

Conversations for Kindness

**Follow Your Compassion**

21 March 2024

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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, 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?



New Hampshire,  
USA



North Tees, England



Melbourne, Australia

# Who did we hear from? The King's Fund

Our speakers today were Dharaa Patel and Simon Newitt, who are both part of the Leadership and Organisation Development team at The King's Fund - an independent charitable organisation working to improve health and care in England

They were joined by Kiara, Sage, Karen and Rosemary - midwives and nurses who participated in the Follow Your Compassion project.



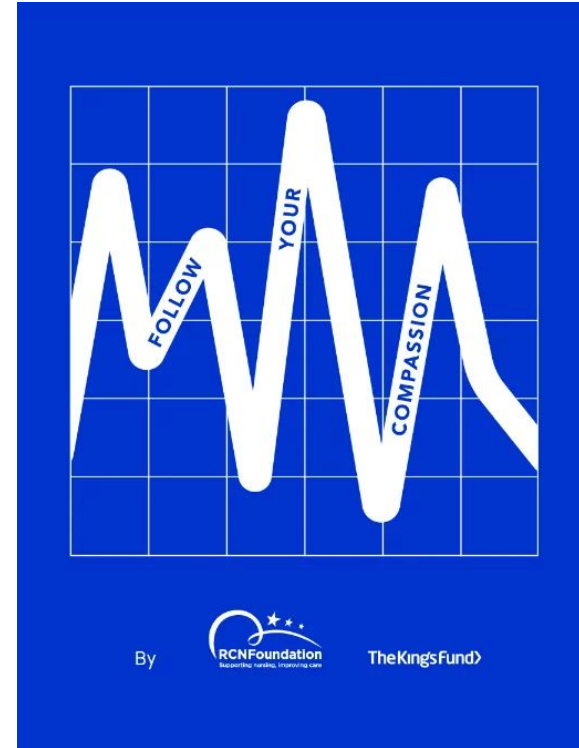
This insights pack summarises the session, but you can also [watch the event on YouTube](#)

# What did we hear? Insights from The King's Fund

Dharaa kicked off by introducing **Follow Your Compassion**, an ethnographic record about **the lived experience of newly qualified and registered nurses and midwives** in the UK.

It involved asking participants to carry out some journaling about what it was like to **walk in their shoes** and their experience of kindness and compassion in the workplace.

The outputs were collated on a website and informed conversations with senior national leaders.



# What did we hear? Insights from midwives and nurses

Next we heard from some of the participants in the 'Follow Your Compassion' project

She felt really **well-supported** and **well-mentored** by senior midwifery colleagues

She felt protected  
supernumerary  
status would help

“People go into this job because they are compassionate, but even a few years down the line you can see that people are so burnt out...  
**they don't have the energy or the time to be compassionate** to other people”

“The higher up you go, the less compassion there seems to be”

She had an experience where serious safety concerns were disregarded by senior managers e.g. staff acuity and wellbeing

*Kiara*  
*Midwife,*  
*Northern Ireland*

*Sage*

*Midwife*

# What did we hear? Insights from midwives and nurses

Next we heard from some of the participants in the 'Follow Your Compassion' project

"It is not that they don't care, it is that they really **don't have the time to care**"

"At the trust I was placed in, there was **absolutely zero compassion**"

*Karen*

*Internationally trained nurse*

She discussed the challenges of supporting new internationally trained nurses

"If we did ask any questions, [the response] was 'well you're qualified, you're supposed to know the answer'"

"The management need to be held accountable for...how the staff are treating each other"

"If you want to ask them [management] a question, they are not even ready to stop. They will be answering you and be walking along"

*Rosemary*

*Nurse,  
South Yorkshire*

# Group discussion

The question for our breakout discussion was:

*“How might we explain and address the gap between the rhetoric and ambition for compassionate leadership and the lived experience of many health and care staff?”*

## Giles

We reflected that often it is not about action but about active listening and creating an environment where people feel heard and are able to speak to everyone, no matter their seniority.

## Simon

A theme our conversation was about finding small ways to collapse hierarchies and shrink the social distance that can grow between managers and staff in care-giving roles.

## Jason

Our discussion made me reflect that the more senior you are, the greater the impact of small acts of compassion e.g. stopping to listen to a colleague.

The visibility and presence of senior leaders on the front line has an impact in itself.

# Group discussion

The question for our breakout discussion was:

*“How might we explain and address the gap between the rhetoric and ambition for compassionate leadership and the lived experience of many health and care staff?”*

## **Bimbi**

We discussed that when we are under stress we tend to retreat into ‘silos of comfort’ look for people to blame. We don’t always have insight into the pressure others are under.

That is why it is so important to break silos and flatten hierarchies. For example, senior leaders offering cover for ward staff to attend training events.

## **Ekaterini**

Ward culture is really important.

There is no excuse for unkindness, whatever the pressures we are under.

# Group discussion

Participants also shared their reflections in the chat:

KLABER, Bob (IMPERIAL COLLEGE HEA... 7:49 AM

**BK** I was so struck listening to [kiara mcelroy](#) in our small group about how we need to better (a) set expectations (b) teach & coach (c) then support anyone and everyone in a leadership / management role....about the behaviours that are needed; listening, creating psychological safety, saying thank you, being there etc etc

Linda Keenan 7:49 AM

**LK** Totally agree listening is action

CHRISTIE, Julie (NORTH TEES AND HA... 7:49 AM

**JC** Learning peoples names (feels painful to have to say this!)

Anna Baverstock (External) 7:49 AM

**AB** Yes agree - a few minutes of a leaders time have a large impact on new members - we talked about needing to be reminded as leaders how imprtant these moments are

Anna Baverstock (External) 7:52 AM

**AB** Role modelling as leaders that even / especially when really busy, having time for colleagues is truly important - the check in / huddles

DORMAN, Saskie (NHS ENGLAND - X... 7:52 AM

**SD** liberating structures feel like they could be helpful here... hear everyone's voice

# Group discussion

Participants also shared their reflections in the chat:

DORMAN, Saskie (NHS ENGLAND – X... 7:51 AM

SD instead of 'holding to account'  
- 'helping to account'

❤️ 2

Gill Phillips @WhoseSh... 7:52 AM **IMPORTANT**

GP 🍌 🍌 🍌 Help people see  
and understand their own  
behaviour and see for  
themselves how it impacts  
others. I gave an example  
whereby someone 'senior'  
discovered the value of  
creating the conditions for  
junior team members to speak  
openly - and LISTEN - and was  
VERY humbled. !

NAHEED, Yasara (THURSBY SURGERY) 7:51 AM

YN Everyone should understand  
that it's a team effort . There  
shouldn't be a hierarchy.  
Everybody needs to work  
towards the bigger goal and  
provide quality care in a  
positive environment for  
everyone

👍 2

McLeod, Lisa [CWBC] 7:58 AM

LM We need connection... and  
trust. teams need to know  
that however hard the  
conditions are.. their leadrr is  
advocating for them and is in it  
with them

Jason Nicol (NHS Grampian) 7:58 AM

JN Be brave, really lean in. I love  
the concept of going 'inch-  
wide but mile-deep'.....

❤️ 1

Giles Adams 7:58 AM

GA Look at the areas where  
everyone is happy and find out  
why...

👍 2

# Closing reflections

To close out the session, we heard from the participants of the programme on one thing that would make a difference to their experience of compassion at work:

Managers and leaders knowing and using my name

Managers and leaders listening to staff and asking about any challenges they are facing

Better channels of communication between new starters and management

Management spending time in clinical areas that are struggling to so they can identify the root causes of problems

# 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](mailto: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!