Description

Kindness is Free



Clare Kennedy

Clare Kennedy – Bank Midwife

She/her

Summary

Following an episode of incivility at work, I designed a new initiative to try and improve workplace culture and staff satisfaction. I created and implemented ***Positivity Boxes*** which supported staff in providing positive feedback to each other. This initiative was recently identified and recognised during a HIS (Health Improvement Scotland) inspection.

What happened?

In October 2023, I was working a night shift in an alongside Midwife Led Unit in Scotland. It was a fairly busy shift which culminated in a stressful birth complicated by a shoulder dystocia at 0630 in the morning. The senior charge midwife from the Labour Ward kindly came to complete the suturing so that I could get something to eat and finish my documentation. You'd think that this sounds like excellent teamwork, and it was. I was very grateful for the support I received. But. And there usually is but, isn't there? Whilst I was handing over, the receiving midwife made a comment. I

can't even remember what it was now, as I write this over two years later. But I remember it made me feel undermined and undervalued. I, in my post nightshift haze, took to social media to rant about incivility and the impact that the comment had had on me. I don't advise or condone this course of action and would like to direct readers to the NMC guidance on social media use. However, it did lead to something productive.

Why does it matter?

Currently, in 2026 as I write this, learning more about incivility and the impact this has on our health and wellbeing but also the health and wellbeing of our patients. Unkindness isn't just unkind; it can have real world consequences and result in real harm to those in our care. No one wants that. No one gets out of bed in the morning and thinks to themselves 'I'm going to shout at someone today'. I get that. But it happens. We deal with the worst of the worst and the most stressful of situations. It can be draining and exhausting. We are pushed to the very limits of capability at times (yes, nightshifts, I'm looking at you).

What did I do about it?

Following my poorly-judged social media post, I received quite a few comments sympathising and empathising with me. But I also knew that it hadn't been the professional thing to do. I apologised to those who had been directly affected by my comments. And then I decided to do something about it. I knew I felt undervalued. I knew other felt people undervalued. But what could I do about it? I've always been one of those busybody types who likes to tinker with things and try and make things better.

So, I created the Positivity Box; a miniature box decorated with motivational stickers. I attached a very short, easy to complete form to the boxes. The goal was that staff could write a sentence or two of feedback or thanks for another member of staff. The feedback forms were simple and asked the person completing it to help make someone's day.


Clare's Positivity Box

How did I do it?

Each month, I collected the feedback and emailed it out to the individual staff members so that they could retain it for revalidation but also for that little boost we all need from time to time. For the 8 months that Positivity Boxes were in action, the midwives, health care support workers, doctors and students of maternity received a monthly email with some of the highlights of feedback. It made me feel good typing them all up and sending them out. It really was beautiful reading about the support that we had offered each other, whether that it was making a cup of tea for someone when they'd had a rough shift or being the second midwife and making sure the notes were up to date. Kindness was found in the simple, easy things.

Midwifery feels like it’s under fire a little right now. So, it might feel like such a small thing to be kind..

At the start of the year, the maternity unit received a visit from the HIS team. Imagine my surprise when my little Positivity Boxes were mentioned! It felt important that the boxes were recognised as an initiative seeking to promote staff wellbeing. Seeing them mentioned in an important review was also my little kick up the bum to finally write these words. And even though the Positivity Boxes aren’t used anymore, I know for the 8 months that I sent out those emails sharing the kind words with my colleagues. I know that this made people smile. More importantly, it reminded people that what they do is important and that they are seen and appreciated.

Midwifery feels like it’s under fire a little right now. So, it might feel like such a small thing to be kind, but it makes the world of a difference, and we really need that right now.

If you like the idea, please feel free to adopt it in your midwifery unit. You can find template of the feedback form I created here on via the Dropbox QR code:

Category

1. News & Views

Tags

1. workplace
2. workplace culture

Date Created
18th September 2026