What progress has the NHS made in improving patient safety since Don Berwick’s 2013 review, ‘A Promise to Learn – A Commitment to Act’?

90% of NHS providers (40%), including acute, community, mental health and ambulance trusts, responded to a survey from the Health Foundation, Monitor and the Trust Development Authority.

ARE THE REVIEW’S ‘COMMITMENTS’ BEING ACTED UPON?

The Berwick review set out seven ‘commitments’ for the leaders of NHS organisations. Respondents reported the following significant or very significant progress against them:

1. Monitor the quality and safety of care constantly, including variation within the organisation
2. Embrace complete transparency
3. Respond directly, openly, faithfully, and rapidly to safety alerts, early warning systems, and complaints from patients and staff
4. Use evidence based tools to ensure adequate staffing levels
5. Listen to and involve patients and carers in every organisational process and at every step in their care
6. Join multi-organisational collaboratives – networks – in which teams can learn from and teach each other
7. Train and support staff all the time to improve the processes of care

This was felt to be the most challenging area due to staff shortages, pressures on funding and the time it takes to embed culture change.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THE REVIEW?

Improvements directly attributed to the review include:

IN THE WARD:
- Better incident reporting, particularly reporting that embraces openness and enables wider lessons to be learned
- Compliance inspections
- Greater transparency

AT THE BOARD:
- Updated strategies and governance to reflect the Berwick review’s ambitions
- More ‘quality champions’
- Daily safety teleconferences
- Revised quality strategy

HAS PATIENT SAFETY IMPROVED?

93% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement we are making progress towards a continual reduction in harm.

There were many examples of organisations taking pride in the changes they have made to improve safety. For example, one organisation told us that they had introduced:

‘TalkSafe’ initiative

WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THE REVIEW?

46% of respondents told us the Berwick review has had a high or very high impact on their safety improvement agenda.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THE REVIEW?

69%

62%

62%

57%

52%

38%

35%

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HOW CAN NATIONAL AGENCIES SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT IN PATIENT SAFETY?

Respondents told us that national bodies should provide NHS organisations with:

- Practical support
- Moral support

- Sharing learning, evidence and best practice
- Making improvement tools, resources and benchmarking data available
- Acknowledging when improvements have been made and recognising that lasting improvement takes time to achieve