

Supporting leadership decisions in maternity services

The challenge

Facing intense regulatory scrutiny into a number of clinical incidents, a remote maternity service secured the support of FMLM to help with relationships within the team and to foster multiprofessional leadership. The staff themselves recognised how fractured relationships were impacting on the running of the service and there was a lot of unhappiness.

The solution

The programme was facilitated by a senior medical professional and a leadership development expert from FMLM. During the first session of the programme, obstetricians and senior midwives were asked, independently, “what would the other group say about you?” There were many constructive issues to work on but also pleasant surprises, for example midwives were surprised by how highly valued they were by their medical colleagues. This began a process of “stripping us bare, but then putting us back together again”, according to one participant.

Collaborative exercises built trust such that, over time, participants were increasingly ‘brutally honest’ with each other.. Working in this way helped to build lasting honesty, understanding and mutual trust among the group. It also helped the team develop ways to deal with people in general and to apply a constructive language framework for difficult conversations.

After initial healthy scepticism for the programme, participants later acknowledged that the focus on leadership and interpersonal skills was absolutely essential. The doctors particularly welcomed the deep understanding the FMLM medical professional had of their needs.

At the end of the programme, the participants worked together in multiprofessional groups to jointly agree a future action plan which they presented this to senior leaders and local politicians.

The results

An independent evaluation of the programme found:

- Lower staff turnover and happier, more committed teams
- Increased joint ward rounds and more constructive governance meetings
- Regularly updated training and more robust monitoring of KPIs
- Significant mitigation of risk (comparable to locality benchmark), e.g. reduced admissions to neonatal ICU, quicker response to emergencies, reduced regulator reporting and reduced C-Sections.

“They gave us the tools to do it ourselves...all of us can now walk in and know there is help and that somebody wants to help me [improve].”