Progress report
It has been a busy 3 months since the last Being Open newsletter. We have:

- Run 3 more communication training workshops.
- Run successful initial tests of two more stages of our evidence-based process for communicating with patients and their families about adverse events (providing updates during the review / review feedback meeting).
- Developed a Communication Guide for staff, based on the learning from the workshops and process testing.
- Attended meetings with a range of staff groups to raise awareness of the project and report on progress.
- Published resources on the Being Open Intranet pages to support the involvement of more staff in testing the Being Open process.

What do patients think of Being Open?

We found it extremely useful to be able to discuss things … with Dr X, Dr Y and a member of the midwifery team. We understand this was part of a trial initiative to communicate with patients after more serious incidents, but we found it extremely useful and we really appreciate the extra time it took out of these staff members’ days to talk us through events and answer questions at length.

Extract from letter written by a patient

Communication workshops
We have now run 5 one-day communication workshops for multidisciplinary groups of staff – consultants, junior doctors, nurses, midwives and CSWs from Obstetrics, Neonatology, Anaesthetics and the Community.

These sessions allowed staff to work on optimising communication approaches at key points in the journey through an adverse event which stakeholders (both staff and patients) had identified as being particularly challenging.

What surprised the participants most about the training?

“How many staff members, including senior management, find the same things difficult!”

“How involved in the scenario we got.”

“People don’t respond in the way you think they will.”

“How subtle changes in language can have a profound effect on patients.”

We have now undertaken all the planned workshops. We plan to use a range of methods to share the learning across the department, eg via resources such as the Communication Guide and trained staff buddying colleagues.
Getting more staff involved

We have been very encouraged by the feedback from staff and patients on the initial tests of the Being Open process but we need to run many more tests to refine the process and make sure that it works in other contexts.

As a first step, we have asked all the Obstetric and Neonatal Consultants who attended the Being Open communication workshops to take as many opportunities as they can to run tests over the next few months. For the purposes of testing, adverse events which are going to case note review can be used as well as those which will have a full review.

Edile Murdoch is also in discussion with colleagues about how other staff groups can get involved in testing and how staff who have been trained can spread the learning from the project to their colleagues.

We are also working with colleagues at the Royal Victoria Hospital to check that the processes we have developed are transferable to a different setting (Medicine of the Elderly / falls).

Support for staff

We know that adverse events are traumatic for staff as well as for patients. Initial tests of running short staff support debrief sessions before the end of a shift have been very positive. Staff seem to appreciate these meetings and one consultant commented that the meeting paved the way for colleagues to speak to her afterwards about their anxieties and for her to speak later to a member of staff who had been particularly upset and ask how she was feeling.

“**We were treating a patient with (condition), who was extremely sick and unfortunately didn’t make it. The staff involved in treating the patient (doctors and nurses) and involved in the resuscitation were quite upset afterwards. However Dr A was the attending consultant, and she was extremely supportive both throughout and after the resuscitation. She invited us all for a debrief afterwards to discuss the resuscitation, and asked if we had anything we wanted to ask or share. It is not often we get this support from senior staff, and all the nursing staff appreciated this a great deal.”**

Extract from email sent to Dr A after a staff support debrief

We hope that these staff support debriefs can become routine whenever there an event which is distressing for staff.

About the Being Open project

Maternity and neonatal services in NHS Lothian are leading national work to improve communication with patients and families about adverse events. A one-year pilot project is looking at how best to implement the national guidelines in **Being Open: Communicating patient safety incidents with patients, their families and carers**, NPSA, 2009.

In particular, the pilot is developing and testing sensitive and effective processes for engaging with patients/families and a communication training model for staff.

The pilot is being funded by Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) and the project findings and resources will be shared locally and nationally.