

NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework



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Secretary's foreword

**Susan Pearce,
Secretary, NSW Health**

The skill, dedication and compassion of NSW Health staff play an essential role in our ability to provide world class health care. Each day, our people work diligently to deliver great experiences of care and outcomes that matter most to patients and the community.

Delivering high-quality, safe and compassionate patient care requires a well-supported and engaged workforce.

People need a workplace that helps to bring out their best.

Our aim is for a NSW Health culture that prioritises staff wellbeing and provides our dedicated and passionate workforce with a positive experience.

We know that when individuals and teams feel supported and nurtured in their workplace, that helps us to deliver the best possible experiences and outcomes of care for the communities we serve.

The *NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework* follows the development of the NSW Health Workforce Plan. It will help enable our Future Health strategy, in addition to our objective of *building positive work environments that bring out the best in everyone*.

At NSW Health, our culture is deeply rooted in our CORE values: collaboration, openness, respect, and empowerment. These values guide and underpin every interaction every day including between colleagues, but also with patients, their families, carers and the wider community.

Creating a vibrant organisational culture involves nurturing behaviours that empower and support our people to deliver human-centred care. It is important that every individual feels valued, respected and included. At NSW Health, every person has an important role to play, makes a valuable contribution, and every voice is welcomed.

This Framework sets out the elements that contribute to culture and staff experience. It is designed to support and enhance the cultural aspects and endeavours of the many individual workplaces across the NSW Health system.

It features a focus on culture and staff experience levers. These are the key elements that influence and enhance organisational culture, including: psychological safety; culture focused leadership; diversity, inclusion and belonging; and sustainability.

Unlocking the power of these elements is crucial for enhancing our staff's wellbeing, engagement, satisfaction and retention. It provides further opportunity for all parts of NSW Health to enhance their workplaces, and embed a consistently vibrant culture to enhance our current ways of working. Greater investment across these areas also aligns with our *Elevating the Human Experience* strategy.

Thank you for your commitment to making NSW Health a great place to work. Together, we will continue shaping an inclusive, human-centered workplace where teams enrich health in millions of ways every day.



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which all NSW Health staff live and work and pay our respects to elders past and present. We extend that respect to NSW Health staff who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

For Aboriginal people, Culture is the foundation upon which everything else is built. While significant diversity exists across and within Aboriginal peoples and nations, there are some common characteristics that unite all Aboriginal cultures. The values of kinship, community, connection and sharing create a holistic approach where everyone is seen as important, with a specific role to play within the family, community, kinship network and land. Importantly, a person and community's cultural wellbeing is linked to their physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs and overall wellbeing.

Aboriginal people's experiences of culture are at the heart of our Framework. We are committed to improving Aboriginal people's experiences in our workplace as we build and maintain NSW Health's culture.

Culture and Staff Experience



What are culture and staff experience and why do they matter?

Culture and staff experience are two significant, intertwined elements that shape our collective identity and workplace environment and drive our accountability to achieve our goals.

Culture outlines the expected behaviour of our staff and is informed by shared values, norms, and beliefs. It is the self-sustaining patterns of the way we do things around here¹. It guides our interactions and reinforces accepted behaviours. A positive workplace culture supports our people to bring their best self to work and to provide exceptional, compassionate care to patients, carers and families². Culture matters because it enables our people to thrive, personally and professionally, and to be engaged in their work³.

An effective workplace culture enables our staff to be their best selves, both at work and outside of work.



Staff experience is how our people interpret and feel about all their encounters and interactions with (and within) our organisation, from the time they are recruited, to the time they exit, and all stages in between⁴⁵⁶⁷. Positive experiences are created by showing we care and expressing appreciation for the unique value in all our people. Staff experience also influences patient experience and drives outcomes across the system. Culture plays a role in creating a better experience for staff, teams and organisations.

Culture is dynamic and evolving all the time. We all have a part to play in actively nurturing our staff experience and workplace culture. Every staff member creates, maintains, and models workplace culture every day through their actions and words. Our CORE Values guide our interactions, communications and decisions. A positive culture is created and experienced at the individual, team and organisational level and directly impacts the way we accomplish our goals.

“A British Medical Journal study review of healthcare facilities found positive organisational and workplace cultures were consistently associated with a wide range of patient outcomes such as reduced mortality rates, falls, hospital-acquired infections and increased patient satisfaction.”⁸

In every NSW Health workplace, fostering a supportive culture is essential to empower all staff to advance our shared priorities, which enhances patient experience and health outcomes. This in turn instils a sense of pride in our collective efforts as the team enriching health in millions of ways every day.

Purpose of the Framework

The *NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework* (the Framework) has been designed to provide guidance and direction on behavioural expectations in our workplaces for creating a positive, rewarding, and nurturing culture and staff experience.

The NSW Health CORE Values, introduced in 2011, provide the foundation for the Framework. New contemporary definitions have been codesigned with our people in varied roles across our system.

At its heart, the Framework consists of nine Culture Levers to help our leaders and people understand the areas we can influence to build positive and resilient cultures. Becoming familiar with these levers will allow our organisations to evaluate current cultural initiatives and prioritise opportunities for improvement.

The full version of the Framework has been developed to support senior leaders by providing a more detailed explanation of the contributing factors behind culture. The Levers are drawn from contemporary thought leadership on culture and staff experience. A summarised version, the *NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework in Practice*, is also available to everyone. This provides an overview of each lever with specific examples of behaviours that build a positive staff experience.

A [Culture and Staff Experience Portal](#) has been developed to support the Framework with practical tools and resources aligned to the CORE Values and Levers to help design local culture initiatives.

The Framework works alongside all NSW Health organisations' culture frameworks and strategies. Its aim is not to undermine or replace these local strategies, but rather to provide essential support to the local strategies

and initiatives. Each NSW Health organisation has its own aspirational culture with its own unique context, people and requirements. This Framework respects this diversity and doesn't impose one single desired culture. It does, however, identify actions and behaviours that will be common across NSW Health and will signify that we are working together.

The Framework promotes the realisation of our NSW Health Employee Value Proposition (EVP) developed through listening to what our people told us made them choose NSW Health as their employer and importantly, why they stay. As the largest health system in Australia, we are uniquely placed to offer a wide variety of roles and unique employee experiences. Professional and personal growth supported by a world-class structure designed for impact and innovation, we work together for the greater good. These are the things our people told us matter in choosing to work here. The Culture and Staff Experience Framework is a strategic approach to ensure our EVP translates into reality. Fostering a positive culture and staff experience supports our EVP, *"the team enriching health in millions of ways every day"*.

**Culture is built daily...
Moment by moment,
interaction by interaction.**

About the Framework

This Framework is aligned with the work of psychologist Edgar Schein¹⁴ from the Sloan School of Management, who created a model for understanding and analysing organisational culture with three distinct layers. It provides a clear structure for analysing and developing positive cultural initiatives and emphasises that true cultural change often means addressing unconscious beliefs and behaviours.

The first layer is the visible aspects or artifacts of an organisation such as hospital layouts, uniforms and dress standards, as well as communication styles and organisational and team structures. It also includes less obvious but equally observable aspects like team meetings and events.

The second layer is the organisation’s stated beliefs, norms and values. In NSW Health, these include our strategic plans, codes of conduct and CORE Values.

The final layer is made up of the underlying or shared assumptions and accepted behaviours that guide the way we interact with each other, patients, families and carers. These beliefs and behaviours are less obvious and are often taken for granted or unspoken, yet they shape the way we work.

This *Culture and Staff Experience Framework* targets the final layer of Schein’s model: the underlying assumptions and accepted behaviours. It provides structure and guidance on desired behaviours that positively shape our culture and enhance our staff’s day-to-day experience.

NSW Health Culture Landscape

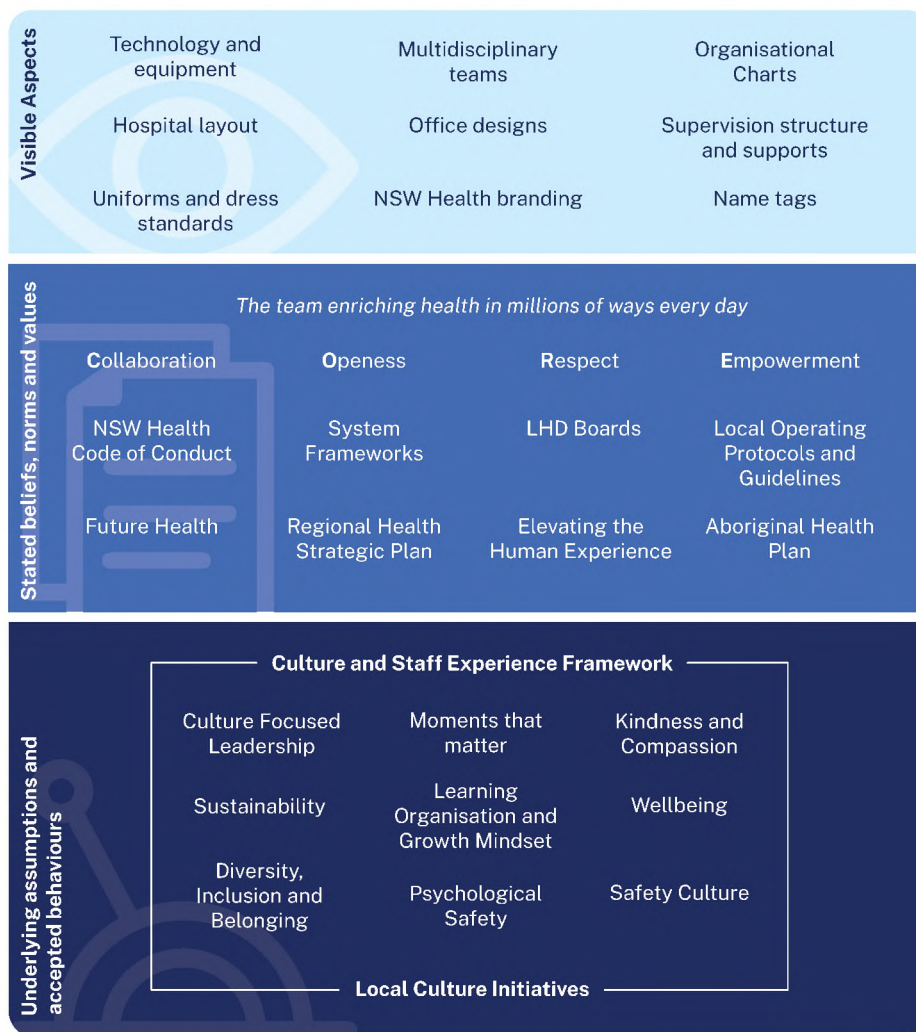


Figure 1 – The NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework
Adapted from Edgar Schein’s model for organisational culture¹
Examples only and not an exhaustive list

The Culture and Staff Experience Framework is part of NSW Health’s strategic plans to align our culture with our priorities and objectives. This includes [Elevating the Human Experience – Our guide to action for patient, family, carer, volunteer and caregiver experiences](#), which aims to connect staff culture and experience with improved patient experiences and outcomes.

The Framework underpins and interacts with other NSW Health frameworks, including but not limited to, the [Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework](#), the [Clinical Excellence Commission’s Healthcare Safety Culture Framework](#) and the [Integrated Trauma-Informed Care Framework](#).

The Strategic Context

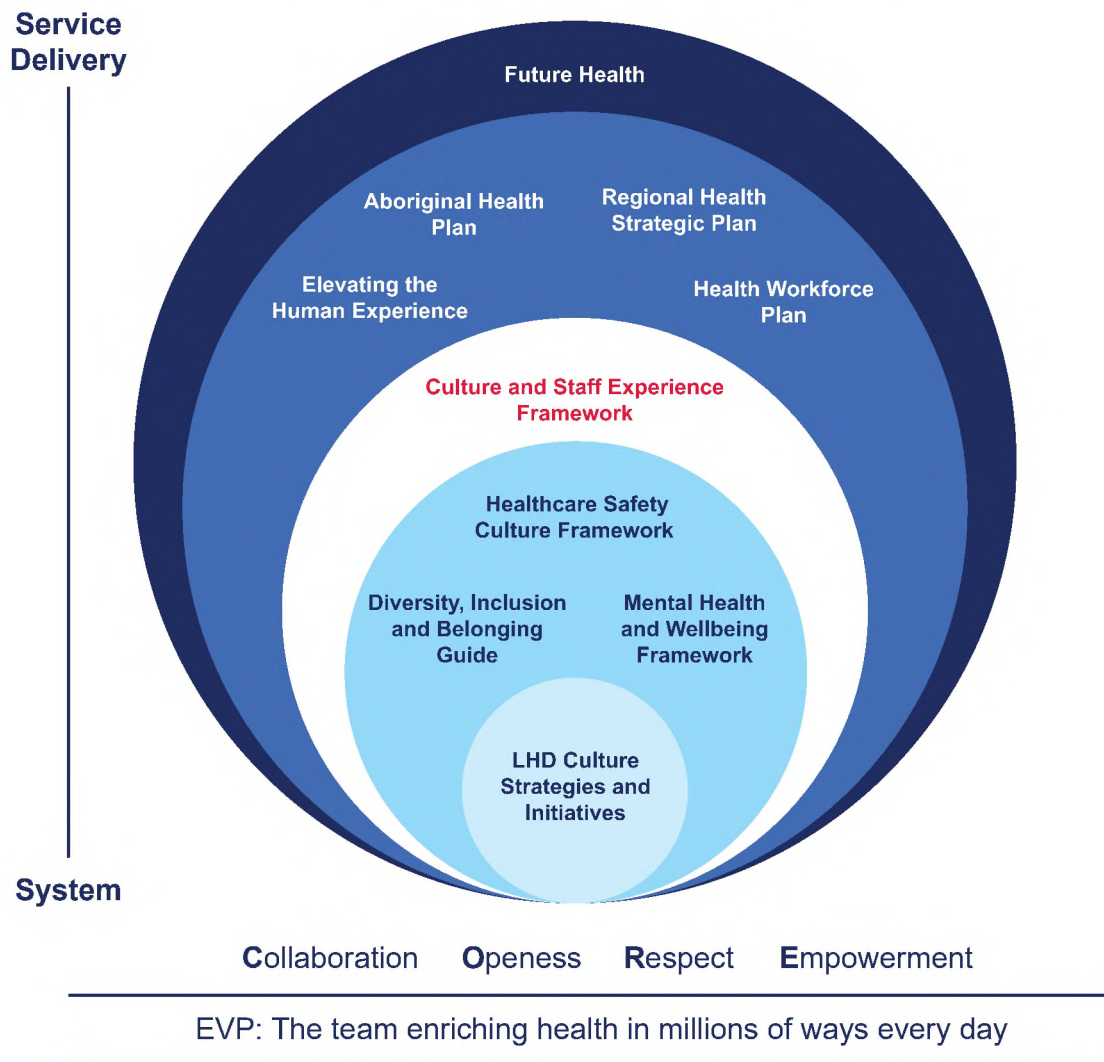


Figure 2 – The Context of the Culture and Staff Experience Framework
Examples only and not an exhaustive list

What does success look like?

A positive, safe and inclusive culture is embedded in everything we do across our organisation. We consider our people's wellbeing and experiences in all our decisions, knowing this also directly impacts the patient experience. Our leaders model behaviour that empowers people to be their best and contribute to decisions that affect them. Our people feel they belong and are free to speak up respectfully, to build new ideas and challenge old ones. Our teams collaborate for success and innovation in all they do.

As a system, we will know we have achieved this when our people can confidently demonstrate:

People

- ✓ I feel that I belong.
- ✓ I feel safe to speak up.
- ✓ I can thrive personally and professionally.
- ✓ I know my strengths and am valued for my contributions to the outcomes of my team, organisation and NSW Health.
- ✓ I am able to be myself.
- ✓ I am accountable for my own behaviours.
- ✓ I experience kindness and compassion from my colleagues.
- ✓ I am supported to learn and grow from my mistakes.
- ✓ I know that my effort makes a difference.
- ✓ I am encouraged to develop my career through development opportunities.
- ✓ I feel culturally safe.
- ✓ I clearly understand the expectations of my role.
- ✓ I am energised by the work I do.
- ✓ I demonstrate our CORE Values.

Teams

- ✓ We plan, create, and celebrate as a team.
- ✓ We ensure our culture is safe and respectful for everyone.
- ✓ We foster innovation and continuous improvement.
- ✓ We connect our work and performance to staff and patient experience.
- ✓ We value diversity and the experiences of our colleagues and patients.
- ✓ We discuss the behaviours we want.
- ✓ Our work is sustainable.
- ✓ We learn and grow from our past.
- ✓ We work collaboratively across professions, teams, and health organisations.
- ✓ We bring the CORE Values to life in the way we work.

Leaders

- ✓ I create an environment that promotes cultural safety.
- ✓ I have open conversations with my team to promote behaviours we support and manage behaviours we don't.
- ✓ I understand that what I say and do as a leader is pivotal to creating my team's culture.
- ✓ I am committed to developing my people management and leadership skills.
- ✓ I lead with kindness and compassion.
- ✓ I set clear expectations and accountabilities for my team.
- ✓ I support career development and learning opportunities for my team.
- ✓ I encourage the contribution of individual perspectives and talents.
- ✓ I seek feedback from my team on what matters to them and act on this.
- ✓ I value and take part in shared decision making.
- ✓ I create positive experiences for my team.
- ✓ I role model our CORE Values.

Organisation

- ✓ Our organisations put kindness and compassion at the centre of everything we do.
- ✓ We encourage people to speak up for high standards without fear.
- ✓ Our policies, processes and strategies reflect a commitment to valuing our staff's experiences.
- ✓ Our leaders prioritise the staff and patient experience through their actions and words.
- ✓ Prioritising safety is reflected in our policies, processes and measures.
- ✓ Our staff are proud to work in NSW Health, actively promote the CORE Values and feel valued for their contributions.
- ✓ We have reward and recognition frameworks and practices embedded throughout the organisation.
- ✓ Our decision-making frameworks require sustainability as an outcome.
- ✓ Our indicators and surveys of our staff experience positively reflect our efforts to improve our culture.

Our CORE values guide the way we work

NSW Health's culture is defined by our CORE Values: Collaboration, Openness, Respect and Empowerment. These values guide the way we work by setting the standards and expectations for how we interact with each other and with patients, families and carers.

The CORE Values have long been a key component of our culture and remain relevant as we look to the future. The descriptions have been refreshed to align with the NSW Health landscape now and into the future.

Collaboration

We work together, recognising the contributions of everyone, to create supportive workplaces that produce the best health outcomes.

- Setting clear expectations on working together to achieve shared goals.
- Giving staff the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them.
- Seeking to understand and discuss without judgement.
- Using inclusive language.
- Sharing information with one another.
- Asking considered/curious questions.
- Prioritising collective problem solving.
- Being willing to get involved and learn from others.
- Leading by example and supporting emerging leaders.
- Following up on feedback to show we care about what matters to staff.
- Actively encouraging input and constructive discussion.



Openness

We seek to understand new perspectives to learn, grow and continuously improve. We communicate transparently to create a safe and inclusive workplace that values diverse experiences.

- Demonstrating vulnerability by openly talking about and learning from mistakes.
- Providing transparent and timely communication.
- Being fair, approachable, and reasonable.
- Adapting to change and innovation.
- Asking for help.
- Getting to know others by seeking to understand their lived experience.
- Understanding what matters to each other
- Seeking feedback and recognising that each of us has room to grow.
- People leaders modelling and reinforcing transparency.
- Demonstrating curiosity to strengthen understanding.
- Practising active listening to help others feel heard.
- Reflecting intentionally on feedback and personal behaviours.



Respect

We value one another and recognise that everyone has talents, ideas and skills to contribute. We are considerate and listen to understand.

- Demonstrating kindness and compassion for each other's lived experience.
- Acknowledging that people are the experts in their own lives.
- Taking accountability for what we say and how we say it.
- Listening and making the effort to understand different perspectives.
- Appreciating the unique skills and talents that all staff bring.
- Acknowledging feelings and allowing time to process them.
- Taking a human-centred approach to everything we do.
- Building accessibility for those with disability.
- Thinking about the person as well as the outcome.
- Making the effort to resolve misunderstandings.
- Ensuring all behaviours are ethical.
- Reflecting on how one's actions may impact another.
- Prioritising and recognising the moments that matter to others.



Empowerment

We are trusted and enabled to take ownership of our work and goals, make decisions and contribute our unique talents and ideas to advance NSW Health.

- Promoting accountability in decision making.
- Enabling learning as part of our daily work.
- Knowing what matters to staff, patients, families, and carers and working to achieve it.
- Speaking up on issues and safety concerns through appropriate channels.
- Giving agency to others to make decisions that affect them.
- Having open conversations to explore innovation and different perspectives.
- Acknowledging behaviours and actions that build the desired culture.
- Showing kindness and compassion to staff, patients, families and carers.
- Ensuring staff have the information and resources to perform their roles to the highest standards.
- Enabling staff to achieve their goals.
- Valuing human-centredness in problem solving and patient safety.
- Continuously improving the inclusiveness, equity and diversity of our services.
- Staying informed of evidence and information that promotes better quality of care.



The Culture and Staff Experience Levers



The Culture and Staff Experience Levers

The Framework identifies nine key areas, or Levers, that impact staff experience and drive culture. Each lever is a focus for action to create and sustain a constructive, inclusive workplace culture where our staff can thrive while delivering exceptional health care.

Understanding how each of these levers influence culture in NSW Health organisations will help to clarify where cultural progress is needed. It will be different for every organisation and will change over time as goals and external factors change.

Practical tools and resources aligned to these levers can be accessed through the NSW Health [Culture and Staff Experience Portal](#).

NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework



Figure 3 – Culture and Staff Experience Framework

Culture Focused Leadership



Culture Focused Leadership means leaders of all levels prioritise creating and nurturing a positive workplace culture. This approach emphasises the values, beliefs, behaviours and social norms that define an organisation and acknowledges that a robust, unified culture can enhance performance and increase engagement.

Leaders have the most influence in shaping their team's culture⁹¹⁰ through the behaviours they display, accept, reinforce and reward, and through what they avoid saying or overlook¹¹¹²¹³. Building a culture where people feel they belong and can contribute to the best of their abilities requires leaders' ongoing attention. Creating a supportive work environment that prioritises employee wellbeing, work-life balance and a positive workplace atmosphere fosters engagement and leads to greater job satisfaction.¹⁴

A culture focused leader role models and demonstrates commitment to our CORE Values and leads with compassion and kindness. This is heard and felt through their words and actions. Leaders who demonstrate vulnerability with their teams by expressing honesty and openness will forge a stronger connection and build a more positive work environment. Leaders are not 'right' all the time; they are mindful, respectful and transparent communicators. They demonstrate self-awareness, admit they don't have all the answers, display curiosity and have a growth mindset. Effective leaders maintain open lines of communication, ensuring that information flows freely throughout the organisation. They are transparent about challenges and successes, fostering trust and a sense of shared purpose among their people.

Good leaders are fair and reasonable, collaborate in decision making, and set a clear vision and expectations for individuals and teams. To be successful, leaders need to cultivate a feeling of trust that allows our people to share their concerns, needs and aspirations in a safe environment. Communicating authentically and cultivating an inclusive culture where diversity is celebrated and truly valued is a

shared responsibility. However, leaders must initiate and model these behaviours to signal that the environment is safe. This open dialogue enables informed decision-making, continuous improvement, and innovation.

Culture focused leadership empowers individuals, with leaders taking on the role of a facilitator and enabler of their people's success. This involves providing opportunities for professional and personal growth which progress an individual's development and help the team achieve its goals. Fostering a sense of ownership and accountability and recognising and rewarding effort and achievements are also ways leaders can empower their people and build strong relationships within their team. Culture focused leadership also means applying policies and practices consistently and fairly, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect. This consistency helps build trust and credibility within teams.

Providing regular opportunities for genuine recognition and delivering this in ways that make people feel comfortable contributes to a positive culture. Making recognition part of our culture means acknowledging both everyday efforts and operational achievements. While celebrating success is important, leaders also need to coach staff through disappointment and mishaps. Key to coaching success is displaying empathy and reframing problems into learning opportunities.

While culture is everyone's responsibility, leaders at all levels play an important role in establishing custom and practice in their teams. Empowering our people to show their unique talents and discuss their experiences encourages professional growth and produces better health outcomes. Our daily interactions and responses to one another shape our environment. Ultimately, promoting productive behaviours and living the CORE Values is a collective effort.

A positive, safe, and inclusive culture improves the staff experience and strengthens the human experience at NSW Health.

In practice: When things don't go as planned...

Culture Focused Leadership is:

Taking a moment to compose. Openly discussing the issues respectfully and showing understanding. Guiding the conversation towards what we can do better next time.

Culture Focused Leadership isn't:

Blaming others, showing anger, and raising voices. Disregarding other people's feelings and not providing opportunities to learn.

Kindness and Compassion



Caregiving is best achieved through kindness and compassion.

Kindness means demonstrating empathy and understanding for someone else's circumstances.

Compassion is when this empathy motivates action.

Showing kindness and compassion to all the people we interact with improves our workplace culture and the way we deliver health care.

The interaction of kindness and compassion can transform health care from being a transactional process to something that is more human and healing. There is strong evidence that a kinder and more compassionate healthcare system has a significant impact on achieving better outcomes for patients, carers and their families¹⁵. This ethos is embraced by NSW Health, with a values-based, human-centred, safe approach ingrained in our care models. Working in a kind and compassionate way can also mean recognising that staff have their own experiences and, in some cases, this may include trauma. The Integrated Trauma-Informed Care Framework helps us recognise and respond to the effects of direct and vicarious trauma. This is equally important in our interactions with both staff and patients. Kindness and compassion between staff will also have a profound

effect on patient experience; it will build trust in people and treatments, and positively affect both psychological and physiological outcomes¹⁶.

Kindness and compassion are key elements of our healthcare delivery. Organisations that value and demonstrate kindness and compassion create workplaces that embed wellbeing. Being kind and compassionate towards one another has a ripple effect, positively impacting staff experience, wellbeing, engagement and performance. Acts of kindness, both small and large, create an environment where staff feel they are understood and belong.

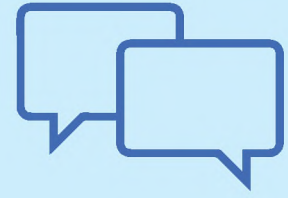
Compassion enables us to connect with people more deeply. At an individual level, we can all take responsibility to act and lead with empathy and demonstrate support for our colleagues. We can demonstrate compassion by seeking to understand everyone's situations through openness: having conversations to share thoughts, emotions and concerns.

A kind and compassionate workplace improves culture and morale and reduces negative influences or external impacts. In kind and compassionate teams, there is increased motivation to contribute and we are set up to perform at our best.

In practice: In every day moments...

Kindness and Compassion is:	Kindness and Compassion isn't:
Showing interest in your colleagues through active listening and empathy, seeking to understand other perspectives, being non-judgemental.	Speaking in a dismissive or rude manner, ignoring others, acts of micro-aggression, bullying and exclusionary behaviour.

Psychological Safety



“A belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes, and that the team is safe for inter-personal risk taking.”²⁰

Amy Edmondson – Prof. Harvard Business School

Psychological safety means feeling safe to freely express your opinions without fear. In a psychologically safe workplace, there is a shared understanding that it is okay to make mistakes, it's okay to ask for support, and it's okay to challenge the way we do things.²¹ It is all okay because there is trust and comfort within the team to learn from experience. This enhances interpersonal relationships and elevates the team's performance. In psychologically safe teams, people are confident there will be no negative consequences for open disclosure. Psychological safety is a commitment to doing everything possible to maintain standards of excellence and achieving team goals.

Leaders can promote psychological safety by building trust through open and honest communication. This involves explaining their vision, being transparent with information and empowering staff to take ownership for their roles in the success of our health system. Showing people that we value their opinion by making them feel welcome to speak up and appreciating diverse perspectives enables rich discussion and collaborative problem solving. This is how

big ideas begin and innovation and continuous improvement follows. Reframing challenges as learning problems and showing a willingness to learn from others are also ways leaders can build psychologically safe teams. It is modelling accountability, so we learn to anticipate obstacles and plan for contingencies.

Everyone can take action to build the psychological safety in our teams by helping people feel that their participation matters. We do this by inviting people to express their views and having respectful and open disagreement or discussion. By listening and responding productively we encourage a culture of speaking up without fear. Having a strong sense of psychological safety means we are more likely to innovate and adapt to changes. It also means there are fewer errors and mistakes and people feel empowered to learn and contribute. It improves the staff experience and workplace culture so they can enjoy rewarding careers in NSW Health.

Psychological safety is fundamental to creating a safety culture.

In practice: When working through a difficult challenge...

Psychological Safety is:	Psychological Safety isn't:
A team member raising an alternative view and the manager welcoming and exploring this contribution.	Apportioning blame and shame when mistakes are made; dismissing a comment or email because you don't agree.

Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging



As the largest public health system in Australia, building a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce that represents the community we serve is vital to delivering the health care our communities need. By building diversity and inclusion within our workforce, we acknowledge the strengths that come from individual differences. This includes reflecting the community we serve and the creative problem solving that diversity brings. We embrace diversity and recognise the crucial role a sense of belonging plays in our staff's wellbeing¹⁷.

Diversity refers to the presence of differences within our workforce. These differences include characteristics such as skills, experience, sexuality, gender identity, religion, physical features and abilities, neurodiversity, gender, age and cultural background. These attributes influence how we live and see the world around us. Understanding difference is essential to understanding the human experience.

Inclusion is about creating a workplace that values our lived experiences and sees our differences as strengths. It means that staff feel welcome to bring their whole selves to work and that their voices can make a difference¹⁸.

When we have a diverse workforce that feels valued for what their differences bring, we create a culture where people feel they truly belong. Each of us needs to commit to building an inclusive workplace that values and celebrates

our diversity. We need to be curious and open to learning and understanding each other's differences and how this impacts the way we each see the world around us.

To achieve this, we need to proactively build diverse teams. This comes through ensuring our recruitment, development and progression pathways and ways of working are equitable and free from cognitive bias that may unfairly disadvantage cohorts of our workforce. It means empowering different voices through encouraging productive debate, consciously creating accessible and culturally safe workplaces, establishing employee networks that champion diverse groups and actively managing unacceptable workplace behaviours such as racism, homophobia and sexism. It means recognising the different needs of the multiple generations within the NSW Health workforce and acknowledging and supporting staff requirements across the various stages of their employee and life cycles¹⁹.

Our aim is that our people, patients, families and carers know that diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging are fundamental and valued parts of how we work from their very first encounter with NSW Health.

For further information, see the [NSW Health Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Guide](#).

In practice: Building an inclusive workplace where people feel they belong...

Inclusion is:	Inclusion isn't:
Asking people what they are comfortable sharing, what their preferred pronouns are, what they want to celebrate and what they prefer to keep private.	<p>Making jokes that relate to diversity e.g. cultural background, language, or traditions.</p> <p>Making assumptions around someone's capability and needs.</p>

Moments that Matter



NSW Health is large and complex organisation and has many subcultures. We don't all do things the same way. Our staff journey (or 'employee life cycle') starts from the very first interaction with NSW Health through to the time of exiting. Throughout these journeys, certain events will have a bigger impact on our experience than others. These will vary across individuals, teams and organisations and are known as the 'moments that matter'. Common 'moments that matter' include^{30 31 32}:

Professional moments that matter:

- first interview with a future manager
- starting work with NSW Health
- clinical rotations and secondments
- support following critical incidents
- receiving constructive feedback
- performance-development conversations
- receiving a promotion or professional award.

Life moments that matter:

- becoming a parent
- celebrating significant relationships
- dealing with personal grief
- returning to work following extended leave
- managing changing life and family circumstances.

In addition to the 'big' moments outlined above, there are also many micro-moments in everyday interactions that we can all focus on to improve our workplace culture. These include:

- facilitating introductions and building relationships across teams
- having ongoing conversations with staff
- supporting carer responsibilities
- giving in-the-moment feedback and coaching.

These moments can significantly impact our experience, either positively or negatively. By identifying the moments that matter and focusing on improving our responses to these moments, we can improve our overall culture and staff experience^{33 34}. The key to this is ensuring what we say we stand for is aligned with what our people experience. Our CORE Values need to be seen and heard in the moments that matter, for example, considering what empowerment looks like during performance-development conversations³⁵.

It's also important that we understand we are a part of an intergenerational workforce and there are different milestones and moments that matter in all our lives. These are important influences on how we 'show up' and contribute to work. Demonstrating an awareness and understanding of our colleagues' different life phases will help to foster understanding and promote kind, compassionate and respectful interactions³⁶.

In practice: When someone joins the team on clinical rotation or secondment...

Acknowledging Moments that Matter is:	It isn't:
Welcoming staff on rotations and supporting their transition by taking time to understand their own lived experience and designing an onboarding support with them.	Not introducing them to their team members or making them feel welcome. Assuming they will know what to do and get on with it without thorough onboarding.

Wellbeing



Wellbeing in the workplace includes all aspects of work life. It means having a holistic view of mental, emotional, and physical health. We want our people to feel content and have the support they need to achieve their professional goals, while protecting their personal needs. This includes how wellbeing relates to their careers, relationships, financial and physical states and their sense of community and belonging.

Workplace wellbeing means experiencing professional fulfillment that enables us to thrive and prevents burnout²⁵²⁶. It involves using our skills and talents in a meaningful way to gain a sense of accomplishment and growth. Connecting with our work's purpose and knowing our individual values align with NSW Health's CORE Values promotes professional fulfillment.

To make this work, leaders can build a culture where people feel safe and supported to speak up and seek help when they experience poor wellbeing²⁷. When people feel safe and supported in voicing concerns about their wellbeing, targeted programs and systemic changes are both more effective.

A system-wide commitment to wellbeing is the key to building lasting change. Building our capacity to provide a culture of workplace wellbeing involves three key elements. This first is applying a wellbeing lens to policy development to ensure our people are being given more scope to thrive. The second is resourcing leaders to effectively promote, role model and implement opportunities for improving wellbeing at work. Thirdly, awareness-raising events are important to educate and share best practice. We all have a collective responsibility to promote workplace wellbeing. There is an

opportunity to learn from experience, build on what we have achieved and design a better future. Leaders who recognise the importance of engaging everyone in the solution-building process will enable lasting change.

Wellbeing is central to a positive staff experience. Promoting a culture of wellbeing includes a focus on continuous improvement and innovation. Achieving this means nurturing a feedback culture and closing the feedback loop. Building a feedback-positive culture means taking time to let someone know they made a difference. This strengths-based approach amplifies what is working well. We can increase people's sense of purpose with small acts of kindness or by showing genuine appreciation for their contributions. Leaders can also show they genuinely prioritise wellbeing by empowering their teams to have solutions-focused conversations and solve problems together. Actioning feedback and monitoring the outcomes of any interventions demonstrates commitment to closing the feedback loop and reinforces that we value our people's input and ideas.

Nurturing a workplace environment that prioritises wellbeing involves open and transparent communication. Leaders have a responsibility to hold regular wellbeing check-ins with their staff and encourage them to take advantage of wellbeing opportunities, plan leave to rest and recharge, and ensure professional growth is available, if desired. Effective check-ins, where barriers to wellbeing are removed and individuals are able to use their talents, will promote a workplace where people thrive. When people feel supported and safe in the workplace, they can focus on providing the best-quality health care²⁷²⁸²⁹. Professional fulfilment has a positive impact on our wellbeing.

In practice: Demonstrating a commitment to prioritising wellbeing takes conscious effort ...

Supporting Wellbeing is:	Supporting Wellbeing isn't:
Providing time to check in with how staff are coping and asking what barriers you can help remove. Making time for social conversation, sharing a cup of tea, and encouraging staff to make leave plans where possible.	Consistently expecting unreasonable discretionary effort; ignoring work-life balance conversations.

Safety Culture



A resilient and reliable **safety culture** is one where safety is everyone's responsibility, and compassionate behaviours are evident at all levels of the system²². Safety needs to be a part of everything we do for our staff and patients.

Safety culture involves ongoing recognition that the way we act with each other, and with our environments, enables a positive, safe workplace where things mostly 'go right'. When risks to ourselves, colleagues and patients arise we feel psychologically safe to identify and address them through open and respectful conversation.

Teams and organisations with safety culture can have a significant impact on the staff experience and patient outcomes. Attention to safety within an organisation's culture usually leads to challenges, incidents and errors being proactively resolved.

Ways to promote a preventive approach include:

- **Safety before savings** – where safety is viewed as an investment or positive outcome rather than a cost.
- **Proactivity** – where identifying potential issues or risks is encouraged and rewarded.
- **Avoiding leadership group-think** – a commitment to challenging the status quo to avoid risky or unsafe processes.
- **Clear communication** – providing all necessary information in a clear and timely manner.
- **Focusing on lessons learned** – where identified causes of issues are explored and shared and new solutions implemented.
- **Competency checks** – checking that people have been provided with the necessary information, skills and training to successfully manage all aspects of their roles²³

A safety culture requires a commitment to realistic practices, and to continuously learning to identify and mitigate physical and psychosocial hazards. It is important that we are aware of and work to address our own biases by maintaining an open mindset. Safety culture requires confidence in the value of preventive measures. It requires us to be mindful in our actions and interactions and to take time to consider their impacts on our people and patients. Key to safety culture is protecting against physical and psychosocial hazards of our workplace as far as is reasonable. Physical hazards are often visible and can be more easily identified and reported. Psychosocial hazards are anything that could cause psychological harm to someone's mental health and require more conscious consideration around workplace behaviours. They can include bullying and harassment, low job control or violence and aggression. For more information see the [NSW Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework](#).

The Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC) highlights that compassionate leadership is a key component of a safety culture²⁴. Compassionate leadership is respectful, inclusive, and distributed across the whole care system, from patients, clinical and support staff, to management and boards. We all play a part in leading with compassion. We focus on relationships through listening to, understanding, empathising with, and supporting people to feel respected and valued. Compassionate leadership behaviours enable a safety culture.

See the CEC's [Healthcare Safety Culture Framework](#) for more information.

In practice: In day-to-day activities...

Safety Culture is:	Safety Culture isn't:
Openly discussing risks and challenging the way things are usually done to see if there is a better way.	Taking short cuts to save costs, leaving risk of injury or harm exposed. Ignoring the root cause or overlooking unsafe practices because it is the 'status quo'.

Learning Organisation and Growth Mindset



At NSW Health we have deep expertise and many talents across our workforce that can be harnessed so we can become a world-class learning organisation. A learning organisation prioritises both individual learning and collective effort for continuous improvement. It recognises the connections between the different parts of the organisation and enables knowledge sharing across teams, work units and through the generations of its workforce.

As a **learning organisation**, NSW Health is focused on continued learning to innovate and refine the way we work to ensure we meet our community's evolving healthcare needs. Learning is not a one-time event; it is an ongoing process. Taking a systems-thinking approach, we consider the way our organisations are interconnected and identify opportunities to collaborate. This creates the environment for collective knowledge sharing to nurture a more fulfilling staff experience and achieve our shared vision. This long-term perspective enables NSW Health to plan for the future and adapt and respond proactively.

Facilitating learning involves creating an environment that encourages trust and growth, implementing effective processes and championing learning across all levels of leadership³⁷. This can be achieved by leaders sharing their own learning journeys and making time for team reflection and creative problem-solving. Embracing curiosity and diverse skills and experiences, and reframing mistakes as growth opportunities, are essential for sustaining ongoing

learning. Recognising that we all have more to learn means openly seeking input where there are gaps in our understanding. This collective learning allows us to build on a foundation of previously established knowledge. It creates a richer understanding as new information is added to the shared pool.

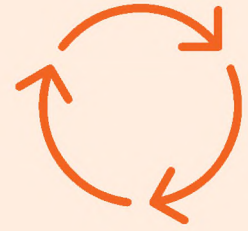
A **growth mindset** is the belief that we can learn new skills and unlearn the things that no longer serve us. It enables and sustains a learning culture. It means we are inspired by the challenges we face, and we focus on the progress we make. By reframing our perceptions and thoughts, we can develop our growth mindset. Organisations that incorporate a growth-mindset culture have increased employee engagement and higher workplace satisfaction.³⁸

Rapid development of technologies, such as robotics and AI, have and will continue to impact care models, diagnoses and preventive approaches to health services. A learning organisation and growth mindsets equips us with optimism, flexibility and resilience. It improves our ability to adapt and manage change. Building a culture of learning means approaching new situations with openness and curiosity³⁹. When we embrace opportunities and work with a growth mindset, we empower our people to thrive and continue to achieve the very best health outcomes for our patients and their families.

In practice: When someone raises ideas for improvement...

A learning organisation and growth mindset:	It isn't:
Coaching in the spirit of support and growth. Encouraging others to use their strengths and being open to changing the way we do things.	Shutting down concerns or ideas raised in an attempt to improve the way we work.

Sustainability



At NSW Health we aspire to make sustainability a part of our DNA⁴⁰. Our goal is to deliver a healthcare system that prioritises sustainable environments, workforces and decision making. Economic, social and environmental sustainability are important for NSW Health’s future success and, increasingly, workplace culture is a fundamental part of the sustainability equation. Organisational culture creates sustainability by valuing it and enabling and promoting sustainable practices to shape the way we do things.

At NSW Health we make it easier for our people to make sustainable decisions at work that are specific to local contexts, for example recycling programs, providing secure bicycle parking, and ensuring our new builds are solar powered and net-zero-ready. Our procurement processes are responsible, and we have created specific roles with expertise to guide us.

Future-of-work research tells us that people entering the workforce care deeply about sustainability^{41 42 43}. By creating a culture that supports us to experiment and evolve in this area, we are setting ourselves up to attract and retain talent and be an employer of choice now and into the future.

We want to create a workplace culture that takes a holistic approach to sustainability and encompasses not only environmental aspects but also organisational culture, knowledge management, community impact and ethical considerations. This can mean sharing knowledge with the next generation of leaders to ensure they understand the efforts made to create a positive culture. It can also mean thinking about how to ensure the positive aspects of our culture are embedded into the foundations of everything we do, thinking about the long-term impact of our decisions, and about how our decisions impact on our culture and environment.

In practice: When managing resources...

Sustainability is:	It isn't:
Correctly labelling resources with expiry dates and implementing a stock-control process.	Throwing away unused in-date resources while waiting for new orders to arrive.
Seeking out suppliers who use sustainable practices.	Leaving equipment running when it is not being used.
Installing recycling bins in our facilities	

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