“Where there is hope, anything is possible” - an Appreciative Inquiry of Maternity Culture at Milton Keynes University Hospital.

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life learning from excellence

Discover

Culture within Maternity services has been highlighted as a key area for development in recent national reports[1,2]. In particular, the importance of promoting professional standards of clinical behaviour and improving teamworking.

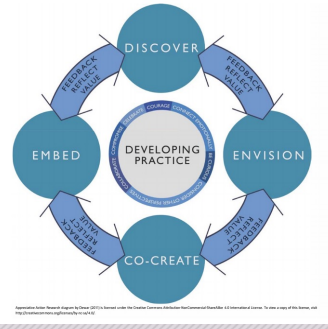
Our aim was to investigate the culture within Milton Keynes University Hospital Maternity Services and use these findings to guide and develop initiatives to make a positive change.

Dream

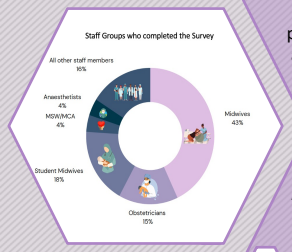
Our dream is for a positive and collaborative maternity culture to become normality. Staff will always feel confident to escalate concerns in an organisation with a flattened authority gradient. Systems to support staff wellbeing and psychological safety will be developed and training prioritised.

Design

Through a monthly collaborative "Culture Task and Finish Group", Appreciative Inquiry methodology was used to co-create a Maternity Culture Survey gaining responses from 142 members of the multidisciplinary team using an online form. Responses included ordinal data and free text. Qualitative data was analysed through coding of themes and word groups.



Results



Responses demonstrated many areas of excellence.

A strong emphasis on trusted escalation pathways and themes of a caring and supportive team.

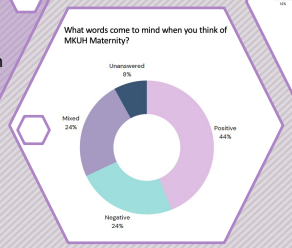
Areas for improvement were recognised.

Embedded hierarchy and missed opportunities to celebrate success were highlighted.

Top Three Positive and Negative Words

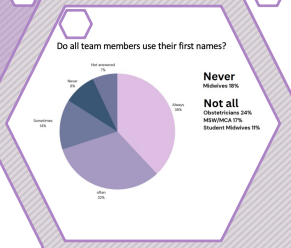
Positive (n)	Negative (n)
Friendly (33)	Cliques (11)
Supportive (22)	Hierarchy (8)
Welcoming (8)	Undermining (5)

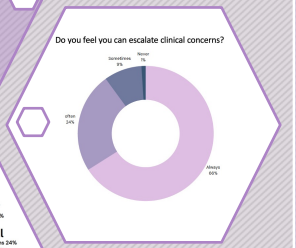
Results have enabled us to target departmental initiatives.
The role of “Workplace Behaviour Champion” has been introduced, sustaining positive cultural change through group forums.



An escalation toolkit has been implemented, including techniques such as the “CUS” tool (Concerned, Unsafe, Stop) and “Teach or Treat”.

These techniques are now regularly used by multidisciplinary team members to standardise the use of safety critical language and promote civility amongst the team.





Destiny

This work highlights excellence in many aspects of Maternity Culture at Milton Keynes, along with some areas for improvement. Using a collaborative approach, we have implemented departmental changes making a real difference to safe escalation and civility in the workplace.

An area for future development is the Labour Ward Handover. We aim to implement a “Team of the Shift Huddle” as recommended by RCOG & RCM. Our appreciative inquiry has highlighted the importance of optimal communication, clinical escalation, and a positive safety culture.

Challenges will be faced going forward, culture is embedded and therefore obstacles may be encountered. However, in using a collaborative approach, we have found willingness to change.

References
1. Independent Maternity Review. (2022). *Ockenden report - Final* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1064302/Final-Ockenden-Report-web-accessible.pdf
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