

Inspectors heavily criticise trust leaders after being ‘shouted at by staff’

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Jack Searle, June 2021

The Care Quality Commission has downgraded the maternity services at Northwick Park Hospital in London to “inadequate” after an inspection in April. The site is run by London North West University Hospitals Trust.

Staff told the CQC about consultants “who went home instead of discharging patients” and of staff regularly shouting at each other.

On one occasion, a midwife reportedly shouted at a patient because she could not understand English, and one staff member even shouted at a member of the inspection team “after mistaking them for a colleague”, inspectors said.

Staff told the CQC that leaders at the trust “did not listen” to their concerns about “the poor attitude of the senior management team,” said Nicola Wise, the CQC’s head of hospital inspection.

Some staff were “frightened to speak out, for fear of repercussions” while “some claimed they had been told by management only to say good things when asked”, she added.

The service has been downgraded from “requires improvement”.

The inspection came after the trust reported 13 serious incidents in the year to March 2021, including eight perinatal deaths in a five-week period in July and August, which the CQC described as “a very high number of such a short period”.

The Health and Safety Investigation Branch raised concerns about the number of interpartum stillbirths at the trust in January.

A review into these issues by North West London Integrated Care System earlier this year suggested five of the babies could have survived with better care, while better care for another two “may have made a difference”.

However, it said “no pattern of concerning practice was identified”.

Areas for improvement included using independent interpreting services, identifying small babies, consultant involvement in complex cases, and support for midwifery staff. The review found covid influenced the outcome in some cases “through staffing shortages”.

The trust said it has “taken these findings extremely seriously” and addressed the recommendations in [a wider maternity improvement plan, published in June](#).

This document said a new clinical director and general manager were appointed [In November and October last year], and a new director of midwifery was being sought. The new clinical director was temporarily redeployed to the covid response in January.

The CQC noted the new leadership team had only recently been established when they inspected the service, adding: “Because they had only been in post for a short time, the new team did not yet have a proper governance structure in place, and was therefore unable to provide assurance that they had the skills and abilities to run the service, or to implement meaningful changes that improved the safety of the service...”

“Not all leaders were aware of challenges to the service. Some did not know what was on the risk register and there were some longstanding issues that had not been addressed.”

Lisa Knight, the trust’s chief nurse, said in a statement: “The culture that our teams work in has a huge impact on the care that they provide, and we are focused on creating a supportive maternity environment, where our people feel confident to raise concerns and can achieve their full potential.

“We have already made several immediate improvements and are working rapidly to put in place further changes.”

Source

[CQC inspection report; trust improvement plan](#)