Learnings from Gosport: Communication

Last Updated: 29/10/2026

What went wrong at Gosport?

The Gosport Independent Panel highlighted:

- failures to discuss care treatment options and plan for end of life with both patients and families
- families felt that they were not listened to when they raised concerns in both informal and formal contexts

What our Code says

Our Code says professionals must 'use a range of verbal and non-verbal communication methods, and consider cultural sensitivities, to better understand and respond to people's personal and health needs,' and 'be able to communicate clearly and effectively in English.'

It also says that to work co-operatively, professionals must 'maintain effective communication with colleagues.' To uphold the reputation of your profession, it says you must 'use all forms of spoken, written and digital communication (including social media and networking sites) responsibly, respecting the right to privacy of others at all times.'

What our standards say

Our current nursing standards say that:

> "All nurses must use excellent communication and interpersonal skills. Their communications must always be safe, effective, compassionate and respectful. They must communicate effectively using a wide range of strategies and interventions including the effective use of communication technologies.
>
> "Where people have a disability, nurses must be able to work with service users and others to obtain the information needed to make reasonable adjustments that promote optimum health and enable equal access to services"

Our current midwifery standards highlight the need to:

> "Communicate effectively with women and their families throughout the pre-conception, antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal periods."

Our current nursing associate standards say nursing associates must:

> "Demonstrate the knowledge, communication and relationship management skills required to provide people, families and carers with accurate information that meets their needs before, during and after a range of interventions"

Communication today

Patient-centred care has been standard practice in nursing and midwifery for years.

Our standards set out that all registered nurses must play a role in providing, leading and coordinating care that is compassionate and person-centred.

Our new nursing standards say that, 'Effective communication is central to the provision of safe and compassionate person-centred care.'

Professionals are accountable for their own actions, both when working autonomously and when working in partnership with other NMC registrants and with other professionals in interdisciplinary teams.

They support and enable people at all stages of life and in all care settings to make informed choices. They also work in partnership with people to develop person-centred care plans that take into account their circumstances, characteristics and preferences.

The Code requires the professionals on our register to communicate clearly and listen to those in their care, making sure they are acting on any preferences or concerns they may have. They must communicate effectively with their colleagues.

Activities for nurses, midwives and nursing associates

For nurses

- Read our new Standards of proficiency for registered nurses - in particular, Annexe A: Communication and relationship management skills

For nursing associates

- Read our Standards of proficiency for nursing associates

For midwives

- Revisit the ‘Effective midwifery practice’ section of our Standards for competence for registered midwives