PERFORMING MEDICINE

Communication and Team Working in Multidisciplinary Teams Maternity & Neonatal services

A workforce training programme from sector-leading provider **Performing Medicine**

Supporting health professionals to build essential skills and agency for positive transformation and improvement for all

THE CHALLENGE

Recent inquiries into maternity services have identified workplace culture as a critical patient safety issue, highlighting bullying, blame cultures, poor psychological safety, hierarchical working and failures in multidisciplinary communication.

”Leadership, teamworking and culture must improve to ensure care quality and safety are prioritised”
Baroness Amos, Final Report and Recommendations, National Maternity and Neonatal Investigation 2026

THE SOLUTION

Performing Medicine has worked with NHS colleagues to design a specialist programme which helps Trusts to respond directly to these issues and supports the professional development of Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) across Maternity and Neonatal Services.

A unique, interactive training experience exploring communication and working culture through a new lens.

An opportunity for MDTs to work together to reflect on how all staff can influence change and help improve staff and patient experiences.

TRAINING THAT TRANSFORMS WORKPLACE CULTURE...

Performing Medicine's specialist offer also supports wider workplace aims for NHS Trusts, for example, to:

- **SHIFT** workplace dynamic from blame cultures to mutual trust and shared accountability
- **IMPROVE** patient safety by minimising communication failures during critical moments
- **BUILD** agency across all bands to support and empower staff to deliver better cross-departmental collaboration, trust, and shared decision-making

...AND ADDRESSES YOUR PRIORITIES

The training responds to concerns identified by partner Trusts, for example:

- Persistent pressures on staff relating to workflow and staffing, physical and mental exhaustion, and demands from patients and management
- Gaps in understanding between different cultural and educational backgrounds
- Lack of familiarity with team members & implicit power dynamics
- Pre-conceived notions about resources and culture across sites or departments
- Different levels of conflict and a lack of clarity or agreement on how to solve disagreements
- Poor handover & collaborative working
- Lack of appreciation, care and support for junior colleagues

COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

The programme is informed by real experience and understanding of the landscape, culture and needs of MDT Maternity and Neo-natal Services. It has been rigorously developed and evaluated with University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust. Co-produced scenarios have been based on interviews with NHS staff to reflect the reality of cultural and communication challenges.

Development has involved input at all stages from NHS leaders including a Director of Midwifery, Medical Director, Director of Operations, Culture Lead, Consultant Midwife, and scores of stakeholders in different roles across MNS, such as Band 5, 6 and 7 Midwives. Women's voices have been central to the design of the training thanks to Local Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership.

Regular touchpoint meetings between the NHS stakeholder group and Performing Medicine with opportunities for feedback and reflection allowed optimisation throughout a rigorous and iterative design process.



ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Performing Medicine's robust process enables cohesion and connection between a customised training programme and your wider culture change initiatives. The programme creates opportunities for shared decision-making and has the potential to strengthen agency and responsibility across all levels of staff to galvanise change.

STEP 1: Scoping with your Trust

✦Performing Medicine will work with you to understand local context, challenges and specific requirements, e.g through initial meetings with nominated staff and stakeholders.

STEP 2: Analysis, content design and recruitment

✦Analysis of scoping and tailoring of session by Performing Medicine for your particular setting

✦Senior Leadership support the process by authorising time and space for colleagues to engage with training. This might include releasing staff from clinical duties and considering rotas carefully to enable attendance by staff across the MDT.

STEP 3: Design optimisation

✦Regular touchpoints between Performing Medicine and Trust, including invitations to rehearsals for feedback and refinement of the scenario and event plan.

STEP 4: Interactive event

✦An engaging three-hour session
✦In person for groups of up to 40
✦At a location, date and time convenient for you
✦Led by 4 or 5 expert facilitators = Trainer: Participant ratio of 1:10

STEP 5: Evaluation

✦Co-designed evaluation process to measure against bespoke aims.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Works best for MDT cohorts comprising as a range of roles, such as: Consultant Obstetricians, Labour Ward, Coordinators, Midwives, Resident Doctors, Matrons, Ward Managers, Anaesthetists, Theatre Team staff and Neonatal teams.

EXPERT FACILITATION

Sessions are led and facilitated by a specialist team with expertise and understanding honed over more than 25 years of applied work in Health.

METHOD

Performing Medicine will work interactively with participants through a presentation of a powerful and recognisable scenario. Participants are invited to coach characters to change the outcome of a number of scenes in constructive ways. This allows for collective problem-solving and dialogue that focus on, and enable, behavioural change.

Performing Medicine's method engages staff in a practical way without any roleplay or pressure on staff to perform, encouraging a meaningful engagement with the issues brought up by those in the room. Reflective learning techniques are used to elicit empathy and foster constructive dialogue.

Additionally, participants are introduced to Circle of Care, a skills framework developed by Performing Medicine with Guy's and St Thomas' Foundation Trust. This relational skills compass helps team members think about, practise and demonstrate high-quality compassionate care.

TRAINING OUTCOMES FOR STAFF

By the end of this training, colleagues can expect increased awareness and understanding of:

- ✓ the ways staff can improve communication in stressful situations
- ✓ the consequences of their actions and decisions on colleagues and patients
- ✓ the challenges of other professionals' roles
- ✓ the ways staff can adapt their behaviours to improve MDT working
- ✓ their responsibility in wider culture change initiatives

Staff will demonstrate skills and agency to motivate change, including:

- ✓ better communication (language, tone, non-verbals)
- ✓ improved team working on delivery suites and triage between doctors, midwives,
- ✓ labour ward coordinators and theatre teams
- ✓ more collective MDT thinking and identity for shared accountability
- ✓ practical self-care strategies

IMPACT AND EVIDENCE

Evaluation based on pre- and post-workshop surveys, alongside current follow up interviews by University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust at 3 to 6 months post delivery, saw:

- Strong endorsement of the workshop & desire for wider rollout
- Value of MDT and cross-perspective learning
- Greater self awareness and understanding of the impact of behaviours and communication on relationships and culture
- Personal and professional reflection & identified areas for improvement

Positive feedback was seen across all staff roles.

79% of staff reported that the workshop helped them to understand the challenges of other professionals' roles compared to only 38% reporting that they understand the challenges at baseline

86% of respondents reported an increased awareness of the ways they can improve communication in stressful situations

86% reported increased awareness of the ways they can adapt their behaviors to improve MDT working

87% of respondents reported an increased awareness of the consequences of their actions and decisions on colleagues and patients

FEEDBACK & TESTIMONIALS

"What struck me most was the unexpected benefit of learning alongside colleagues. Sharing these exercises broke down professional barriers in a way that formal training rarely does. Seeing each other vulnerable, playful, and uncertain created a new kind of trust. It was a reminder that good communication isn't just for the patient encounter — it starts with how we show up for each other."
Consultant Obstetrician, Participant

"The scenarios are immediately relatable, and the (often) outrageously bad behaviour portrayed by the actors is deliberately provocative: it draws people in, unlocks honest discussion and creates space for insight and reflection. I believe that this kind of experiential learning can translate into meaningful improvements in professional behaviours and multidisciplinary teamworking.

In an ideal world, everyone involved in maternity care would have the opportunity to take part in a Performing Medicine session. I would certainly recommend the programme to other maternity services."
Medical Director for Women's & Children's Services

"The training highlighted how important it is to think carefully about our decisions, behaviours, body language, and the way we respond to others. Even small actions or unkind replies can have an impact.
All of these things ultimately affect the care we provide to our patients.

Kindness is free, and better communication and teamwork are essential. We are all here for the same reason: to deliver safe, high-quality care to our patients."
Theatre Team Leader, Participant

CONTACT US

To make a booking or an enquiry, please contact Performing Medicine

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ABOUT PERFORMING MEDICINE

Clod Ensemble's award-winning **Performing Medicine** initiative provides sector-leading interventions in healthcare education using performative techniques from dance and theatre, to enable healthcare professionals to gain a deeper understanding of how they communicate verbally and non-verbally.

Since 2001, this pioneering team has worked with over 30,000 healthcare professionals and students. Partner organisations have included Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust; Imperial Health Charity; Bart's and the London NHS Foundation Trust, University College London Hospital; Swansea Bay Health Board; Great Ormond Street Hospital; King's College London; and, internationally, la Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá.

Performing Medicine has been written about widely, including articles in the Lancet, BMJ, the Guardian and Telegraph, and cited in the 2017 Creative Health report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, as an example of best practice. The programme has also been supported by funding bodies such as UKRI AHRC, Wellcome and the British Academy.

PM team is led by Suzy Willson, Honorary Professor at the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London, and includes Carly Annable-Coop, Programme Manager and Lead Artist/Facilitator, Eliz Hassan, Research and Project Manager, and Catherine Peters, Strategic Consultant. Performing Medicine also works with an expert team of Associate Artists whose experience spans across a range of applied fields.