

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 incident management

Staff are encouraged to report any safety incident without fear for reprisal and provided with the time to do so.

There is an open and transparent safety culture, encouraged throughout the service. All staff understand and fulfil their responsibilities in raising concerns and report incidents and near misses. All staff are fully supported when they do so. When reporting incidents and near misses, protected equality characteristics of the woman are recorded routinely and considered as part of the review to identify themes and trends.

The maternity service routinely collects and uses equality data as part of their incident reporting process. When reviewing safety outcomes, trends are identified for women from ethnic minority groups and action is taken to respond to any risk factors. All maternity staff understand the importance of collecting demographic information and how it is used to improve outcomes for women. The maternity service breaks down data by levels of deprivation and targets improvement initiatives to areas with the highest deprivation.

When something does not go as planned, a thorough review or investigation is undertaken and involves all relevant staff, the woman, and their family. Questions of the woman and their family should be answered in full as part of the review process. Women leave hospital with all the information they need to be able to process their individual birth experience. If a woman requests a conversation with a member of the multi-disciplinary team about their birth prior to them leaving hospital, this should happen. However, when this is unachievable, women should be informed of the next opportunity for this conversation to happen.

For those cases referred to a review panel, women are invited to attend and supported to co-produce improvements for future service provision and reviews.

The maternity service actively participates in learning with other providers within the local maternity and neonatal system. Learning is communicated widely and through a variety of different methods to support improvements in throughout the trust, as well as services within the local maternity and neonatal system. External safety events and patient safety alerts are considered and reviewed by the service and shared with staff.

Improvements made following learning from reviews within the service, trust or the wider local maternity and neonatal system, the resulting changes are monitored through audit and the effectiveness is reviewed.