Patient Safety Principles

The Patient Safety Principles act as a guide for leaders at all levels on how to design and deliver safer care for patients and reduce avoidable harm in a just and learning culture. They are relevant to healthcare providers as well as commissioners, regulators, manufacturers, and the broader supply chain.

The principles provide a clear framework for planning, decision-making, and working collaboratively with patients as partners.

1. **Create a culture of safety**

Leaders have a responsibility to lead by example to inspire a just and learning culture of patient safety and quality improvement.

They should set out to keep people safe through a culture of compassion and civility and effective listening. Leaders should consider adopting a safety management system, embedding continuity of care and restorative practice.

2. **Put patients at the heart of everything**

Leaders should put the patient at the heart of all the work that they do, with patient partnerships the default position at all levels of the organisation. They should consider the needs of patients and communities to deliver person centred care. Leaders should ensure that the patient voice is central in the design of services, in obtaining fully informed consent and to the implementation of shared decision making.

3. **Treat people equitably**

People should be treated with respect, equity, and dignity. Leaders should incorporate the views of all, and proactively seek and capture meaningful feedback from patients, workers, and communities, acknowledging that those from disadvantaged groups may need specific support and encouragement to contribute. They should act upon feedback, to embed equity of voice.

4. **Identify and act on inequalities**

Health inequalities, and their drivers, should be identified and acted upon at every stage of healthcare design and delivery to drive improvements in patient safety and experience.

5. **Identify and mitigate risks**

Targeted and coordinated action should be directed towards patient safety risks. Patients, workers, and communities should be encouraged and empowered to proactively identify and speak up about risks, hazards, and potential improvements. Leaders should promptly escalate new and existing risks to the most appropriate person or body.

6. **Be transparent and accountable**

Leaders should acknowledge that creating a culture of safety requires honest, respectful, and open dialogue, where candour is the default position. This transparency should support a model of continuous improvement, that learns from both successes and events, and ensures that patients, workers, and communities do not face avoidable harm due to a cover up culture.

7. Use information and data to drive improved care and outcomes

Leaders should enable patients to have access to their personal and other data to help them improve their own care. They should ensure that good quality data is collected and meets the needs of all patients, including those from underrepresented and inclusion health groups. Workers should be supported to use and share information and data to drive improved care and outcomes for patients, in accordance with the Caldicott Principles.