



Royal College  
of Midwives



**Making maternity services safer:**

**nurturing**

**a positive culture**

# The role of a positive culture

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

Culture can be described as 'the way we do things around here'.

Culture in health services is shaped by a number of factors:

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

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



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



The courage of compassion The King's Fund ([kingsfund.org.uk](https://kingsfund.org.uk))



# How do we improve our culture?

**In order to provide compassionate, safe, effective, person-centred care in this increasingly complex environment and maintain resilience, staff need to care for each other as well as have self-care. There is growing evidence about how staff who feel supported, valued and developed can deliver better quality care with lower mortality rates, morbidity, and improved patient experience (Simpson et al. 2019).**

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



## Practical tools to improve culture



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



# How do we measure our culture?

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

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

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

**NHS England | Staff Survey 2020**

**NHS Scotland | Staff Survey 2020**

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

**NHS Wales | Staff Survey 2020**

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



## Key improvements and deteriorations highlighted in the latest staff surveys

### Key improvements

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

### Key deteriorations

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



## Organisational Culture self-assessment tools

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

(Simpson et al. 2019)

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





# Additional resources

Positive cultures workshop:

[rcm.org.uk/media/5273/positive-cultures-workshop-4.pptx](https://rcm.org.uk/media/5273/positive-cultures-workshop-4.pptx)

RCOG workplace behaviour toolkit:

[rcog.org.uk/en/careers-training/workplace-workforce-issues/workplace-behaviour/toolkit/](https://rcog.org.uk/en/careers-training/workplace-workforce-issues/workplace-behaviour/toolkit/)

Tackling undermining and bullying:

[resolution.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/BullyingA4-final-Dec-2019-002.pdf](https://resolution.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/BullyingA4-final-Dec-2019-002.pdf)

Coast E., Jones E., Portela A., Lattof S.R. (2014). Maternity Care Services and Culture: A Systematic Global Mapping of Interventions:

[doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0108130](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0108130)

NHS Employers Professionalism and cultural transformation pact toolkit:

[nhsemployers.org/publications/professionalism-and-cultural-transformation-pact-toolkit](https://nhsemployers.org/publications/professionalism-and-cultural-transformation-pact-toolkit)

NHS England cultural leadership programme:

[england.nhs.uk/culture/culture-leadership-programme/discovery-phase/](https://england.nhs.uk/culture/culture-leadership-programme/discovery-phase/)

NICE recommendations, monitoring and evaluating staffing requirements:

[nice.org.uk/guidance/ng4/chapter/1-Recommendations#monitoring-and-evaluating-midwifery-staffing-requirements](https://nice.org.uk/guidance/ng4/chapter/1-Recommendations#monitoring-and-evaluating-midwifery-staffing-requirements)

Health and Safety Executive Human factor topics:

[hse.gov.uk/humanfactors/topics/culture.htm](https://hse.gov.uk/humanfactors/topics/culture.htm)

Health and Safety Executive Human factors – organisational change:

[hse.gov.uk/humanfactors/topics/orgchange.htm](https://hse.gov.uk/humanfactors/topics/orgchange.htm)

The King's Fund Transformational change in health and care: reports from the field:

[kingsfund.org.uk/publications/transformational-change-health-care](https://kingsfund.org.uk/publications/transformational-change-health-care)

The King's Fund: Improving NHS culture:

[kingsfund.org.uk/projects/culture](https://kingsfund.org.uk/projects/culture)

The King's Fund: The courage of compassion: supporting nurses and midwives to deliver high quality care:

[kingsfund.org.uk/publications/courage-compassion-supporting-nurses-midwives](https://kingsfund.org.uk/publications/courage-compassion-supporting-nurses-midwives)

Mannion R. and Davies H (2018). Understanding organisational culture for healthcare quality improvement BMJ 2018; 363 doi:

[doi.org/10.1136/bmj.k4907](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.k4907)



Royal College of Midwives (2021). The solution series:1. Improving Maternity: Learning from reviews of maternity services:  
**[rcm.org.uk/media/4988/the-solution-series-1-improving-maternity-services.pdf](https://rcm.org.uk/media/4988/the-solution-series-1-improving-maternity-services.pdf)**

Royal College of Midwives (2016). Undermining and bullying behaviours in the workplace i-learn course:  
**[rcm.org.uk/i-learn-and-i-folio](https://rcm.org.uk/i-learn-and-i-folio)**

Sexton J.B., Helmreich R.L., Neilands T.B., Rowan K., Vella K., Boyden J., Roberts P.R. & Thomas E.J. (2006). The Safety Attitudes Questionnaire: psychometric properties, benchmarking data, and emerging research. BMC Health Services Research volume:  
**[bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/1472-6963-6-44.pdf](https://bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/1472-6963-6-44.pdf)**

Simpson D., Hamilton S., McSherry R. and McIntosh R. (2019). Measuring and Assessing Healthcare Organisational Culture in the England's National Health Service: A Snapshot of Current Tools and Tool Use:  
**[ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6955975/pdf/health-care-07-00127.pdf](https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6955975/pdf/health-care-07-00127.pdf)**

UK Parliament: The safety of maternity services in England:  
**[publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cm-health/19/1902.htm](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cm-health/19/1902.htm)**

Braithwaite J, Herkes J, Ludlow K, Testa L, Lamprell G. (2017). Association between organisational and workplace cultures, and patient outcomes: systematic review. BMJ Open2017;7:e017708. .  
**[doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2017-017708](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2017-017708) pmid:29122796**

Amy C. Edmondson (2018). The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth. ISBN: 978-1-119-47724-2

Schwartz rounds  
**[pointofcarefoundation.org.uk/our-work/schwartz-rounds](https://pointofcarefoundation.org.uk/our-work/schwartz-rounds)**

Restorative Supervision  
**[learn.nes.nhs.scot/3580/clinical-supervision](https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/3580/clinical-supervision)**  
**[england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/a-equip-midwifery-supervision-model.pdf](https://england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/a-equip-midwifery-supervision-model.pdf)**

National Institute for Health Research (2009). Measuring and assessing organisational culture in the NHS





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Published: September 2021  
[www.rcm.org.uk](http://www.rcm.org.uk)