

Conversations for Kindness

Kindness in breastfeeding

August 2025

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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, Göran 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 MS Teams 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 **40** 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?



Oslo,
Norway



Totnes, United
Kingdom



Glasgow, United
Kingdom

Who did we hear from? Gill Phillips and Florence Wilcock

Gill is the co-founder of #MatExp and creator of 'Whose Shoes', a concept and tool which encourages looking at things from different perspectives, gets people to talk together as equals and come up with imaginative solutions.



Florence is a consultant obstetrician at Kingston Hospital and the co-founder of #MatExp. She was co-chair of London Maternity Voices Strategic group supporting co production in maternity services across London 2013-20 and is now clinical representative on the RCOG women's network. Florence continues to lead and champion maternity experience improvement projects at regional and national level.

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

What did we hear? Introducing #MatExp

Gill and Florence introduced #MatExp, a powerful grassroots campaign to identify and share best practice across the nation's maternity services.

Florence reflected that things have come a long way since they started the project a decade ago, when safety was often seen as the single concern in maternity services - often at the expense of patient experience, which was seen as exclusively the domain of nurses and midwives, not obstetricians.

However, she acknowledged that there is still a long way to go in embedding kindness and concerns with patient experience in maternity services, especially in the context of national maternity enquiries and reviews in the UK.



What did we hear? An obstetrician's perspective

Florence shared her perspective as an obstetrician:



I look after a lot of women, including those with perinatal mental health conditions and detectable HIV, who are advised not to breastfeed by clinicians.

The 'breast is best' message is difficult for those women, as well as others who can't breastfeed. It leads to feelings of **both guilt and shame**.

There is a balance between promoting and supporting breastfeeding and showing kindness towards these women and we're not getting that balance right.

This is exemplified by elements of the 'Unicef baby-friendly hospital' accreditation, which includes measures such as locking all formula in a fridge and having a sign-in/sign-out book for formula.

Group discussion

The provocation for our breakout discussion was:

- **What insights can a kindness perspective bring to breastfeeding?**
- **How can our reflections inform how we behave as professionals and as patients?**

Clare

We had an interesting conversation around the fact that breastfeeding at discharge is a metric that Trusts have to deliver which becomes the focus, rather than supporting women to make their own choice. Are we setting ourselves up to be unkind?

Florence

We discussed the idea that locking formula away is demonising of formula feeding, as the only other things we lock away are controlled drugs. This can exacerbate guilt and shame.

Jenny

Having a GP that focused on the fact my baby was thriving, despite the challenges I was having, completely changed my perspective about myself as a mother and made the world of difference to me!

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
bob.klaber@nhs.net

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!