



How talking helps – from those who have tried it

Helping people talk to each other as the foundation for improving patient safety

Sign up to Safety focuses on the kinder attitudes, values and behaviours that are necessary for a safety culture to grow and flourish. We help our members change how they talk to each other, trying different ways to share stories and hold conversations about safety together that could enhance their pledges, local safety work and safety culture.

Why help people talk to each other?

Throughout our work we have turned to our members; to ask questions, to listen to what they experience, to learn from what they say, and to involve them as our thinking has evolved.

What we heard loud and clear is that it is a struggle in the busy work day to develop relationships, a struggle to speak up and a struggle to be heard. We realised that if we wanted to help the right safety culture to take root, then this is where we should focus our help...

We began to look at changing the way people talk to each other. This set us off on a new adventure, testing ideas and methods to inspire people to have safety conversations.

What we saw led us to believe that **helping people talk to each other** could significantly impact on a safety culture in the NHS.

Here we share with you some of the responses we have had from the people who have experienced it for themselves, either by holding and encouraging conversations about safety where they work or coming along to an event we hosted:

“The challenges we face are not in isolation and can be tackled with a collective response and positive listening approach. Small steps can lead the way to bigger cultural changes if all summed up and shared widely. Listening, learning and taking part can make a difference even if you only start with a few.”

The majority of people in the room are facing the same dilemmas and voiced similar concerns which shows something has to change if people are willing to listen.”

Arsha Sharma, The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Foundation Trust, Sign up to Safety Project Manager

“It’s about upstream thinking. Opening up the possibility for thinking imaginatively about potential issues before they happen.”

Lynn Pearl, Safety, Risk and Resilience Manager, Bradford District Care NHS Trust

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"The ward just felt different, the staff felt different, the patients felt different. And for us, the volume of that speaks louder than any sort of report."

Katie Eacret, the Assistant Ward Manager/ Clinical Patient Safety Lead, Bradford District Care NHS Trust

"The intention of [Schwarz Rounds] is to do something really quite counter-cultural, against the traditional NHS big organisation way of doing things, with metrics and KPIs and monitoring."

Paul Mulligan, Change manager for Organisational Development and Schwartz Round Facilitator Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

"Much more useful than working in our own bubbles"

Anonymous attendee at the King's Fund event 'Keeping people safer'

"People will tell you that they don't have the time to talk. In our experience talking makes work easier and frees up time further down the line."

Lynn Pearl, Safety, Risk and Resilience Manager at Bradford District Care NHS Trust

"I think we've got to make more connections in the NHS and stop saying "that's not for me" or "that's not relevant to me" and saying "let's talk about it and find out if it's relevant"."

Victoria Murray, Sign Up to Safety Matron and Clinical Handover Lead at Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

"I think that's one of the things that's been different about these conversations – it's 'Tell us what it is that you think' and rather than me saying 'I'll take that away and do something about it', it's actually 'And what can you do about it and how can we help you to do something about it yourself?'"

Victoria Murray, Sign Up to Safety Matron and Clinical Handover Lead at Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

"I can take personal responsibility for creating a positive learning culture back in my workplace and offer support to colleagues and patients where possible by taking messages and sharing messages until we can change what has become the norm to a better safer environment for all."

Arsha Sharma, The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Foundation Trust, Sign up to Safety Project Manager

Sign up to SAFETY

“It’s about learning what it’s like to have a real, valuable conversation and from that hopefully taking something away and using it in other places.”

Anna Janssen, Clinical psychologist and Schwartz Rounds
facilitator at Guy’s & ST Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust

“While we sometimes pick up safety issues that we weren’t previously aware of, and can deal with them, which is great, it’s more about ensuring that staff across the organisation feel heard, and encouraging them to speak up, because if they feel happy speaking up in a patient safety conversation, it means they might be happier speaking up about safety elsewhere.”

Louise Scull, Trust Chair at Nottingham University Hospitals

“I’ve been struck by the power of one tool in my medical repertoire that’s more effective than any intervention I’ve ever come across: just listening.”

Dr Nishma Manek, GP

Hear more about these experiences on our website

- [Guy’s and St Thomas’ talks Schwarz Rounds](#)
- [Feel the difference: start a conversation](#)
- [Conversations as the foundation of a safety culture](#)
- [Let’s Talk podcast series](#)

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