



Pioneering governance in maternity care: A roadmap to healthcare excellence

Creating confidence in safety of care

In the realm of healthcare, the importance of robust safety and governance cannot be overstated, particularly in the highly specialised and sensitive area of maternity and neonatal care. At a time when the demands and pressures on all departments are escalating, the need for stringent safety protocols is more critical than ever.

The Ockendon review, a comprehensive investigation into maternity care across NHS Trusts, shed light on significant failings in the safety and quality of maternity services in England. The report highlights instances of poor clinical practices, inadequate leadership, and systemic failures that have led to devastating consequences for mothers and their babies. Key issues include substandard care during labour, insufficient monitoring, and a lack of effective communication between healthcare professionals. The findings underscore the urgent need for improvements in training, staffing levels, and the overall culture within maternity services. The Ockendon report serves as a critical call to action, emphasising the importance of reevaluating and restructuring maternity care protocols to ensure that every expectant mother receives the highest standard of healthcare and support throughout the childbirth process.

The harrowing case of Lucy Letby, a neonatal nurse convicted of murdering seven infants and attempting to murder six more, has cast a stark light on the vulnerabilities within our healthcare systems. Her actions not only devastated families but also raised questions about the effectiveness of current safety measures in detecting and preventing such tragedies.

Maternity Care: Ensuring best practice care every day

Maternity and neonatal departments are highly sensitive environments where the stakes are incredibly high - safeguarding the well-being of both mother, child, and family. In these settings, ensuring safety transcends the realms of standard medical care. It requires an all-encompassing person-centred approach that includes individualised care and concern throughout the pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period.

While most births are natural, and positive experiences, where medical care is not required, there are for some, more risks and complications associated with their pregnancies. The risks for this group of women and their babies are distinct and multifaceted, ranging from complications during childbirth to the prematurity or ill health of the new-born baby. It is essential that best practice policies, and training are in place and the team are supported to work together effectively. This facilitates and supports safety in these departments through the consideration and effective management of risks.

Safety protocols in maternity departments are not just reactive measures; they are proactive strategies aimed at identifying and mitigating risks at the earliest stages. These measures, which include stringent infection control and meticulous monitoring of vital signs, are not mere formalities. They are vital tools that play a crucial role in preventing complications, keeping patients safe and significantly enhancing the quality of maternal and neonatal care.

Considering recent events and the evolving challenges in healthcare, this e-guide delves deep into the essence of safety and governance in healthcare, with a special focus on maternity and neonatal departments. It is a call to action for healthcare professionals, policymakers, and the public to re-examine and reinforce the safety frameworks that protect our most vulnerable. As we navigate through these demanding times it is vital we remain focused on quality and safety to ensure we maintain care of the highest standard.

Governance as a Cornerstone of Maternity Healthcare

Governance in healthcare, particularly in maternity services, involves monitoring systems and processes to provide assurance of patient safety and quality of care. This governance is not just about enforcing rules but also about fostering a culture where safety is paramount, and continuous quality improvement is an everyday practice. In maternity departments, this translates to leadership who create a governance framework which provides a structure to support staff, protocols for emergency situations, regular training for healthcare staff, and ensures adherence to national and international healthcare standards.

The Interplay of Safety and Governance

During a time of increasing healthcare pressure and demands, maintaining safety through governance is critical. Safety and governance are intertwined. Governance provides the framework within which safety measures are implemented and protected. In maternity wards, this means having clear policies on issues like infection control, emergency response, and patient confidentiality. It also involves having systems in place for regular audits and monitoring to ensure that these policies are effectively implemented and adapted as needed.

Safety in maternity care also involves respecting and responding to the individual needs of pregnant women and their families. This includes providing options for the place of birth, be it at home, in a midwifery-led unit, or a hospital, each with its safety protocols and governance structure.

A strong safety culture is essential for effective governance in healthcare. This culture is particularly crucial in maternity wards where the staff attitudes and behaviours significantly impact patient outcomes. The staff should be empowered to report safety concerns and be involved in developing solutions. This inclusive approach helps in creating an environment of trust and learning, which is vital for patient safety.

Safety and governance within healthcare systems, especially in maternity wards, are critical for ensuring quality care and positive patient outcomes. They work hand in hand to create an environment where risks are managed, policies are effectively implemented, and continuous improvement is a constant goal. In such settings, the wellbeing of mothers and babies is prioritised, and healthcare providers are equipped and empowered to deliver the best possible care.

How CHKS Accreditation Can Help

CHKS Assurance & Accreditation services play a pivotal role in addressing challenges within healthcare organisations by offering independent recognition of commitment to quality improvement.

Here's how they assist:

Enhancing Quality and Safety

CHKS accreditation is designed to acknowledge and foster a healthcare organisation's dedication to enhancing quality and safety for patients. This recognition is crucial not just for patient trust, but also for demonstrating compliance to external regulators and stakeholders.

Consistency and Confidence

Through its accreditation process, CHKS has helped organisations achieve consistency in their operations. This consistency is vital for maintaining high standards across various healthcare services. It also builds confidence among patients and external partners about the credibility and reliability of the healthcare services offered.

Improving Organisational Quality

Working with CHKS to achieve accreditation can lead to significant benefits in quality improvement. For instance, organisations reported notable enhancements in staff engagement and the culture of their organisation following completion of the accreditation process. They reported creating better operational and safety frameworks and improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare delivery. In addition to this they realised improved leadership, empowerment of staff and teams which led to a culture focused on care quality improvement.

Flexibility and Comprehensive Coverage

CHKS accreditation offers a comprehensive range of standards across healthcare organisations. This allows organisations the flexibility to select services for focus or include all services within the accreditation scope.

The Children's Trust supports children and young people up to 18 years old from across the UK with acquired brain injury (ABI), neurodisability and complex health needs. When The Children's Trust first received CHKS accreditation, the charity's chief executive, Dalton Leong, said the process was a significant factor in helping it move from being rated as 'Requires improvement' to being rated as 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission.

As healthcare providers, you are at the forefront of delivering compassionate and high-quality care to patients every day. In the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, the pursuit of excellence is not just a goal but a necessity.

At CHKS, we understand the complexities and challenges of healthcare delivery. With over 30 years experience and being a leader in quality and excellence- we can help. Our mission is to empower healthcare providers like you with the tools, insights, and support needed to elevate the standard of care you provide.

If you're ready to take the next step, contact CHKS now and embark on a transformative journey to support your team to improve the quality and safety of care. Make a difference today, call us to allow us to support you.

Contact: info@chks.co.uk

Visit: www.chks.co.uk

