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**SAFETY**

**National Kitchen  
Table Week**  
18<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Handbook**



**KINDNESS RESPECT HUMILITY**

# Encouraging an open and supportive conversation at your Kitchen Table event

Thank you so much for getting involved in National Kitchen Table Week 2019

## What do we mean by a Kitchen Table?

A Kitchen Table is an opportunity to bring people together, to reconnect through conversations built around respect, humility, curiosity, kindness, and civility. To talk to each other in a way that helps people to open up, so that anything that is on their minds or relates to how they work – whether positive or negative – can be voiced.

It encourages conversations within and across teams, perhaps made up of people who may not normally talk to each other. It can be held around a table, on the move with a trolley, in existing huddles, debriefs and team meetings – what matters is the way in which the conversations are fostered and supported.

We call these 'kitchen tables' to bring to mind the times people sit round a table and share their day. Like the kitchen table at home, it is a place where people can talk openly and honestly, without judgement and, above all, be listened to. A place at the heart of the home and the heart of the family, where we can feel safe and cared for, and are able to have truly open and honest conversations.

And it's also really SIMPLE to do.

## Why hold a Kitchen Table event?

Over the course of Sign up to Safety, we have realised that relationships and how people talk to and listen to each other is at the heart of creating a safety system and culture. And we have more recently grown to understand that safety is also about learning about success as much as failure, and that there is an undeniable link between staff health and wellbeing, and safety.

In truth, safety is about everything; leadership, teams, quality, staff and patient experience, well-being...

For us, staff health and wellbeing is not just that they are physically or psychologically cared for or that their basic physical needs are met such as food, hydration and sleep. Staff health and wellbeing is dependent upon the way they are led, the way they are trusted and supported, especially when things don't go as planned.

Staff health and wellbeing is also dependent upon the way people behave towards each other, whether they are kind to each other. It also means building a positive workplace; increasing morale and enjoyment at work.

A Kitchen Table is an opportunity to explore these thoughts and realisations with your colleagues; to find out what they need to help them work effectively and safely, what they think goes well now, what needs to change, what brings them joy, and what they may have on their minds.

Kitchen Tables have been tried out by hundreds of organisations across England since 2017, in a variety of different locations and settings, and the response from people who have experienced it has been incredibly positive.

We know that time is a very precious resource, so to provide people with the opportunity just to stop for a few minutes, to be asked their thoughts and really be listened to has been quite profound for the people who have experienced this approach.

When we ourselves hosted Kitchen Tables, as the people who did the listening, we heard the most amazing stories and personal experiences from people about working safely which have helped to shape what we do at Sign up to Safety.

These conversations have helped connect individuals in new ways, to connect leaders with their staff, to help highlight what works well, as well as what needs to change, to provide a chance to show appreciation and acknowledgement of staff members expertise in the day to day.

If you host your own Kitchen Table we know you too will hear the most brilliant insight from the people you work with.

## Hosting your Kitchen Table

The important pieces of advice we can give you about planning your Kitchen Table are **don't overthink** it and **keep it simple**. Because it really is simple!

When we planned our first Kitchen Table we did get a bit bogged down worrying too much about anticipating what the conversations would be like, what people would think, making sure people would enjoy it and wondering how we were going to capture what was being said. Obviously this was out of a well-intentioned desire to plan a successful event, but in reality it's much easier than we realised.

*If you provide a genuinely safe space where people are kind and really listen, you will have created an experience people will love.*

## There are some basic steps to getting your Kitchen Table set up:

- **When**  
Chose a date and time for your Kitchen Table event.
- **Where**  
Find a place, a space, a corner, commandeer a bit of the canteen, an area in the entrance to your organisation, a lunchroom or an office then set up some chairs and a table. Or get on the move with a trolley, or make use of an existing meeting time. It is absolutely fine to do this in whatever way works best for you and your colleagues.
- **Tell everyone about it!**  
Obviously people will need to know about your Kitchen Table and where to find it so to help we have provided an A2 poster to download and print which you can find it here: <http://bit.ly/NKTWnews>.

In this handbook we have also provided some suggested tweets and newsletter copy for your internal intranet or staff newsletter or your organisation's twitter account.

- **Giving something in return**  
When we hosted our own Kitchen Tables events, we found that the odd cake, piece of fruit or biscuit is a lovely gift for the people who come and stop by. Especially when we know that people are finding it hard to find time to eat and drink during their working day. Budgets may not stretch to this, but we find there is often someone who is really keen to show off their baking skills!
- **Start the conversation off in the right way**  
We know that people sometimes feel that they don't know how to get going on a really fruitful and open conversation, or that those taking part may not know what is ok and not ok to say. So, we've put together some starter questions that you could use to get the ball rolling. You can find those below, and as printable cards here: <http://bit.ly/NKTWnews>.
- **Be amazed**  
Prepare yourself to listen to the amazing stories, experiences and insight your staff and colleagues have to tell you. You won't be disappointed
- **Capture**  
What are you hearing at your Kitchen Table? We don't suggest going overboard with any kind of minute taking or report writing, this isn't a meeting after all. How you capture what you're hearing is entirely up to you and to help we have an A2 sized scribble sheet to download and print to put on your table for people to note down what they're hearing, key words or questions. Some questions to think about while you're listening could be:
  - What did I hear?
  - What am I feeling?
  - What am I noticing about what I'm hearing?
  - What has surprised me?

- What had the biggest impact?
- What was the most satisfying?
- What have I learnt?
- What were your 'aha!' moments

You may find that people raise issues that you feel need to be responded to or you would like to know where you can direct them for help. We would recommend that you have your Freedom to Speak Up Guardian's details to hand and that you let them know about the Kitchen Table in advance as it may be helpful for them to attend.

- **Who should attend?**  
Everyone is welcome at a Kitchen Table. In fact, we would encourage you to reach out and let people know that a rich mix of voices is wanted. Some organisations who have held Kitchen Tables have had a great variety of people and experiences shared together, including porters, nurses, doctors, managers and board members. This can go a long way to building deeper connections and appreciation between people who may otherwise not get a chance to talk to each other.

## Conversation starters

- What makes you feel safe in your work?
- What keeps you awake at night?
- What makes you feel cared for?
- What does a day look like where you feel appreciated by your colleagues?
- What does a day look like when you feel actively helped to do your job?
- Is anything bothering you today?
- What's made you smile in the last week?
- How are you feeling today?
- Tell us about a day that went really well
- Tell me about your strengths
- Tell a story about a day when you felt proud

## Twitter

Here are some suggested tweets you can cut and paste to promote your Kitchen Table:

- What can we do to improve the safety culture here? Join us at our #kitchentable on DATE and share what you know
- Take a moment out of your day, pull up a chair and share your ideas with us at our #kitchentable. We'll put the kettle on!
- Join us round the #kitchentable to listen to other peoples' ideas for how to keep our staff well and patients safer
- What makes you feel cared for in your job? Head to our #kitchentable on DATE and share with us
- There are only open, honest and safe conversations round our #kitchentable. Join us and add your two pennies worth on DATE
- We'd love to hear about what you think would make our staff and patients safer. Grab a chair and join us round the #kitchentable

## Internal Communications

Here is some suggested copy for internal newsletters or intranets:

### Join us at our Kitchen Table

Conversation is a powerful thing. Done right, it can lay the foundations for a safety culture – helping people to connect, learn and improve. It's a way of sharing how we feel and what we think.

We will be hosting a Kitchen Table as a way to bring people together and help you share your stories and experiences about what you know about working safely. Like the kitchen table at home, this is a place where people can talk openly and honestly, without judgement and above all be listened to.

For many of us the kitchen table is the heart of the home and the heart of family life, where you can talk with your parents, children, siblings and friends. This is usually a 'safe place' where people feel comfortable, can be open, honest and talk about what matters to them, how they are feeling and be listened to in a caring and kind way.

- When: XXXX
- Where: XXXX

## Some free resources to help you have great conversations which you can use and share with all your staff

- Blog: *Everything* - Suzette Woodward  
<http://bit.ly/SafetyIsEverything>
- Blog: *National Kitchen Table Week and Other Updates*  
<http://bit.ly/handover>
- Blog: *Joyful Leadership* - Suzette Woodward  
<http://bit.ly/joyful-leadership>
- Blog: *Safety Conversations*  
<http://bit.ly/SafetyConversations>
- Blog: *The Campaign Kitchen Table and other conversation methods*  
<http://bit.ly/CampaignKitchen>
- Blog: *Talking about talking*  
<http://bit.ly/TalkingaboutTalking>
- Blog: *If you want to help someone then simply talk to them*  
<http://bit.ly/talk2help>
- Blog: *Feel the difference: start a conversation. Safety Huddles in practice*  
<http://bit.ly/HuddleConvos>
- TED Talk: *10 ways to have a better conversation*  
<http://bit.ly/10betterwaystotalk>
- Blog: *The potential of safer safety conversations*  
<http://bit.ly/ConvoPotential>

