

Characteristics of good

We have developed the content below using national guidance and evidence from our recent inspection programme. This resource aims to set out the general characteristics of good maternity practice.

The characteristics of good leadership and culture

The leadership, governance and culture of the service promote the delivery of high-quality person-centred care.

Maternity leaders should have the experience, capacity, capability and integrity to ensure that the maternity strategy can be delivered and risks to performance addressed.

Maternity leaders at every level, including board safety champions, should be visible and approachable. Compassionate, inclusive and effective leadership is sustained through a leadership strategy and development programme and effective selection, deployment and support processes and succession planning.

The maternity leadership should be knowledgeable about issues and priorities for the quality and sustainability of their maternity services, understand the challenges and act to address them.

There is a clear statement of vision and values within the maternity service, which is driven by quality and sustainability. The vision and values have been translated into a robust and realistic maternity specific strategy with well-defined objectives, which are achievable and relevant. The vision, values and strategy should have been coproduced with women and staff. The maternity strategy should be aligned to local maternity and neonatal system (LMNS) and integrated care system (ICS) plans in the wider health and social care economy and services are planned to meet the needs of women.

Progress against delivery of the maternity strategy is monitored and reviewed, and there is evidence of this.

All staff in the maternity service know, understand and support the maternity specific vision, values and strategic goals and their role in achieving them.

Maternity leaders consistently demonstrate and encourage compassionate, inclusive and supportive relationships among staff so that they feel respected, valued and supported.

Maternity leaders should at every level:

- live the vision and embody shared values
- prioritise high-quality, sustainable and compassionate care
- promote equality and diversity.

Pride and positivity are encouraged within the maternity service with a focus on the needs and experiences of women and their families. Where behaviours and performance are inconsistent with the maternity vision and values they should be swiftly identified and dealt with effectively, regardless of seniority.

Maternity leadership actively promotes staff empowerment to drive improvement, and raising concerns is encouraged and valued. Maternity leaders promote and actively contribute to an environment of continuous learning. There is a psychologically safe environment that enables maternity staff to actively raise concerns and leaders ensure they are supported. Candour, openness, honesty, transparency and challenges to poor practice are the norm.

Concerns are investigated sensitively and confidentially, and lessons learned are shared through a variety of methods and acted on. When something goes wrong, women receive a sincere and timely apology and are told about any actions being taken to prevent the same happening again.

The maternity team demonstrate a collective responsibility of care, where conflicts are resolved quickly and constructively and responsibility is shared.

Maternity staff at every level are supported in their development and this includes high-quality appraisal and career conversations. Equality and diversity are actively promoted within the maternity service, the cause of any workforce inequality are identified and action taken to address these. All maternity staff, including those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act, feel they are treated equitably.