



Clinical & Scientific Services
Manchester University
NHS Foundation Trust



Building a Freedom to Speak Up culture in my team



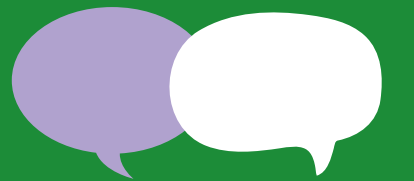
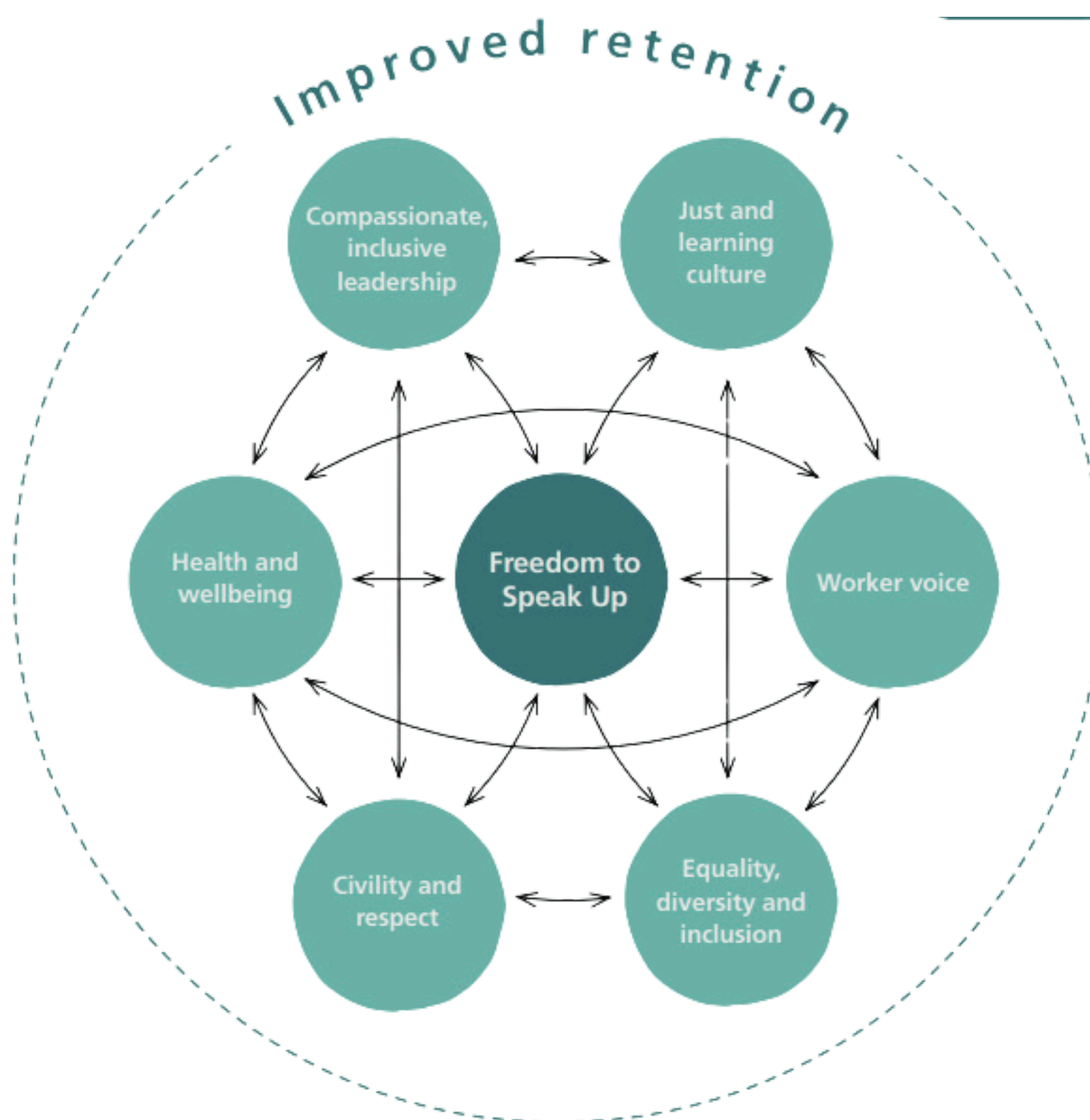


Speak Up Cultures at CSS

Ideally, improving your speaking-up culture should form part of wider culture improvement work because a healthy speaking-up culture is also one where people feel safe and confident to:

- share their thoughts, experiences and improvement ideas
- participate in health and wellbeing conversations
- call out incivility, discrimination or bullying.

Compassionate and inclusive working environments have a positive impact on staff engagement, too. If people feel comfortable doing all these things, this increases the likelihood they will stay working within the NHS.





Psychological Safety at CSS

Definition

“The belief that the work environment is safe for interpersonal risk taking and that people feel able to speak up with relevant ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes without fear of being punished or humiliated.” (Edmondson 2018)

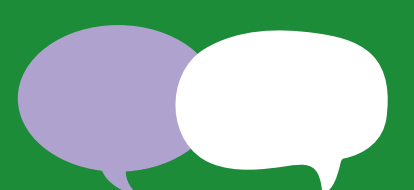
Why is psychological Safety important?

Psychological safety minimises fear and enables people to be and work at their best in their teams to deliver safe and effective care. Psychological safety is vital given it is a key cognitive state that allows learning processes to occur and contributes to improved work outcomes at different levels of analysis (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson et al., 2007).

Psychological safety is essential in work environments where employee and customer safety are paramount, such as healthcare. Here it has shown to be critical in reducing employee errors and enhancing safety (Leroy et al., 2012; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2011) and increasing team and individual learning across multiple organizations (e.g., Liu, Hu, Li, Wang, & Lin, 2014; Ortega, Sanchez-Manzanares, Gil, & Rico, 2010).

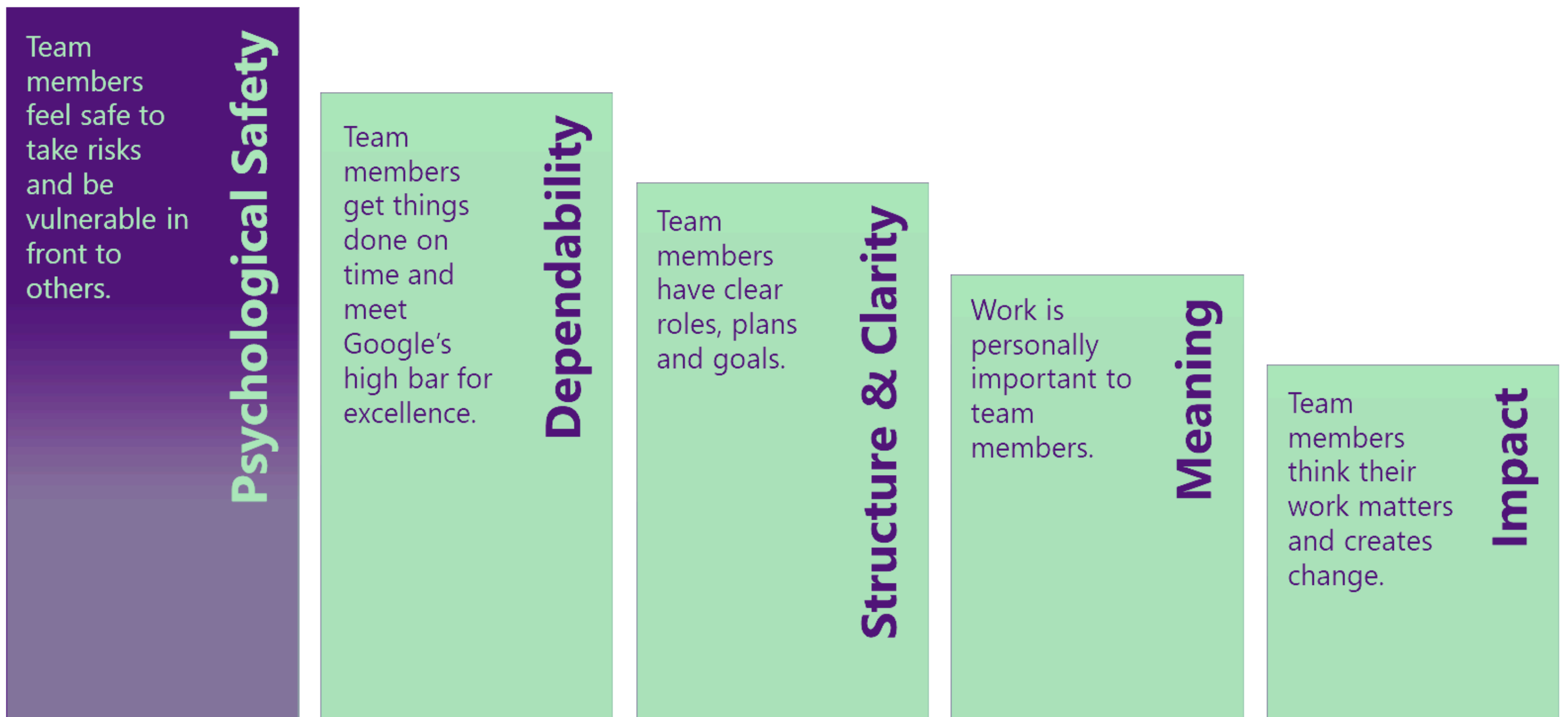
Research tells us that when psychological safety is high:

- nurses speak about errors more often.
- people are more committed to the organisation and to patient safety.
- there is a reduction in work-arounds.
- team-based learning in QI is more likely to happen.
- engagement and performance is more likely to be high.
- organisations are more able to learn from failure.





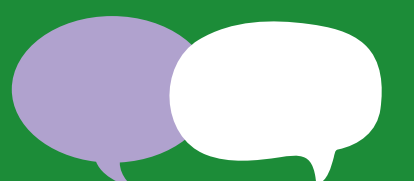
Psychological Safety in CSS



Recent longitudinal work by Google's People Analytics Unit led to five distinctive metrics that significantly affect team performance. Psychological safety is the essential element -- it was identified as the number one characteristic of successful high-performing teams (Bergmann & Schaeppi, 2016).

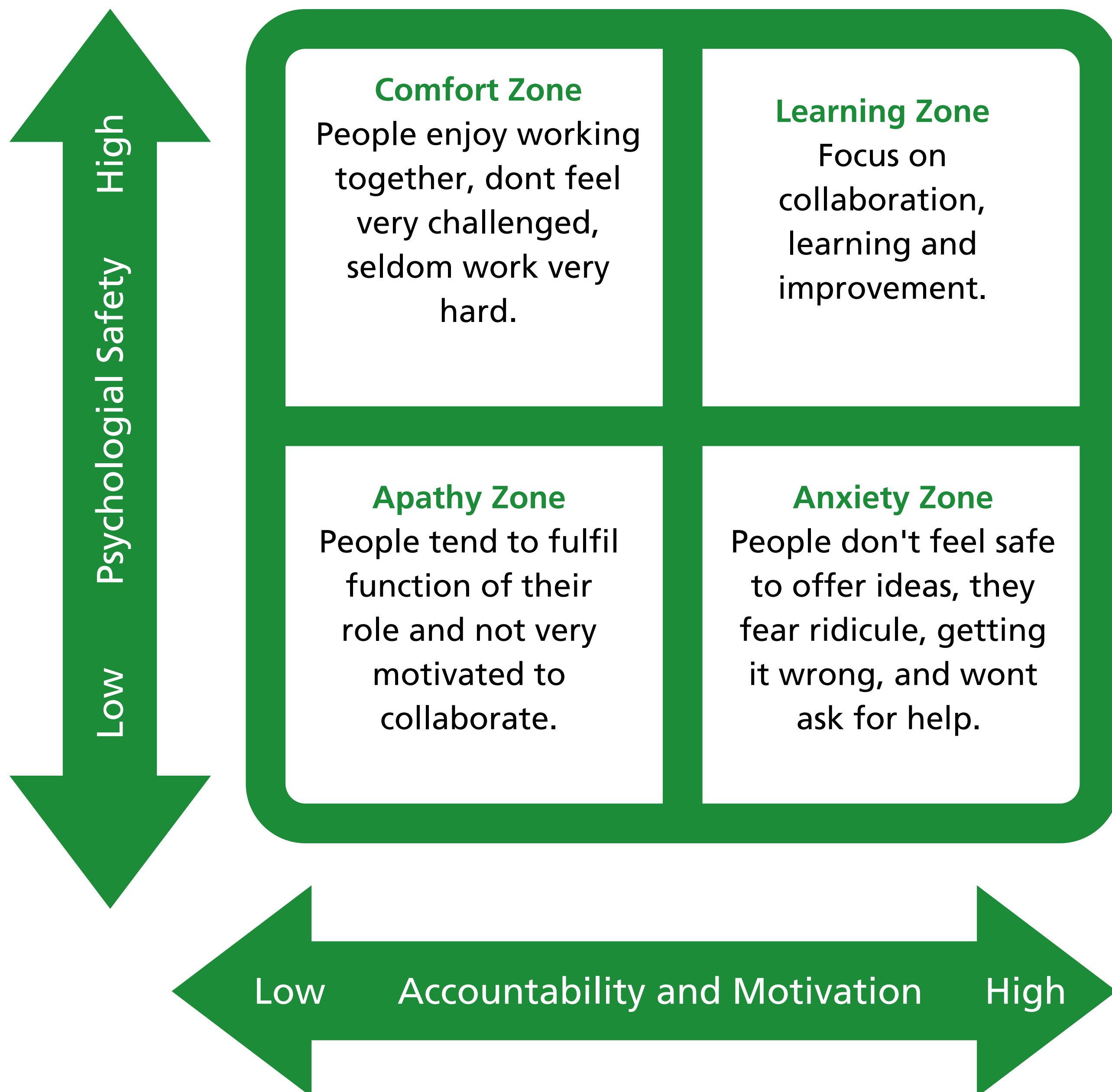


The other four factors of team effectiveness only prove to be valuable once a team is psychologically safe.

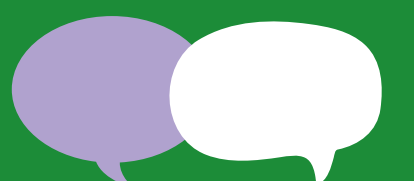




Psychological Safety at CSS



**‘How very little can be done under the spirit of fear.’
(Florence Nightingale)**





Tools to help Teams assess their level of psychological safety

Edmondson's 7 questions

Edmondson's scale is designed for use by individuals to be completed anonymously, then results aggregated for the team and used for team discussion. Using it as a group discussion where people feel unsafe will not facilitate honest answers.

Questions are taken from Edmondson A (1999): Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44, 350-383.

1. If you make a mistake in your team, is it held against you?

2. Are you able to bring up problems and tough issues?

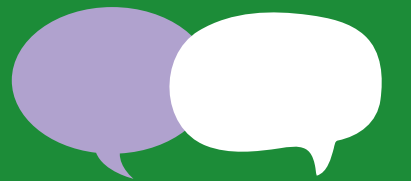
3. Do people on the team sometimes reject others for being different?

4. Is it safe to take a risk?

5. Is it difficult to ask other team members for help?

6. Do people on the team deliberately act to undermine your efforts?

7. Are your unique skills and talents valued and utilised?



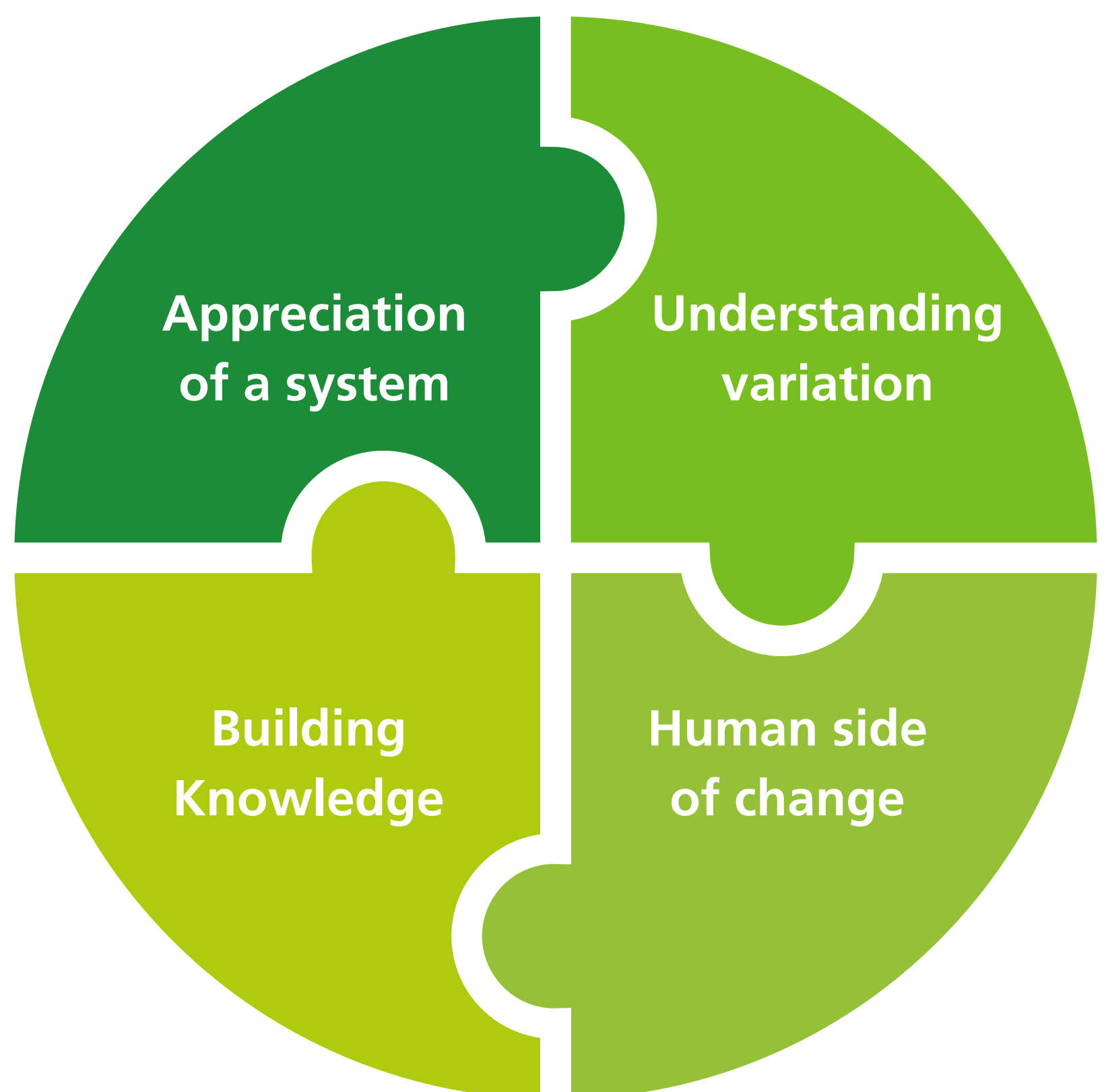


Psychological safety - Innovation

Psychological safety helps improvement by supporting teams to build a mindset which encourages teams to:

- Speak Up
- Check Assumptions
- Collaborate
- Experiment
- Reflect
- Fail well
- Learn and continue to improve
- Focus on results

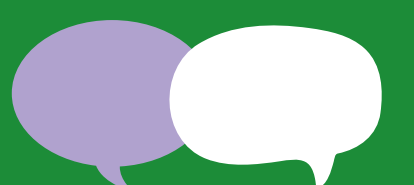
(Kings fund 2013, Edmonson, 2018)



Demings system of Profound knowledge

It enables people to learn without fear and to achieve positive change by using improvement methodology effectively. Psychological Safety creates a sense of belonging amongst colleagues, which leads to increased employee engagement, an improved culture, better wellbeing and mental health.

This also leads to an increase in innovation as colleagues feel free to speak up and share ideas, which then leads to improved policies and processes and overall improvements in efficiency and productivity.





Psychological Safety

Psychological Safety for Staff Retention: Key Strategies

Foster Open Communication

Build trust through regular, meaningful interactions such as one-to-ones, coffee chats, and open forums. Encourage sharing of both positive and negative experiences, whether in person, virtually, or in hybrid settings.

Mind Your Language

Ensure everyone feels valued by using respectful, inclusive language. Leaders and staff should openly say "sorry," "thank you," and ask for help. This creates a culture where healthy communication thrives.

Promote a Growth Mindset

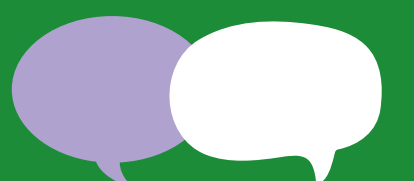
Treat mistakes as learning opportunities. Leaders should model this by sharing their own mistakes and allowing time for reflection and improvement.

Practise Compassionate Leadership

Listen, empathise, and provide support. Leaders who demonstrate a growth mindset encourage their teams to do the same. Upskilling line managers to support initiatives like Schwartz Rounds can foster this culture.

Address Bullying and Harassment

Set clear expectations for respectful behaviour and provide training to recognise and combat bullying, harassment, and microaggressions. Reducing toxic behaviour could save the NHS over £2 billion annually.





Uphold Accountability

Speak up against incivility and unacceptable behaviour. Raising awareness and challenging these actions is essential for creating a safer, more supportive workplace.

We have a Freedom to Speak Up policy that supports this and we have further information on raising concerns [here](#).

Allyship

Strong colleague network groups offer safe spaces for people to express themselves and work together to drive change. Allyship should focus on making others feel comfortable and acknowledge the power dynamics within an organisation. Recognise that your perspective may differ from that of a diverse or junior colleague. Support and engage with the Staff Networks at MFT, which currently includes five networks. More information on MFT Staff Networks can be found [here](#).

Use the ABC Model

- Asking: What does it feel like? What does it sound like?
- Bench marking: Where are we now? Where do we want to go? What would success look like?
- Considering: Reflect on differences and power dynamics in the organisation, whether related to job levels or diversity characteristics.

Make It Everyday Practice

Culture is not defined by policies, values, or branding; it's shaped by the daily behaviours seen throughout the workplace and how medical professionals treat each other and their patients.

