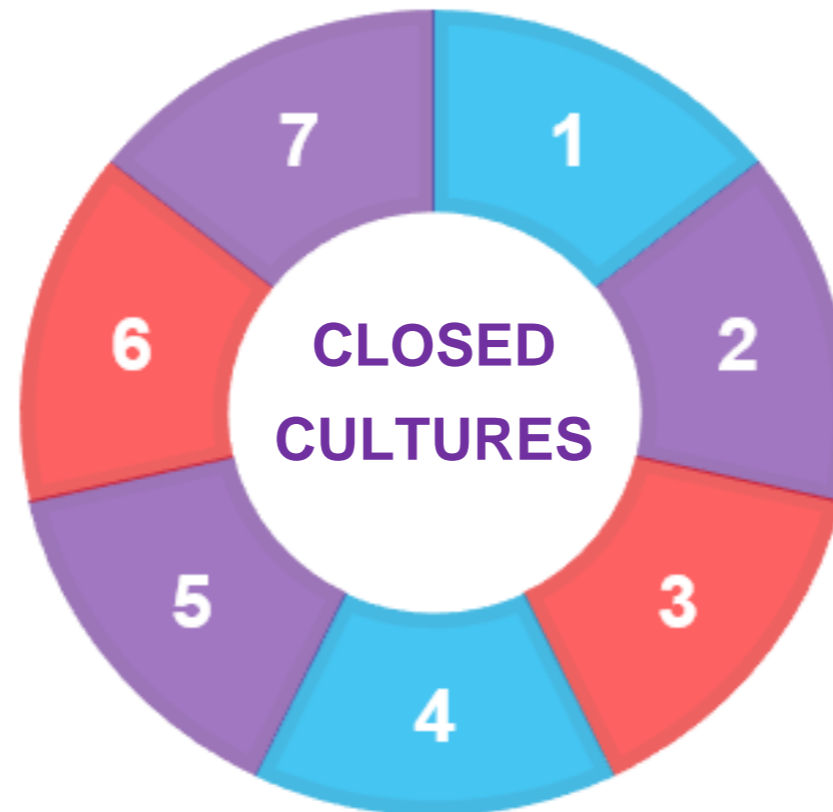


# 7 MINUTE BRIEFING CLOSED CULTURES



**KNOWSLEY  
SAFEGUARDING  
ADULTS BOARD**

PREVENTION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP



## 1. Organisational Abuse

**Organisational Abuse** is one of the 10 types of abuse and neglect in the Care Act.

Neglect and poor care practice within an organisation or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home or even care provided in a person's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

The combination of structure, policies, processes and practice that can result in organisational abuse has been identified as a **closed culture**.

## 2. What is a Closed Culture

'A poor culture that can lead to harm, including human rights breaches such as abuse'

Any service that delivers care can have a closed culture.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has published guidance to enable staff to recognise a closed culture and to flag the warning signs that there is the risk of a closed culture developing.

It highlights the need for professional curiosity, and being better at understanding, hearing from and 'seeing' adults who are placed in high-risk settings or who are isolated. Closed cultures page on CQC's website:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/themes-care/our-work-closed-cultures>

## 3. What can happen in a closed culture?

- The care given takes little account of the individual's needs and personality
- Less focus on making sure people can see their family and have privacy
- Health conditions may not be recognised because the person's behaviour is thought to be because of their dementia or learning disability
- Decisions are made without appropriate use of the Mental Capacity Act
- People's personal distress is not considered e.g. past trauma
- Care may be arranged that leads to disproportionate and unnecessary infringements on the person's liberty

## 4. Signs of a 'closed culture'

- Record keeping is not accurate or detailed enough
- People who are less able to speak up for themselves without good support from the service, for example, people with a learning disability or people living in care homes with dementia.
- There are regular changes in management or managers are not regularly present and at times the service may run without a manager.
- The organisation employs many members of staff who are either related or friends, causing 'cliques' to form, making it less likely to challenge poor practice.
- Managers do not lead by example.

## 5. Signs of a 'closed culture' cont.

- Staff are not supported or encouraged to raise concerns
- High turnover of staff or consistent staff shortages
- There is a high use of agency staff who do not know the people they are caring for e.g. in mental health hospitals or residential care
- There is a lack of suitable induction, training, monitoring, and supervision of staff.
- Shift patterns within the service mean that the same people are always working together, and staff are not mixing with other colleagues.
- Staff work excessively long hours or overtime.

## 6. Encouraging Best Practice

- Protectively identify and promote the individual's human rights, wishes and desires in line with the Mental Capacity Act.
- Work with families (with the adult's wishes) as equal partners
- Consider least restrictive practice- Mental Capacity Act.
- Promote Professional Curiosity among staff.
- Understand, hear from, and 'see' adults who are placed in care settings or who are isolated.
- Encourage and support a transparent culture.
- Familiarise yourself with your organisation's whistle blowing procedure.
- Discuss with staff; use team meetings, supervision, and mentoring, etc.
- Make sure staff have an induction upon employment.
- Senior leaders have a role in setting the tone and acting as a role model to staff.

## 7. Further Support

- Knowsley Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, (MASH) - 0151 443 2600 / MARF [Multi Agency Referral Form \(knowsley.gov.uk\)](https://www.knowsley.gov.uk/marf)

### Further Reading

- [How CQC identifies and responds to closed cultures - Care Quality Commission](#)
- [CQC closed Culture Easy Read](#)

Thank you to Durham Safeguarding Adults Board for information used in this briefing.