

The NHS is founded on a common set of principles and values that bind together the communities and people it serves – patients and public – and the staff who work for it.

The NHS Constitution establishes the **principles** and **values** of the NHS in England. It sets out **rights** to which patients, public and staff are entitled, and **pledges** which the NHS is committed to achieve, together with **responsibilities**, which the public, patients and staff owe to one another to ensure that the NHS operates fairly and effectively. The Secretary of State for Health, all NHS bodies, private and voluntary sector providers supplying NHS services, and local authorities in the exercise of their public health functions are required by law to take account of this Constitution in their decisions and actions.

The NHS Values provide common ground for cooperation to achieve shared aspirations, at all levels of the NHS.

Working together for patients

The value of "working together for patients" is a central tenet guiding service provision in the NHS and other organisations providing health services. Patients must come first in everything the NHS does. All parts of the NHS system should act and collaborate in the interests of patients, always putting patient interest before institutional interest, even when that involves admitting mistakes. As well as working with each other, health service organisations and providers should also involve staff, patients, carers and local communities to ensure they are providing services tailored to local needs.

Respect and dignity

Every individual who comes into contact with the NHS and organisations providing health services should always be treated with respect and dignity, regardless of whether they are a patient, carer or member of staff. This value seeks to ensure that organisations value and respect different needs, aspirations and priorities, and take them into account when designing and delivering services. The NHS aims to foster a spirit of candour and a culture of humility, openness and honesty, where staff communicate clearly and openly with patients, relatives and carers.

Commitment to quality of care

The NHS aspires to the highest standards of excellence and professionalism in the provision of high-quality care that is safe, effective and focused on patient experience. Quality should not be compromised – the relentless pursuit of safe, compassionate care for every person who uses and relies on services is a collective endeavour, requiring collective effort and collaboration at every level of the system. The delivery of high-quality care is dependent on feedback: organisations that welcome feedback from patients and staff are able to identify and drive areas for improvement.

Compassion

Compassionate care ties closely with respect and dignity in that individual patients, carers and relatives must be treated with sensitivity and kindness. The business of the NHS extends beyond providing clinical care and includes alleviating pain, distress, and making people feel valued and that their concerns are important.

Improving lives

The core function of the NHS is emphasised in this value – the NHS seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of patients, communities and its staff through professionalism, innovation and excellence in care. This value also recognises that to really improve lives the NHS needs to be helping people and their communities take responsibility for living healthier lives.

Everyone counts

We have a responsibility to maximise the benefits we obtain from NHS resources, ensuring they are distributed fairly to those most in need. Nobody should be discriminated or disadvantaged, and everyone should be treated with equal respect and importance