

Case Study

Date: 2015

Region: South of England

Overview:

Further to five serious incidents, a South of England NHS Trust asked Donna Ockenden to review performance within a Maternity Service.

The details:

The department had been underperforming and the underlying issues consisted of out of date training records, low staff morale, a very under resourced department and a considerable lack of support from senior leaders. Some of those interviewed reported friction between the consultants and midwives and poor multi professional relationships which impacted on the ability of the maternity service to deliver safe and effective care.

The review found that processes in general were unclear, many audits were not fully completed, and in some cases records were of poor quality. A number of risk assessments required fresh eyes.

A new Head of Maternity (HOM) had joined the Trust (just prior to the review taking place) and improvements were beginning to take place. These included, but were not limited to:

- Improved working relationships between two hospital sites which had previously caused concern
- Joint training opportunities across sites for staff development had begun
- Improved processes were being established.

It was also noted by the review that many issues in the service, over a number of years, had been hidden from view of the Executive Team. In particular, underfunding of the service and poor staff development opportunities had been accepted locally rather than been highlighted as a concern.

The findings of the review demonstrated that with Executive support improvements could easily be made especially around a number of the significant concerns regarding the workforce, infrastructure, staff skill sets and governance. It was also essential that the new HOM received support to enable more joined up working resulting in safer working environments.

Outcome:

A number of recommendations were made by Donna Ockenden to the Trust which were accepted and subsequently implemented.