AN OVERVIEW FOR NHS AND CARE ORGANISATIONS

Heart Safe Consultancy & Training

Martha's Rule

What it is and what it asks of you

An NHS England patient safety initiative that makes sure the concerns of patients, and of the people who know them best, are acted on when someone's condition is getting worse.

CONTRACT DEADLINE
31 Mar 2027
NHS Standard Contract 2026/27

THE THREE COMPONENTS

Three ways to raise the alarm

1 Daily check-in

Patients are asked at least once a day how they feel and whether they're getting better or worse, and the answer is acted on.

2 Staff can call for a review

Any member of staff can ask, at any time, for a review from a different team if they're worried and not being heard.

3 Families can call too

The same urgent review route is open to patients, families and carers, and is advertised so they know how to use it.

WHO IT APPLIES TO

Where Martha's Rule is going

- **Adult and children's acute wards:** all NHS trusts and foundation trusts must have all three components in place by 31 March 2027.
- **Emergency departments, maternity and neonatal care:** added in phase 3, from April 2026.
- **Mental health and community settings:** an adapted model is being tested, as these services often have no critical care outreach team on site.
- **Primary care and care homes:** not yet in scope, but the same principle of listening to families and escalating early applies.

THE NUMBERS SO FAR

It is already being used

19,177 Martha's Rule calls nationally, September 2024 to July 2026

30% of those calls were about acute deterioration

Source: NHS England Martha's Rule programme data, July 2026.

WHAT NHS ENGLAND EXPECTS

The six core standards

1. Reliable implementation and equitable access
2. Timely reviews by skilled, independent clinicians
3. Meaningful involvement of patients, families, carers and staff
4. Awareness and understanding across all groups
5. Staff education and training
6. Integration into governance and quality systems

ASK YOURSELF

Is your organisation ready?

- Could every member of your clinical staff explain the three components today?
- Do staff know what to do when the first response isn't enough?
- Do families know how to ask for a review, and would your staff welcome the call?
- Could you evidence your staff training for your self-assessment?

Training your teams for Martha's Rule

Our HEARD – Recognise & Respond programme trains staff in every setting to spot deterioration and escalate with confidence. Ask us for details.

01285 654006
www.heart-safe.co.uk

Information correct as of October 2026 and based on NHS England publications and the NHS Standard Contract 2026/27. This overview is produced independently by Heart Safe Consultancy & Training Ltd (company no. 08638067). It is not an NHS England publication and is not endorsed by NHS England or by Martha's family.