

Learning from Excellence Reveals the Actions & Behaviours Valued during Incident Investigations



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Background and Aim

Incident investigations are stressful and can have a negative impact on staff well-being¹.

We aimed to identify the actions and behaviours that staff find helpful during these events through the analysis of Learning from Excellence (Lfe) reports.

Lfe identifies and captures intelligence from episodes of peer-reported 'excellence' or positive deviance² Alongside traditional incident investigations, it promotes the reporting, recognition and reflection on positive processes and outcomes rather than error alone. This has the potential to augment learning, enhance patient experience and outcomes and, through quality improvement work, positively impact resilience and culture in the workplace.

The eLfe system at BWCH is centrally and electronically managed allowing comprehensive analysis of report data.



Method

All Lfe reports from June 2019-March 2021 were screened using the search terms in table 1.

Table 1

| Search term | No. of reports |
|----------------------|----------------|
| IR1, Datix | 4 |
| SIRI, RCA, incident | 6 |
| Table top, DLR | 3 |
| Complaint, grievance | 3 |
| GMA, NMC | 2 |
| HR, disciplinary | 3 |
| coroner | 1 |

The reports were independently thematically analysed and validated by three authors TO, AJ and RM.

Results

22 reports were collated from 11 departments within BWCH; 5 themes emerged.

Themes reported

1. Support :

- Senior colleague expertise, at the time and ongoing
- External to incident and/or Trust

**Colleagues appreciated the ability of senior colleagues to look out for and check on them while the investigation was ongoing. Support was offered irrespective of whether it was sought. Professional help was also provided by coaches outside the organisation which further enhanced the support structure by aiding understanding of what happened and subsequent emotions.

2. Timeliness of:

- Debrief
- Support
- Investigation
- Apology

**Debriefs soon after incident and prior to commencement of investigation afforded staff the opportunity for an initial reflection which aided coping. Information about commencement of investigation also came simultaneously with offer of support and contacts of support network available. Initiating formal investigation close to the incident was also identified as being helpful in shortening the duration of stress on staff.

3. Investigation:

- Clear documentation
- Attention to detail
- Opportunity to learn

**Colleagues conducting incident investigations reported that clear, concise and contemporaneous documentation helped to mitigate the initial stress. This helped staff to see the process not only as a formal and legal process but also as an opportunity for everyone to learn.

4. Values:

- Bravery
- Compassion:

**While colleagues were being investigated, the feeling of "not being alone" was appreciated because they were checked upon from time to time by senior colleagues that they were already familiar with (such as educational supervisors).

5. Family:

- Patient advocacy
- Parental reassurance

**Investigation into an incident is a form of patient advocacy as it puts the patient and family at the centre of care. Collaborative open apologies enhance the trusting relationship with parents and family.

References:

- Understanding challenges to wellbeing among medical & nursing staff working in paediatric critical care: an Enhanced Critical Incident Technique, Isabelle Butcher, Rachael Morrison, Sarah Webb, Heather Duncan, & Rachel Shaw, WFPICCS 2022 poster
- <https://adc.bmj.com/content/archdischild/101/9/788.full.pdf>

1. SUPPORT

'.. as a middle manager it is always helpful to be able to 'phone a friend', [the exec on call] was happy to support' - this involved phone calls at a weekend and an open door for meetings

2. TIMELINESS

'S was able to speak with the staff and feedback to the parents at the time. This is without doubt the best way to deal with issues and I am very grateful'

3. INVESTIGATION

'H conducted a very detailed investigation in a timely and efficient manner, and has pulled together a brilliant response.'

4. VALUES

'The response delivers complex evidence and terminology in both an informative and compassionate way, meaning the patient could fully understand all the events regarding her care.'

5. FAMILY

'reassurance to the parent ... want to make it better for our patients and families.'

Conclusions

Lfe provides an opportunity to explore 'what works' and the actions and behaviours that contribute to success.

This project explored the conditions that are perceived to support staff and mitigate distress during incident investigations. The themes will be used to inform practice in these situations and the design of a care bundle for staff.

It also evidences expressions of gratitude, recognition and appreciation all of which are known to contribute to the well-being of both the sender and recipient.

