

Conversations for Kindness  
Listening as a way to kindness  
January 2025

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This insights pack summarises the session, but you can also [watch the event on YouTube](#)

## About the movement

**Conversations for Kindness** is a monthly virtual meeting that was set up in the summer of 2020 by eight colleagues and friends working in healthcare across Sweden, the UK and the USA: Bob Klaber, Dominique Allwood, Maureen Bisognano, Goran Henriks, Suzie Bailey, Anette Nilsson, Gabby Matthews and James Mountford. The purpose of the meeting was to have some time together to continue some initial conversations around kindness, and its role at the 'business end' of healthcare, and to plan interactive workshops on this topic.

## Conversations for Kindness

- Monthly Zoom call on the third Thursday of every month (6-7pm UK time)
- A focus on listening, learning, thinking differently and mobilising for action
- An open culture of sharing of resources, energy and ideas

**If you would like to join the conversation for kindness, please complete this [contact form](#)**

# Joining the Conversation from across the world

More than **50** Kindness in Healthcare community members came together from all over the world for this Conversation for Kindness. Once again, we had new faces join us for the first time!

Where were  
our  
participants?



Sydney



Dallas



Belfast

# Who did we hear from? Speaker profiles

## Maureen Bisognano

Maureen Bisognano is a globally recognised healthcare leader who served as President and CEO of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. With decades of experience in healthcare transformation, she has pioneered patient-centered approaches that have reshaped care delivery worldwide. Her expertise in quality improvement and healthcare innovation continues to influence organisations seeking to enhance care while reducing costs.



## Dr Nana Twum-Danso

Dr. Nana Twum-Danso is an accomplished clinician and public health expert specialising in maternal and child health systems. Through her leadership roles at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, she has developed effective quality improvement methodologies for resource-limited settings. Her work has significantly advanced healthcare delivery in developing countries, particularly in her native Ghana.



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# What did we hear? The leadership listening arc

We learnt about the importance of listening through the leadership listening arc, stressing the importance of deep listening and curiosity in the world of health.

## The leadership listening arc

- **Curiosity:** Approaching conversations with genuine interest and a desire to learn.
- **Learning:** Actively seeking to understand the other person's perspective and what is important to them.
- **Alignment:** Identifying areas of natural agreement and shared understanding.
- **Negotiation:** Finding mutually beneficial solutions when alignment isn't immediately apparent.
- **Creativity:** Thinking outside the box to develop innovative solutions that meet diverse needs.

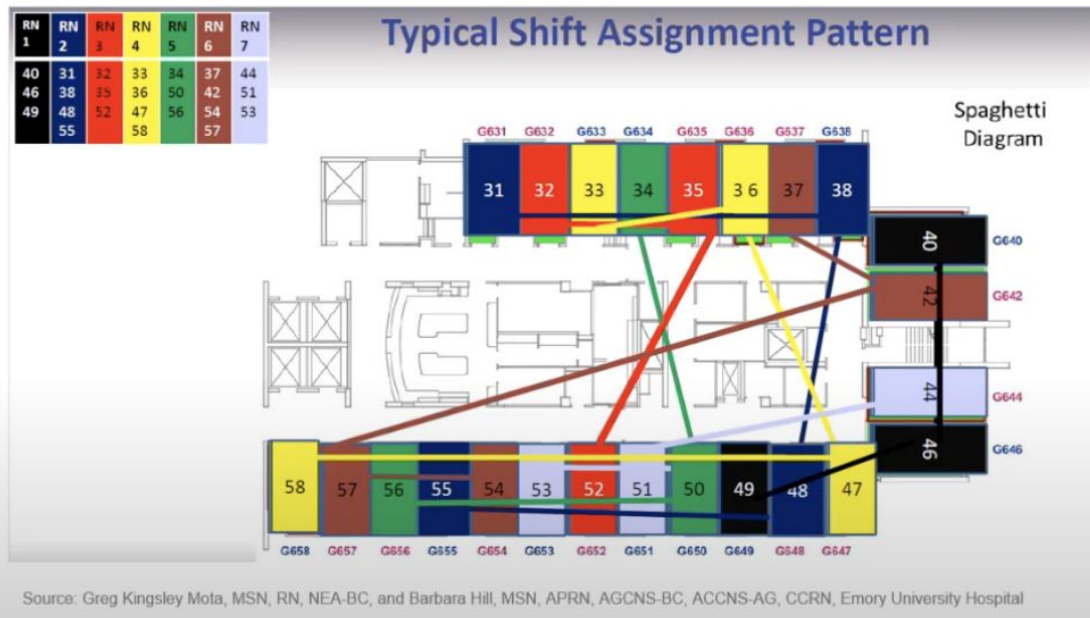


# What did we hear? “A day in the life of” approach

We heard that the act of being curious about the experience of patients and different staff members is important to the wellbeing of the system.

## “A day in the life of” approach

- Use rounds as an opportunity to really listen to patients.
- Spend time with staff - “see with your feet.”
- We discover where barriers and inefficiencies lie when we engage with people.
- We are able to see across the silos and across the whole journey for patients and staff.



## What did we hear? Co-design with patients

Designing systems around patient needs is important to the creation of solutions that are truly fit for purpose. This can only be done by listening.

## Co-design with patients

We can't design healthcare with our point of view, we need to listen.

- Sit down with the population and listen.

## Learning from Midwife in Northern Ghana:

- Engaged with community to understand why they didn't seek labor and delivery care at the health center.
- Reorganised the center to meet the needs including simple things like hot water bathing.
- Provided customer service training to staff to improve patient experience.
- The results were notable.



# Group discussion

The provocation for our breakout discussion was:

“How do you listen at work? & “Think about micro-affirmations”

## Rich

“We got talking about how deep listening sometimes seems connected to being shy or introversion – how for some quieter folks, listening might feel more natural. Then we discussed listening under stress, and everyone agreed it's really hard. When you're super stressed, truly listening is often the first thing to disappear. But we definitely landed on the point that it is a skill you can learn. It takes training, for sure, but it can be taught and developed.”

## Sara

“One of the things that really resonated from our group was giving legitimacy to listening.

When I leave the cancer unit that are treating me, staff always say to me “I hope you're going to pick up a Greggs hot sausage roll on the way home.” That says everything about the quality of care. I am touched that they remembered.”

# Closing reflections

Today we explored the leadership listening arc, witnessing how deeply hearing others strengthens healthcare relationships and creates connections that improve patient outcomes.

## Key takeaways

1. Deep listening is not just a communication skill but a vital act of kindness that can significantly improve patient experiences, staff morale, and the effectiveness of healthcare systems.
2. The leadership listening arc provides a practical framework for leaders to consciously cultivate their listening abilities.
3. Paying attention to "what matters" to individuals, both patients and staff, can unlock solutions and foster more person-centred approaches to care.
4. Even small gestures of "micro affirmation" can have a significant impact on making people feel heard and valued.
5. Actively working to overcome barriers to listening, including stress and systemic inefficiencies, is crucial for fostering a culture of kindness.
6. Integrating the principles of listening and kindness into healthcare education is essential for shaping future generations of healthcare professionals.

# Acknowledgements

This insights pack has been co-produced by  
**Nicki Macklin** and the team at **Kaleidoscope Health and Care**

For all enquiries please contact us [via the Kindness in Healthcare website](#) or email  
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See you next month for another great Conversation.

[Check out resources from our previous sessions on our website](#)



# Thank you for joining, thank you for reading.

We'll see you next month!