selection of honourees, as well as role modelling from the CNO and leaders, embeds a culture of day-to-day recognition.
- Opportunities extend beyond winning awards; meaningful recognition provides staff a platform to share their experiences and stories.
- Meaningful recognition improves staff well-being and morale. As one DAISY honouree reflected, "It has made 40 years of nursing very worthwhile."

"Our DAISY Awards are a much-loved award scheme by our patients, families, and staff... Meaningful recognition promotes professional pride and fosters a culture of day-to-day recognition, which encourages further role modelling of these positive behaviours."

Awards, badges, and wildflower seeds: Creating inclusive and deeply emotional experiences at University Hospitals of Leicester

Overview

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust has offered the DAISY Awards for registered nurses and midwives since 2020. In 2023 the Trust created the BEE (“Be Excellent Everyday”) Awards for multidisciplinary colleagues and non-registrants.

Every month the selection panel meets and awards are distributed. BEE winners receive a pin, a badge, and a pack of wildflower seeds to plant. This has been positively received across the organisation, with over 100 nominations in its first month.



Successes and outcomes

DAISY garden

The Trust has a wild daisy garden full of 80 ceramic flowers with the name of each DAISY award winner. The garden was opened by Ruth May in her role as CNO for England and visited by Deb Zimmerman, CEO of the DAISY Foundation.

Creating deeply personal and moving experiences

A patient with lung cancer nominated a nurse for a DAISY award. The award ceremony was attended by the patient and the nurse’s family. Those who attended said it was a deeply impactful, personal, and emotional experience to witness the ceremony and hear the testimonial story.

Key enablers

- Multidisciplinary team (MDT) inclusion has been key. The inclusive BEE awards promoted MDT support, and medics and allied health professionals are represented on the DAISY award panel. MDT colleagues express feeling included, and the awards are widely supported across the Trust.
- When patients and families join award ceremonies and their testimonies are read aloud, ceremonies become deeply emotional experiences for all staff involved. This builds understanding and empathy for the patient experience and generates motivation for staff to deliver compassionate care.

Key learning points

- Inclusive recognition schemes and involvement of MDT colleagues has led to MDT and wider organisational support for nursing and midwifery specific meaningful recognition programmes.
- Ceremonies involving patients and families create deeply emotional experiences for all staff involved. These experiences promote compassion and motivate nurses and midwives to deliver care which makes a difference.

“Ceremonies are really emotional, personal, and touching. It’s the best thing. It creates those moments you can’t put into words, reminding each of us of the pride of being a nurse, and the passion we brought when we first entered the profession.”

Meaningful recognition contributions: Improving workforce resilience and retention at University Hospitals of North Midlands

Overview

The suite of meaningful recognition offerings at University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust has steadily grown year-on-year. It encompasses awards as well as opportunities for fellowships, educational programmes, and legacy mentors. The DAISY Awards were implemented in 2021 to thank nurses and midwives for providing outstanding care. Fellowships and legacy mentoring opportunities were developed in 2022 to recognise the contributions of experienced staff. Legacy mentors are experienced staff who provide guidance, coaching, and pastoral support to newer staff members. The Diamond Awards were launched in 2023 to celebrate healthcare support workers and nursing associates.



Successes and outcomes

Retaining the workforce

In addition to receiving positive feedback from staff, workforce retention has significantly improved since the implementation of recognition initiatives with a 4% improvement in retention of nurses and midwives and a reduction in sickness. Vacancies have reduced from 450 nursing and 75 midwifery vacancies in 2022, to 6 nursing and 13 midwifery vacancies in 2024.

Key enablers

- The CNO acts as a visible role model and shapes a culture of recognition by presenting awards and celebrating with teams in their workplaces.
- Wider executive leadership inclusion and support has been crucial. Executives understand the value of meaningful recognition and demonstrate their visible support for recognition schemes. Celebrations, successes, and awards are shared via the Chief Executive's "Monday messages" and recognition programmes are widely supported across the organisation.

Key learning points

- Visibility from executive leaders has led to wider organisational backing for role-specific meaningful recognition programmes.
- Meaningful recognition contributes to resilience and retention of the nursing and midwifery workforce.
- Through a resilient workforce with improved staffing resources, all staff benefit from improved environments to deliver high-quality patient-centred care, ultimately benefitting patient outcomes.

"Our executives genuinely understand the importance of meaningful recognition as a way to support our workforce... As our workforce has stabilised, we are starting to see improvement across a range of metrics. Through meaningful recognition, we are creating improved work environments for staff to deliver care... This improved care is the golden thread."

Recognition shaped by direct care nurses and midwives: Creating a culture of peer-to-peer recognition at Northampton General Hospital

Overview

Since 2016 Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust has built their recognition portfolio to include professional celebration days and awards. They offer the DAISY individual, leader, team, lifetime achievement, and educator awards for nurses and midwives, and the Rose Award for allied health professionals and support workers. “Tea-rific Tuesday” is available to all staff to nominate a colleague they want to thank. Over 3000 “Tea-rific Tuesday” awards have been presented in three years.



Successes and outcomes

Professional development opportunities

After receiving a “Tea-rific Tuesday” award from the Pathway to Excellence® team, a nurse became interested in Pathway to Excellence®. This led to participation in the CNO Fellowship and attendance at the 2023 Pathway to Excellence® conference in Chicago, as part of the Trust’s second designation celebration.

Shared decision-making (SDM) councils driving recognition

SDM councils have been empowered to create their own awards. The Emergency Department SDM council developed their “Good Egg” Award and the Stroke SDM Council created their “Stroke of Genius” Awards.

Key enablers

- These programmes are led by the Lead Professional Nurse Advocate who sits within the Pathway to Excellence® team and organised by dedicated administrative support.
- Direct care staff have a voice in shaping meaningful recognition through SDM councils.
- The CNO presents DAISY and Rose Awards and sends thank you cards regularly, role modelling and shaping a culture of recognition.
- “Tea-rific Tuesday” encourages peer-to-peer nominations, and the nomination system has been digitised to ensure the process is accessible for direct care staff. This promotes a culture of peer-to-peer recognition.

Key learning points

- Meaningful recognition creates positive practice environments for staff to thrive and supported the Trust’s second Pathway to Excellence® designation.
- Through CNO role modelling and direct care SDM members’ involvement, meaningful recognition is shaped by staff from all levels.
- Peer-to-peer recognition helps further embed a culture of day-to-day recognition.

“We’re developing a culture of recognition that isn’t just about the big awards, but also day-to-day things... When positive behaviours are encouraged, more staff demonstrate it, and it becomes fertile ground for that behaviour to continue. Happier staff lead to improved retention and experience, and ultimately patients get better care.”

Staff recognition programme: Improving morale and engagement at Nottingham University Hospitals



Overview

In 2017 Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust established their staff recognition programme. The DAISY Awards recognise individual nurses, midwives, and their teams for demonstrating kindness to patients and their families. In 2019 the Tulip Awards were launched to celebrate the contributions of healthcare support workers to the delivery of outstanding care.

Successes and outcomes

Staff engagement

Staff are engaged in the award nomination and selection process. In 2023, the programme received 776 nominations for individuals and 42 nominations for teams. Over 50 members of staff took part in voting panels selecting 11 DAISY Award honourees.

Improved NHS Staff Survey results

A culture of recognition was reflected in the organisation's 2023 NHS Staff Survey results. Staff reported they felt recognised and celebrated, demonstrated through improvements in staff morale and staff engagement scores.

Key enablers

- Staff members have opportunities to be part of voting panels and select award winners. They find it professionally satisfying to be involved in the delivery of meaningful recognition.
- The CNO and Deputy CNO prioritise time to present award certificates to individual staff members and teams. They are visible role models shaping a culture of celebration for staff to receive positive feedback and recognition.

Key learning points

- Staff experience professional satisfaction through involvement in the delivery of meaningful recognition.
- When the CNO and senior leaders are visibly involved in meaningful recognition, they instil a culture of celebration, pride, and appreciation for the professional contributions of staff.
- Meaningful recognition contributes to improved staff morale and engagement.

"We've built it into our organisational culture of celebration... Meaningful recognition has led to better staff engagement and contributes to improved retention. Our people feel recognised and celebrated. They enjoy being recognised, and it promotes more positive behaviour."

Celebrations and award ceremonies: Promoting professional pride, motivation, and teamwork at Royal Orthopaedic Hospital (Birmingham)

Overview

In 2016 the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (Birmingham) established their annual Blue Heart awards. Any patient, visitor, or staff member can nominate an individual or team who has gone above and beyond in their work. Categories include nurse, clinical support team members, and team of the year with over 600 nominations annually. A Learning from Excellence award recognises those who have demonstrated Trust values, with winners receiving a certificate for the values they demonstrated and their nomination story.



Successes and outcomes

Awards night

The Trust hosts an annual award ceremony as a special off-site evening event. Hosted by the executive team, the annual ceremony brings together in celebration direct care staff and leaders across the organisation. The event is enjoyed by staff as an opportunity for team bonding, enhancing pride and morale.

Key enablers

- Leaders and executives prioritise taking the time to recognise staff members across the Trust and celebrate their successes; they lead by example, presenting awards and hosting ceremonies.
- Through a close collaboration with the Communications team, good news and celebrations are shared via social media, team briefs, and posters displayed around the Trust. This generates further excitement and pride.
- Staff from diverse backgrounds and levels are represented on selection panels, promoting an inclusive process in reviewing award nominations against predetermined criteria.

Key learning points

- Benefits extend beyond receiving certificates and awards; celebrations are opportunities for leaders to show they care and are proud of staff across the organisation, as well as opportunities for teams to bond and celebrate their successes together.
- Collaboration with the Communications team to share celebrations widely generates excitement and motivation, which raises staff morale.
- Representation and inclusion of diverse groups of staff on selection panels promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion of the award selection process.

"It's an opportunity to acknowledge our staff for delivering outstanding care. It's important to our leaders that staff feel valued and recognised... This shows the Trust is interested and cares, and the most important bit: it boosts our staff pride and morale."

Recognition awards: Promoting values and outstanding care across disciplines at Royal Wolverhampton and Walsall Healthcare

Overview

The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust and Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust have embedded staff awards since 2020. At Royal Wolverhampton the Exceeding Expectations Award is available for staff members who have gone above and beyond expectations in their role, whilst the Nell Phoenix Award is available to recognise nurses and midwives for outstanding patient experiences.



At both sites the Quality Star Award is available for all staff. It recognises exemplary practice that improves patient care, and winners receive a certificate with a gold star pin. Finally, the “Who should we be like” Award celebrate core values (Listening, Kind, Inclusive, Professional) endorsed by a joint behavioural framework.

Successes and outcomes

Multidisciplinary recognition and inclusion

Nurses nominated catering supervisors for the Quality Star Award for transforming meal service delivery, following positive feedback from staff and patients. Nurses also nominated the Medical Illustration team for the Quality Star Award for their work contributing to improved patient documentation.

Annual staff award ceremony

Every year senior leaders host a staff award ceremony and a formal off-site dinner event. This event celebrates staff contributions and is received positively by staff members.

Key enablers

- “Who should we be like” Award celebrates values, whilst Quality Star Award recognises improved quality of care. These awards encourage role modelling of behaviours and practices that reflect Trust values and improve patient care.
- Senior leaders dedicate time to facilitate award ceremonies. When leaders visibly prioritise recognition, staff feel recognised and valued.
- A culture of recognition between professions and teams contributes to multidisciplinary collaboration and inclusion.
- Awards and celebrations are shared widely via the Trust intranet and newsletters.

Key learning points

- Values-based awards improve workplaces for staff, whilst awards that recognise exemplary practice improve quality of care for patients.
- Awards reinforce positive behaviours and promote role modelling. Through awards, staff feel valued and motivated to deliver high-quality care.
- Recognition that spans multidisciplinary teams helps embed an inclusive culture of recognition.

“Our staff feel proud and motivated through meaningful recognition. They continue that behaviour and that improvement. This creates a ripple effect which motivates other staff to role model exemplary practice.”

A formal recognition framework: Celebrating quality and safety outcomes and sustaining recognition at United Lincolnshire Hospitals



Overview

Recognition offerings at United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust have grown since implementing the DAISY Awards in 2019. Their recognition offerings were brought into a formal framework developed by the Quality team in partnership with nursing, midwifery, and AHP leaders, to celebrate improved quality and safety outcomes across the organisation. The framework includes “harm-free care” certificates celebrating 30 and 60 consecutive harm-free days from falls, pressure ulcers, and infection, the DAISY Award for nurses and midwives, and the “Recognition of Outstanding Sparkle and Excellence” (ROSE) Award for support workers.

Successes and outcomes

Annual “Best Practice” Day

The Trust’s annual “Best Practice” Day, planned alongside international nursing and midwifery celebration days, showcases successes in best practice. The 2023 theme was “Shine bright,” and staff shared powerful personal stories and achievements regarding the implementation of best practice. The day is well-attended from direct care staff and leaders across the Trust and links emotions such as pride and celebration to high-quality outcomes.

Key enablers

- The formal framework will ensure meaningful recognition activities are joined-up, embedded, and sustained year-round.
- The Quality team drives meaningful recognition in partnership with other leaders. They recognise exemplary safety and quality outcomes whilst threading fun and emotions throughout celebrations. They also build capability by supporting staff with their showcase presentations.
- Staff were involved through providing feedback and voting in shaping the ROSE Award for wider team inclusion.
- Leaders and managers prioritise attending celebrations and presenting awards to staff.

Key learning points

- A meaningful recognition framework aligned to quality and safety agendas ties celebration and emotions to exemplary quality and safety outcomes.
- Capability in meaningful recognition is built by supporting staff with preparations for showcase presentations.
- Through involvement in celebrations, managers and leaders demonstrate pride for their teams and experience professional satisfaction and joy at work.

“We create fun moments driven by safety, recognising you’ve done this to keep patients safe... These days are celebrated by everyone, and you hear powerful stories that remind you why you love your job. It connects staff and ties emotion and pride.”

Chapter 4: Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership involves building and sustaining leadership capacity through different roles in organisations.

Infrastructure for distributed leadership: Empowering staff to voice ideas and make decisions at University Hospitals of Leicester



Overview

In 2022 University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust embedded the distributed leadership model into the organisational infrastructure through multiple forums, shared decision-making, and a focus on collective leadership. Regularly scheduled meetings involve leaders at different levels of decision-making such as NMAHP leadership meetings, Matron forums, and Ward Leader forums. These meetings bring together the Chief Nurse with leaders from across the organisation to discuss current topics. Additionally, the shared decision-making model involves direct care staff in making decisions as part of a council. The distributed leadership approach is underpinned by collective leadership principles such as developing a workforce that confidently uses their voice to lead.

Successes and outcomes

Leadership opportunities for direct care staff

The Trust provides leadership opportunities to direct care staff through shared professional decision-making councils. Since 2019, over 90 shared decision-making councils have been established at the organisation.

Key enablers

- Scheduled forums regularly bring together the CNO and leaders from different roles across the organisation. The CNO encourages open communication in these forums; this develops staff confidence in speaking up to drive change.
- The CNO and senior leaders prioritise building leadership capability within clinical teams. Direct care staff learn valuable leadership skills by undertaking projects through shared decision-making councils. Direct care staff are also represented on task and finish groups, leading to improved confidence in voicing ideas.
- The CNO drives a culture of collective leadership by prioritising direct care staff engagement in leadership activities, so their voices are heard. In turn, senior nurses value involvement from direct care teams and are committed to building leadership at all levels.

Key learning points

- Through forums where open communication is encouraged between leaders and staff from all levels, staff voice their ideas to shape change.
- Decision-making is a core component of leadership development, enabled through shared professional decision-making councils. When direct care staff contribute to decision-making, they develop their confidence in using their voice to lead.

“We’re very much about collective leadership; we’re all here for patients and have a role to play... We’re building leadership and decision-making in all groups, including direct care staff... When everyone takes collective responsibility to care for patients and families, it leads to the delivery of excellent care, which leads to excellent care outcomes.”

Shared governance and collective leadership: Developing leaders focused on improvement at University Hospitals of North Midlands



Overview

In 2021 University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust commenced their shared governance model. The model focuses on empowering staff and developing leaders at all levels. Through the principles of collective leadership, staff are encouraged to contribute to decision-making conversations. Shared governance and collective leadership principles have been integrated into organisational infrastructure which includes the Quality Improvement methodology. The model supports the development of nurses and midwives as leaders with a focus on improving outcomes and experiences for colleagues, patients, and their families.

Successes and outcomes

Staff-led improvements

Direct care staff have led projects that improved experiences and outcomes for teams and patients. Trauma Theatres implemented a new model of training after an improvement project using the Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycle. A ward-based team focused on improving patient wait times for treatments, and another clinical team improved patient pathways.

Key enablers

- The CNO and senior leaders are engaged, drive shared governance, and role model these principles.
- The Leadership Council forum is chaired by the CNO and supported by senior leaders. It brings together direct care staff across areas who have undertaken QI work. Staff share their successes and can also seek support. Through this forum, the CNO and senior leaders are accessible, visible, and involved in recognition, and direct care staff are encouraged to use their voice to lead.
- The Leadership Council links directly into the committee structure as part of a Quality Improvement report; this ensures the work is visible, prioritised, and sustained.
- By embedding shared governance and collective leadership principles into QI, staff undertaking QI projects are exposed to these leadership approaches and develop their confidence to lead change.

Key learning points

- Shared governance and collective leadership principles empower nurses and midwives at all levels and develop leaders in a wide range of roles.
- Through forums that bring together the CNO, senior leaders, and direct care staff, staff are encouraged to use their voice to make decisions and shape change.
- By linking shared governance and collective leadership with QI, leaders are developed who use their voice to improve outcomes for staff, patients, and their families.

“We’ve incorporated shared governance as an ethos into our infrastructure as a consistent approach... We prioritise hearing the staff voice, empowering collective leadership at the organisation, and developing accessible leaders... We’re really proud of our staff-led priorities and improvements that impact on staff and patient outcomes and experiences.”

Shared governance and leadership training: Empowering staff at all levels to lead change at Nottingham University Hospitals



Overview

After over a decade of implementation, distributed leadership has been embedded at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust through the shared governance model. The model consists of four principles: accountability, equity, partnership, and ownership. It focuses on staff working in partnership, taking ownership and accountability for their practice, and being empowered to lead change. Staff capability to lead is developed through leadership training and shared governance councils, which bring staff of all levels together, empowering them to make decisions and drive change.

Successes and outcomes

International recognition

In 2020 Nottingham City Hospital received Magnet Recognition® and Nottingham Children's Hospital achieved Pathway to Excellence® designation. The Trust was recognised as the first organisation outside of the USA to receive both accreditations of excellence. This achievement was underpinned by the shared governance model which distributes leadership and decision-making.

CQC "Outstanding" rating for Caring

In 2019 and 2023 the Trust was rated "Outstanding" for caring by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). An area of outstanding practice recognised by the CQC was the shared governance model which improved staff engagement and empowerment.

Improved staff empowerment

Staff were surveyed using the Index of Professional Nursing Governance tool, a validated tool to quantify and evaluate shared governance. Survey results demonstrated that staff felt empowered to lead change.

Key enablers

- Leadership training programmes are available for all staff in band 2 to 8a roles. The training focuses on developing leadership skills and confidence within different roles in the organisation.
- The shared governance model is driven by a dedicated team, led by an Assistant Director of Nursing and Clinical Lead. A team of 12 facilitators delivers training and provides coaching. The team is incorporated within clinical environments, making them visible and accessible to direct care teams.
- Council members are allocated six protected hours each month to fully engage in shared governance.
- Staff of all levels are encouraged to undertake leadership training and participate in shared governance.

Key learning points

- Leadership training develops skills and confidence, whilst shared governance empowers staff in different roles to take ownership of their practice and lead change.
- Leadership training and shared governance builds and sustains leadership capacity at all levels.

"Staff view shared governance as a powerful model of empowering staff and sharing decision-making. It's about distributing leadership at all levels and empowering staff to drive change."

Leadership development programmes: Building confident leaders at all levels at University Hospitals Birmingham



Overview

In 2023 University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust distributed group leadership to individual hospital sites to empower local leaders. The organisation is building leadership capability at all levels across sites through development programmes and staff engagement. Leadership development programmes are available for registered staff and healthcare support workers in bands 2 to 8a roles. Programmes were co-developed in partnership with staff, with sessions tailored to roles. The band 8a leadership programme is currently in its sixth cohort, with 30-35 staff members in each cohort.

Successes and outcomes

Endorsement by the Florence Nightingale Foundation

In 2021 the Florence Nightingale Foundation endorsed the band 8a leadership training programme for nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals. The organisation was the first member of the Florence Nightingale Foundation to receive this recognition.

Key enablers

- Bespoke role-based leadership training helps to develop capacity across different levels in the organisation. Newly qualified nurses and midwives receive leadership training during Preceptorship. Training for band 6-8a nurses and midwives incorporates coaching, networking, and leading quality improvement projects.
- Coaching and undertaking practical projects are key components for success. Staff confidence is increased through coaching sessions, whilst improvement projects are valuable opportunities for staff to drive change through practice.
- The programme was co-designed with staff to ensure content is relevant and valuable. Programme content was shaped by staff feedback and identification of training needs.
- Staff who complete the leadership programme aimed at band 6 staff can choose to undertake the programme as a Masters level module with the University of Birmingham or receive a certificate of attendance.

Key learning points

- Bespoke role-based training develops leadership capacity across the organisation.
- Linking quality improvement to leadership develops staff who are confident to lead change.
- By involving staff in co-design, leadership training is relevant and valuable to end-users.
- Through leadership training and staff engagement, nurses and midwives are empowered to make decisions and drive change.

"We're providing leadership development tailored to their development needs... By building a leadership programme for each level, we're building confidence to empower our staff, to grow and strengthen their leadership capabilities."

Chapter 5: Continuous Quality Improvement

Continuous Quality Improvement (QI) is a methodical approach to solve problems, improve the quality of processes and services, and provide better outcomes.

UHCWi for continuous improvement: Valuing and empowering staff at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire

Overview

In 2015 University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust developed UHCWi, a Trust-wide improvement methodology, following a five-year partnership with the Virginia Mason Institute. UHCWi focuses on eliminating waste and adding value for the benefit of patients and the community. With a focus on including those who do the work, the model empowers staff to develop, test, and measure improvements in processes, patient safety, and outcomes.



Successes and outcomes

Embedded into organisational infrastructure

UHCWi methodology is embedded into the Trust's "business as usual" through organisational infrastructure. Regular use of huddle boards and focus boards have improved team communication. Leadership rounding ensures leaders are visible and understand how to support local services. The methodology supported the Trust's dynamic response and ability to make rapid changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Trust has coached other organisations locally and nationally on the methodology.

Key enablers

- Supported by a dedicated Kaizen Promotion Office team, all staff have access to UHCWi tools, training, and coaching. Training spans introductory to advanced levels.
- An underpinning UHCWi principle is valuing and empowering the staff who do the work. Staff are involved in UHCWi projects and present outcomes and learning in front of senior leaders. They feel engaged, valued, and proud to be recognised.
- Leaders are taught to facilitate and coach. This develops visible and approachable leaders.
- Through alignment with organisational values and culture, executive leaders support the methodology. This has fostered an organisational culture of openness and continuous improvement, which has created a safe environment for staff to try new ideas.

Key learning points

- UHCWi brings together direct care staff and leaders in undertaking quality improvement. It develops transformational visible leaders and empowers staff to drive improvements. UHCWi gives staff the abilities and confidence to test and measure improvements that benefit teams, patients, and families.
- Alignment of the QI methodology with organisational values and culture has led to wide organisational support from staff and leaders at all levels.
- Through an organisational culture that is open to improvement, as well as role modelling from leaders, staff feel psychologically safe to engage, voice new ideas, and implement change.

"Through our organisational culture of 'better never stops,' we always strive for continuous improvement. We empower staff to use their experience to drive change, and we've created a safe environment for this... We have buy-in at all levels, from direct care staff to leaders and executives. We are all working together to improve outcomes and processes for staff and patients."

The Chief Nurse Junior Fellowship and PDSA: Promoting professional development through QI at University Hospitals of Derby and Burton



Overview

University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust have used the Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycle and Kata since the mid-1990s after staff from manufacturing companies joined the Trust to introduce these concepts. Based on a Japanese improvement methodology, Kata involves conducting huddles after an incident to understand the human factors and environmental dynamics that influenced the event; this learning is used to inform change. In 2023 the Trust implemented the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF). Staff also use benchmarking and audits to identify opportunities for change and to measure improvements.

Successes and outcomes

Chief Nurse Junior Fellowship

In addition to PDSA projects led by Ward Managers and Matrons, in 2019 the Chief Nurse Junior Fellowship was launched for band 5 staff nurses and midwives to lead projects using the PDSA cycle.

As part of the Fellowship, a midwife identified that patient information leaflets were only available in English; the midwife developed patient information leaflets and videos in other languages for non-English speaking patients. A trauma and orthopaedic nurse created a new care plan to assess delirium. A nurse on a busy cancer ward set up a staff facility for tea, coffee, and snacks and improved team well-being. All three staff have progressed in their careers.

Key enablers

- A Trust-wide training programme and the Chief Nurse Junior Fellowship develop capability in QI. Staff also have opportunities to undertake training through Florence Nightingale Foundation Scholarships. With a focus on PDSA as a tool to lead service improvement, staff recognise that transferable skills gained from QI can benefit their professional development and career progression.
- The Trust is a local hospital for many staff members and their families, where staff and their families are treated. It personalises the delivery of care and motivates staff to deliver high standards.
- The CNO promotes the use of QI as a method to improve patient and staff experience and outcomes. This trickles down and influences culture across the organisation into local services.

Key learning points

- Internal and external training programmes provide structured opportunities for staff to learn and put knowledge and skills to practice. Staff gain valuable transferable skills from undertaking QI projects which can benefit their professional development and career progression.
- Staff are motivated to deliver high care standards when they work at their local hospital where their families receive care.

"We have a strong ethos of staff development and use PDSA and QI projects as a way to develop staff. It starts from PDSA and QI, and snowballs into other opportunities and developments for staff... Our staff are very passionate about delivering exceptional care, as lots of staff live locally and it's the place where their families are treated. It's very personal and they want to do their best."

Improving Together QI methodology: Fostering a long-term culture of improvement at University Hospitals of North Midlands

Overview

In 2021 University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust commenced implementation of Improving Together, their Trust-wide continuous improvement methodology. With a focus on empowering staff to make changes to their daily work, the programme seeks to foster a long-term culture of improvement over 5-10 years. During the first 15 months of implementation, KPMG trained the Centre for Excellence team. Since 2022 the programme has been fully delivered by the team as part of the QI Academy, with improvements made to programme content based on participant feedback.



Successes and outcomes

Improved triage and induction of labour for maternity patients

The maternity team used the Improving Together methodology to improve processes regarding triage and induction of labour. Guided initially by a local target of 85%, their work resulted in 92% of patients triaged within 15 minutes and 99% of patients induced on time. The maternity team presented their achievements to executives and have sustained this through daily leader standard work.

Key enablers

- A key principle underpinning the QI methodology is involving those staff closest to the work. This principle has shaped the approach to staff engagement and training. Staff are engaged in QI; they feel empowered to improve experiences for staff and improve care for patients.
- The QI Academy team delivers training to staff across the Trust. Staff receive QI training at induction which provides familiarity with QI language and terms. They also have access to full training to undertake improvement work.
- The Improving Together programme focuses on long-term cultural change, is supported by the Trust Board, and programme work is reported into committees up to the Board. This has influenced whole organisational culture and local workplace culture; local leaders want their teams to use the methodology and are supportive of their staff members' time to learn and engage.

Key learning points

- A QI programme that focuses on long-term cultural change fosters an organisational culture of openness to change and improvement.
- Engagement at Board level influences organisational and local workplace cultures; it leads to wider support from leaders across the organisation to involve and engage staff in QI initiatives.
- A dedicated team builds capability through training that starts at Trust Induction. This provides all staff with a baseline familiarisation of QI language, removing a barrier of unfamiliar QI terminology.

“Through engaging and supporting people to understand what can be improved, staff are engaged and feel supported to improve experiences for colleagues and improve care for patients. That’s the beauty of local teams driving the work... When QI is embedded and we use the tools when we’re facing challenges, it will help us to do our work; it’s a very valuable tool.”

5W and 4S for quality improvement: Meaningfully recognising QI success at Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital

Overview

The QI model at Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust was implemented in 2017 through staff consultation and has continued to expand. The current model includes the Trust-wide 5W QI framework, the 4S model, and QI huddles. The 5W framework improves outcomes by addressing the principles of "waste, without harm, with patients, work life, and waiting." The 4S model (scope, shape, shift, and sustain) was adapted from the Plan, Do, Study, Act cycle.



Successes and outcomes

Improving outcomes through development of a nurse-led clinic

A nurse with the nutritional care team led a QI project using the 4S model after attending a QI training programme. They developed a nurse-led central line repair clinic for parental nutrition, as well as a standard operating procedure and training programme. The new pathway has reduced length of stay, improved capacity, and reduced the amount of emergency central line replacements. Patients and families report improved experiences and staff report improved confidence in repairing central lines.

Key enablers

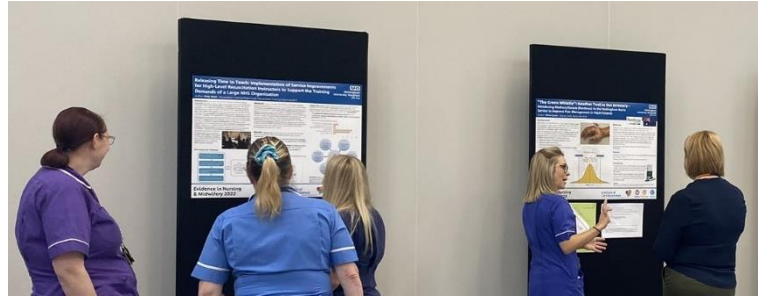
- Local teams have QI huddles centred around focused boards to embed the methodology in local areas. Direct care staff lead huddles and managers provide coaching. Teams discuss ideas and decide which initiatives to test. Patients are invited to participate and add ideas.
- Direct care staff receive training to become QI huddle leads. Training includes how to have brave conversations and respond to resistance to change.
- QI training starts with an entry-level session at Trust Induction. Bronze-level training supports staff undertaking projects within one area. Silver-level training supports projects incorporating multiple teams across divisions.
- When staff complete QI projects, they can apply for the Acorn Award for Improvement. Winners are celebrated by the CEO and Quality Leads in their local areas and awarded an Acorn of Improvement with their name and project headline. Trees for improvement are displayed at all sites to share learning. Staff report they find it rewarding to be recognised by the CEO and senior leaders.

Key learning points

- Robust training develops capability at all levels. A session at Induction introduces new starters and sets the tone, whilst project-based and huddle-based training programmes support experienced staff to put knowledge and skills to practice.
- QI huddles effectively bring together direct care staff, managers, and patients to shape improvement.
- When QI is tied to meaningful recognition, staff are motivated and feel valued.

"Meaningful recognition for QI is really important; it's a celebration of our teams... We recognise that direct care staff hold the key to QI in local areas, so staff are encouraged to get involved and this is supported by executives."

Quality improvement methodologies: Strategically weaving QI into organisational infrastructure at Nottingham University Hospitals



Overview

Since 2020, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust has implemented various QI methodologies including Plan Do Study Act (PDSA), Quality Service Improvement and Redesign (QSIR), and Working to Achieve Value in Excellence (WAVE). The WAVE methodology brings together different clinical, operational, and QI teams to identify opportunities and improve quality of care through benchmarking and improving pathways. Staff are supported and enabled to use these methodologies to undertake improvement projects across the Trust.

Successes and outcomes

“Engage, Enthuse, Empower” Festival

As part of celebrating Excellence, the organisation hosts an annual “Engage, Enthuse, Empower” Festival and Conference celebrating research, QI, and innovation. The conference showcases staff achievements in NMAHP research, innovation, practice development, and education. Staff are proudly involved in sharing best practice.

Key enablers

- QI training is embedded into numerous training programmes for staff at all levels. The three-day training programme for shared governance councils includes QI and QSIR training. Leadership development programmes include QI so leaders can drive and deliver improvement projects.
- There is an active Fellowship programme for nurses and midwives, where staff are enabled with the knowledge and skills to translate evidence into practice.
- QI is intentionally celebrated widely across the organisation. Staff are not only rewarded for achieving successful outcomes; they are also recognised for learning. This is driven by strategy and culture that promotes QI for all staff and wants to empower individuals and teams to be involved.

Key learning points

- When QI is strategically embedded into the organisational infrastructure, it increases staff exposure to QI concepts and increases the number of opportunities for staff engagement.
- By integrating QI into leadership programmes, shared governance culture, and celebrations, it promotes the message that QI is for all staff.
- Fellowship programmes based on QI principles provide opportunities for staff to translate knowledge and skill into practice.
- It is important to celebrate learning from QI, in addition to achievement of successful outcomes.

“We’re celebrating [QI] and weaving it into our fabric, demonstrating the key message that QI is for everyone. Our culture, through our strategic vision, is to empower individuals to be a part of it and celebrate how staff contribute to improved patient outcomes... QI leads to improved staff satisfaction and improved patient outcomes, reflecting key principles of the Excellence agenda.”

Quality Improvement Nurse empowering teams: Engaging teams and leaders in QI at the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital (Birmingham)



Overview

In 2023, the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (Birmingham) employed a Quality Improvement Nurse to work with teams across the organisation and empower them to make evidence-based improvements. The role focuses on improving safety outcomes and transforming services for the benefit of patients. The Trust uses Quality Service Improvement and Redesign (QSIR) methodology and offers a training programme. There are plans to introduce continuous improvement huddle boards and service accreditation across the organisation to promote the delivery of safe high-quality care.

Successes and outcomes

Implementation of plans underway

A Continuous Improvement Triage Group meets monthly and are planning the launch of continuous improvement huddle boards; the boards will engage teams in their areas and encourage idea generation.

A working group has been formed to introduce service accreditation as a bespoke version of ward accreditation. The service accreditation programme will include areas such as Theatres and Pre-Admission. It will comprise a set of measures with bronze, gold, silver, and platinum award designation for services.

Key enablers

- Direct care teams were engaged in their local workplaces from the outset of programme implementation. Engagement activities demonstrate to direct care staff that their input in shaping QI is valued. They have responded enthusiastically, and staff report they find it useful to have opportunities to try new ideas in a structured way.
- Leaders have positively received QI and realise the benefits. It provides assurance for an organised approach to lead and support change in their areas.
- The QSIR training programme is available to all staff. It includes a one-day session that all staff are encouraged to complete, as well as a five-day intensive course for senior leaders focused on translating knowledge into action.

Key learning points

- When staff are involved in QI, they feel engaged and heard, and believe they can enact positive change and improve ownership of their practice.
- Structured QI programmes provide leaders with an organised approach to lead and support change.

“[Through QI] we’re engaging our teams. Our staff feel listened to, appreciated, and respected. We’re empowering our staff to feel heard, engaged, and feel ownership of enacting positive change... Changes that impact staff will support our patients. These changes will improve patient care.”

Continuous Quality Improvement teams: Motivating teams driven by data at Royal Wolverhampton and Walsall Healthcare

Working in partnership

The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust
Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust

Overview

The Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) team was established at Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust in 2017 and at Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust in 2019. CQI team members deliver coaching to staff undertaking improvement projects and use QI boards displayed in local areas to promote staff engagement. Both sites utilise the Quality Service Improvement and Redesign (QSIR) framework and Quality and Safety Improvement Programme (QSIP).

Successes and outcomes

Improved timeliness of electronic documentation

In 2022 a nurse-led improvement project identified delays in the electronic documentation of observations. After analysing the data sources within electronic systems, the nurse introduced a new reporting system for Royal Wolverhampton and adapted it for Walsall Healthcare, resulting in measured improvements in the timeliness of electronic documentation for observations. This work has resulted in sustained improvement at both sites.

Key enablers

- The CQI team delivers training which includes teaching staff how to critically appraise, analyse, and interpret data. Equipped with these skills, staff use data to identify and demonstrate improvements. The team also focuses on being accessible and motivational. They offer coaching, virtual coffee drop-in sessions, and mentorship. Staff feel empowered to liaise with the team and build their confidence.
- Staff have opportunities to attend study days, to fully engage in learning and activities. After attending training, they are encouraged to put their knowledge and skills into practice.
- QI is embedded into the local accreditation programme. As part of the accreditation assessment, staff are asked if they know of QI projects taking place on their ward. This motivates teams to increase their awareness of local QI work and improves the relevance of the programme.
- Leaders demonstrate positive attitudes towards change which has influenced organisational culture. Staff feel empowered to suggest ideas for change and are motivated to improve outcomes.

Key learning points

- QI teams that are accessible, motivational, and train staff to analyse data are important enablers. They equip staff with the ability and motivation to engage in QI and use data to demonstrate impact.
- Embedding QI into the local accreditation framework increases awareness, understanding, and relevance of QI within clinical teams.
- Influenced through leadership and organisational culture that is open to change, staff are confident and motivated to suggest ideas and improve outcomes through QI.

“Through our organisational culture and attitudes of leaders, we demonstrate a positive mindset that change is possible and it is welcome. It’s the ripple effect that starts with the mindset of leaders, showing that we can improve things and that staff will be encouraged when they want to improve. Staff will be motivated to keep trying and keep improving.”

The Improvement Academy: Leadership and organisational culture enabling QI at United Lincolnshire Hospitals



Overview

In 2019 United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust established a Trust-wide Improvement Academy with a dedicated team of QI Facilitators. The aim of the Improvement Academy is to develop and enable sustainable improvement. Facilitators provide training which includes 1-day, 3-day, and bespoke sessions. They also deliver individual and team coaching for staff undertaking improvement projects across the organisation.

Successes and outcomes

“What matters to you” QI training

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a bespoke “What matters to you” Quality Service Improvement and Redesign (QSIR) training session was delivered for nurses and midwives. The training was developed based on feedback regarding what mattered most to them: QI methodologies that were practical, resources that were easily accessible online for clinical schedules, and principles they could take back to clinical areas. Attendees reported the sessions were inspiring, accessible, and relevant to their needs.

Reduced pressure ulcer rates

The oncology-haematology ward used the Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) approach to improve patient experiences and outcomes. They utilised feedback from staff and patients, to involve patients in their care and personalise care for pressure area relief, leading to a reduction in pressure ulcer rates on the ward.

Improved nutrition for parents

When the neonatal unit asked parents what mattered to them, parents responded that it was challenging getting food from the Trust cafeteria because they did not want to leave their newborn. The staff worked with the catering department to bring meals to the ward, leading to improved access to meals for parents.

Key enablers

- The organisational culture and QI model are underpinned by the principle that those who are directly involved in the work are best placed to recognise and have ideas for improvement. Staff appreciate the opportunity to be involved, shape the work, and make direct impacts on patient care.
- The senior nursing team has expertise in QI methodologies. Through workplace culture they consider it part of their role to develop capability and encourage involvement in QI work from their teams.
- The training for shared decision-making councils includes QI; this equips direct care council members with the tools to design and implement change.

Key learning points

- When organisational culture prioritises the involvement of direct care staff in QI, staff engage with QI and feel valued for their contributions.
- When leaders understand QI and view it as part of their roles, they build capability and provide opportunities for improvement work within their teams.

“We’re proud that we’re making QI accessible and empowering teams to turn their ideas into reality. We want that critical mass with the knowledge, skills, and confidence... staff who recognise and have ideas, and leaders that understand QI and enable staff, leading to empowerment to improve patient care.”

Chapter 6:

Research and Innovation

*Research is the scientific inquiry
to discover and generate new knowledge.*

*Innovation encompasses new novel
methods, ideas, and/or products.*

The Centre for NMAHP Research and Education Excellence: Innovation supporting strategic objectives at University Hospitals of North Midlands



Overview

In 2022 University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust established the Centre for NMAHP Research and Education Excellence as part of the Chief Nurse's portfolio. The Centre provides education and training programmes for staff from band 2 roles to senior leaders, building knowledge and skills for nurses, midwives and AHPs to drive innovation. Over 130 nurses, midwives, and AHPs have received training through the Centre for NMAHP Research and Education Excellence.

Successes and outcomes

Fellowships and awards

Through organisational leadership, recognition, and investment, the Trust has supported staff through successful fellowship and award applications including: four NIHR Pre-doctoral Clinical and Practitioner Academic Fellowships; two NIHR Research Leader awards; two NHSE Clinical Leadership Fellowships; two Foundation of Nursing Studies Inspire Improvement Fellowships; a Cystic Fibrosis Trust Fellowship; a North Staffordshire Medical Institute award; a West Midlands Clinical Research Network Personal Development award; and a research and innovation staff member on the Developing Aspirant Leaders programme.

Recruitment and retention

In addition to staff expressing that they feel valued and developed, investment in staff development has supported improvements in recruitment and retention. Nursing and midwifery turnover has decreased from 14% in 2022 to 7% in 2024, leading to a significant reduction in vacancies.

Key enablers

- Fellows are taught by Quality Improvement teams to undertake improvement work aligned to strategic objectives within the organisational strategy and the People Promise, and to Trust values. By clearly aligning each Fellow's project work to strategic objectives, leaders including Trust Board members understand the value of these investments and are widely supportive of the programme.
- The CNO and senior leaders have fostered a culture that encourages staff to speak up, which gives staff the confidence to voice innovative ideas to their teams and leaders.

Key learning points

- Clear alignment of staff members' projects to strategic objectives promotes wide buy-in and support across the organisation.
- An organisational culture of openness fosters psychological safety for staff to speak up and voice innovative ideas.
- Investing in staff capability to undertake research and innovation supports recruitment and retention. When organisations invest in staff development to lead innovation, staff feel valued. They want to work for these organisations and grow in their careers.

"Our people are the foundation and the glue, and we've created a place where people want to live, work, and stay. Our staff feel empowered to innovate... We've fostered a culture of trust, giving staff a voice and giving them opportunities to express themselves and share ideas. Staff are speaking up and getting involved."

CNO Fellowship programme: Developing leadership that drives research and innovation at Northampton General Hospital

Overview

In 2018 Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust established the CNO Fellowship to engage nurses with a culture of research, innovation, and clinical academia. Fellows are seconded from practice one day a week to lead service improvement projects underpinned by research, QI, and leadership. Programme intake has grown from a cohort of two to eight Fellows annually with 24 staff having completed the programme.



Successes and outcomes

Career progression and retention

From last year's cohort of eight Fellows, all were offered new roles with seven progressing in their careers. Twenty of the 24 Fellows are retained within the organisation. One Fellow shadowed the Ruth May in her role of CNO for England.

Inclusion and diversity

The fellowship has been expanded to include midwives and allied health professionals. Engagement work to include staff from culturally diverse backgrounds including internationally-educated staff has been successful in improving representation across diverse groups.

Success stories

A Fellow successfully completed a research internship as part of the programme and conducted a scoping review exploring moral injury, peer support, and COVID-19 pandemic impacts on support workers. Their findings led them to develop a peer support scheme for staff. Another Fellow conducted a project to decrease incidents of violence and aggression in patients with dementia. They developed research-based activity packs, introduced an "Activity Hero" role to support high-risk patients, and evaluated outcomes.

Key enablers

- In addition to research training and an allocated research mentor, Fellows undertake the RCN Leadership training programme and are allocated a dedicated clinical leadership mentor to develop their leadership skills and drive innovative research projects.
- The CNO is directly involved in the programme. Fellows are supported by the CNO and have opportunities to shadow meetings with senior leaders and Board members.
- Fellows are seconded from practice one day each week, paid at a higher banding level for their fellowship days, and services receive backfill to cover their time.

Key learning points

- The CNO Fellowship brings together research, innovation, and leadership. It builds organisational capability for direct care staff to lead on innovative evidence-based projects through leadership training and mentorship from the CNO, research leaders, and clinical leaders.
- Staff are empowered to think differently, voice their ideas, and lead projects improving local services. They feel valued and invested, progress in their careers, and choose to stay at the Trust.

"The Trust culture prioritises building capability to lead evidence-based research and innovation projects that improve outcomes. This programme unlocks a lot of doors; they feel invested by our CNO and organisation, and they feel valued."

Strategic leadership in Research and Innovation: Building capability and equitable opportunities at Nottingham University Hospitals



Overview

Over the past 10 years Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust has established an active programme of nursing and midwifery research and innovation (R&I) through collaboration between their Institute of Care Excellence and R&I department. Nurses and midwives are developed to lead R&I through Chief Nurse Fellowships, NIHR fellowships and internships, PhDs, and partnerships with higher education institutions.

Successes and outcomes

Professional development and partnerships

The CNO Fellows programme is in its sixth year, with 55 staff completions. The Trust has supported 25 nursing and midwifery PhDs and two Health Education England Fellows. The organisation also received six NIHR awards in 2022-23 and established partnership grants with three universities.

Translating research to practice

A CNO Fellow undertook an evidence-based project and transformed national guidelines for pregnancy loss based on findings. The Trust also has a very active research group addressing health inequalities and involving parents and carers in the assessment of deteriorating infants, children, and young people.

Key enablers

- Comprehensive R&I training and development opportunities that target a wide group of staff at all levels, increase the accessibility of these development opportunities for nurses and midwives.
- Staff find it inspiring to have role models from diverse backgrounds, such as research-active nurses and midwives with families, from ethnic minority backgrounds, and with protected characteristics. Programmes that target underrepresented groups, with diverse role models, promote equity and accessibility of available opportunities.
- R&I is inextricably linked to nursing and midwifery celebration initiatives. Staff are motivated to engage when they see colleagues drive change through R&I and receive recognition for improving outcomes.
- Through leadership that values R&I, R&I is incorporated into the organisational strategy at every level. This strategic intent ensures that nursing and midwifery leaders prioritise and drive R&I.

Key learning points

- By purposefully building capability at all levels, nurses and midwives are enabled to engage in R&I.
- Having role models from diverse backgrounds inspires staff from diverse backgrounds and promotes equity of opportunities.
- Linking meaningful recognition to R&I success generates interest and motivation.
- Transformational leaders drive R&I through strategic plans and priorities.

“The organisation creates the right environment to support research and innovation through strategic intent, having articulate and highly trained leaders who recognise research as a pillar of practice, and providing accessible opportunities... Forward-thinking leadership, with expertise in the organisation to drive it, enables nurses and midwives to be active and successful in research and innovation.”

Inclusion and alignment to local service needs: Demonstrating the value of research at University Hospitals Birmingham

Overview

Over the past five years University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust has built its portfolio of research training and development programmes available to nurses and midwives. The Trust delivers the Integrated Clinical Academic Programme on behalf of the West Midlands, supported by a dedicated team that provides clinical academic career support. Through Chief Nurse Scholarships, staff are funded one day a week to undertake a quality improvement project and a level 7 module on research and improvement methods. Through Chief Nurse Fellowships, staff can undertake a Masters of Research at the University of Birmingham.

Successes and outcomes

Professional development

Fourteen students are currently undertaking the “Preparing for Research Delivery” programme, a 12-month course. The Trust has also supported successful fellowships; in 2024 three staff members were shortlisted for NIHR Doctoral Clinical Academic Fellowships and a Wellcome Fellowship, with two fellowships awarded.

Nurses and midwives leading research

The portfolio of nursing and midwifery led research includes a £4.6 million bid led by a Professor of Nursing.

Key enablers

- Chief Nurse Scholars and Fellows are released from practice one day a week and services receive backfill to cover their time. They undertake projects aligned to service needs to bring back learning and add value to local services.
- Engagement events improve the visibility and attractiveness of research. Roadshows in local areas and an established community of practice for researchers within the organisation promote opportunities for networking and engagement.
- Bespoke programmes support underrepresented staff from global majority backgrounds and with protected characteristics to engage in research. Funded by the Clinical Research Network West Midlands and led by the Trust, a regional programme pairs staff with mentors from similar backgrounds.

Key learning points

- Staff capability and confidence to engage in research is developed through internal and external training programmes.
- By aligning projects to service needs, local managers and teams realise the value added by research and evidence-based practice.
- Engagement events improve the visibility of research. Bespoke R&I mentorship programmes support staff from underrepresented groups.

“We want to make research visible and attractive to all direct care staff and encourage representation from the global majority. We’ve gone out, engaged them, and undertaken targeted projects to reach them... It’s important to develop NMAHPs who lead research with confidence and autonomy.”



The Centre for Care Excellence: Building capability and translating evidence into practice at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire



Overview

In 2020 University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, in collaboration with Coventry University, established the Centre for Care Excellence (CfCE) to lead and build capacity and capability in NMAHP research and innovation. The Trust has a well-established Research and Development department and Innovation team to support research and innovation activities, as well as an Innovation Hub, a dedicated space for staff to network and develop ideas.

Successes and outcomes

"Inspiring Excellence" Symposium

An annual "Inspiring Excellence" Conference brings together local, national, and global experts to showcase the impacts of research, innovation, professional practice, and education.

Research successes

Numerous research studies are being led by the clinical academic team of professors and associates. Additionally, clinical staff are undertaking funded PhD programmes whilst maintaining their clinical skills through practice each week.

Critically Appraised Topic groups

Critically Appraised Topic (CAT) groups have been developed across the Trust. The CAT model utilises multidisciplinary group learning to build capability in evaluating evidence. It is delivered in partnership with Clinical Evidence Based Information Services Specialists, a knowledge specialist team supporting practice improvements. A staff group from Frailty appraised evidence to consider for changes to practice, to improve staff understanding of ReSPECT (Recommended Summary Plan for Emergency Care and Treatment) plans.

Key enablers

- The CfCE team support staff to develop a wide range of skills such as publishing, undertaking audits, and critical appraisal of literature through CAT groups, in-house programmes, research internships, and supporting staff to access NIHR training programmes.
- The CfCE team delivers coaching and research advice/signposting via drop-in clinics to help identify career pathways. They also talent-spot and develop staff who are curious, self-driven, and undertake evidence-based projects in practice.
- The CfCE team support staff with publications and translating findings to practice. Staff report feeling fulfilled seeing quality and safety improvements resulting from implementing evidence-based change.

Key learning points

- The Centre for Care Excellence have built a dedicated team of professorial and associate staff with research expertise, enabling direct care staff to evaluate and translate evidence into practice.
- Staff find it rewarding to improve quality and safety outcomes through translation of evidence into practice.

"Staff translate evidence into clinical practice and make a difference improving quality and safety outcomes... When we develop capability and grow talent within an organisation, it becomes an attractive place to work, staff feel happier and are retained, leading to a healthier, happier organisation."

An inspirational journal and successful partnerships: Improving the accessibility of research at University Hospitals of Leicester



Overview

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust established the NIHR Biomedical Research Centre, NIHR Clinical Research Facilities, and the NIHR Recruitment Centre. Research is clearly integrated within the new organisational strategy. Strategic focuses include developing nurses and midwives within research and innovation, promoting accessible opportunities in research, and linking research to the digital transformation agenda.

Successes and outcomes

First journal dedicated to NMAHP research

In 2023 the Trust launched *Inspire*, their first journal dedicated to research by nurses, midwives, AHPs, health scientists, and pharmacists. Funded by the organisation, the aim is to improve the accessibility of research for novice, developing, and experienced staff, who are encouraged to submit reflections, audits, service evaluations, QI projects, or research publications. Submissions are peer-reviewed by a panel of clinical academic editors. The journal has received recognition from NIHR and NHS England.

Research successes and partnerships

Over the past five years, the organisation has seen an increase in successful grants, funding, and patient recruitment to studies. They won the HSJ Award for Acute Sector Innovation of the Year in 2023. The Trust also benefits from a strong network between clinicians, academics, and regional partners. The Trust is leading a programme with the University of Leicester to develop the Institute of Excellence in Healthcare Research.

Key enablers

- Focused work to improve the accessibility of research has been fundamental to success. The *Inspire* journal accepts different types of publications such as reflections and audits; this approach exposes staff to a culture of research, giving them valuable experience and building confidence.
- “Research champion” link roles offer opportunities for clinical nurses and midwives to bring back learning to their clinical areas. They support colleagues to make the connection between evidence-based practice and improved care outcomes.
- Research as a pillar of organisational strategy gives direction and demonstrates its value.
- Strong partnerships with community, regional, and national partners support the sharing of innovation.

Key learning points

- Organisations can support staff to engage in research through strategic plans, external partnerships, and improving the accessibility of research.
- Accessibility is vital in engaging staff with a culture of research. When research is accessible, nurses and midwives are engaged and motivated to learn and improve care outcomes for patients.
- Champion link roles provide opportunities for staff to bring back learning to their local areas.

“Our nursing and midwifery Research Champions are the lynchpin between clinical care and research. They are based on wards and departments and can build their research interests and learn... We are excited that our staff can see how evidence-based practice makes an impact to improve patient care outcomes.”

Abbreviations

In alphabetical order:

AHP	Allied Health Professional
CAT	Critically Appraised Topic
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CNO	Chief Nursing Officer
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CQI	Continuous Quality Improvement
EDI	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
HSJ	Health Service Journal
MDT	Multidisciplinary team
NHSE	NHS England
NIHR	National Institute for Health and Care Research
NMAHP	Nurses, Midwives, and Allied Health Professionals
PDSA	Plan Do Study Act
PNA	Professional Nurse Advocate
PSIRF	Patient Safety Incident Response Framework
QI	Quality Improvement
QSIP	Quality and Safety Improvement Programme
QSIR	Quality Service Improvement and Redesign

R&I	Research and Innovation
RCN	Royal College of Nursing
SDM	Shared decision-making
SPDM	Shared professional decision-making

Glossary of terms

In alphabetical order:

Continuous quality improvement	A methodical approach to solve problems, improve the quality of processes and services, and improve outcomes
DAISY Awards	A recognition programme to recognise nurses for the compassionate care they provide patients and families, delivered by the DAISY Foundation
Distributed leadership	Building and sustaining leadership capacity at all levels, through different roles in organisations
Excellence	Nursing and Midwifery Excellence
Excellence approaches	The framework of six Excellence initiatives explored in this study, namely: 1) shared professional decision-making, 2) meaningful recognition, 3) local accreditation, 4) distributed leadership, 5) continuous quality improvement, 6) research and innovation
Health Service Journal (HSJ) Awards	An award programme to celebrate healthcare service excellence in the United Kingdom, focused on sharing best practice, improving patient outcomes, and innovating better service
Innovation	New novel methods and ideas
Local accreditation	A framework for standards of care; a comprehensive assessment of the quality of care at a local level enabling areas of improvement to be identified and areas of Excellence to be celebrated
Magnet Recognition Program®	An international accreditation programme for nursing excellence and improved patient care and quality through the American Nurses Credentialing Center
Meaningful recognition	The recognition of nurses and/or midwives for their contributions and value which promotes fulfilment and professional pride
Pathway to Excellence Program®	An international accreditation programme for nursing excellence and healthy work environments through the American Nurses Credentialing Center

Research	The scientific inquiry to generate new knowledge
Shared professional decision-making	A non-hierarchical approach where staff are involved in making decisions about their practice; also known as shared decision-making, shared governance, or collective leadership

Please visit the Chief Nursing Officer for England's Excellence Programme page on the FutureNHS Collaboration Platform, to find more resources and to stay updated on this exciting agenda.

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