

The Draft National Whistleblowing Standards

The Structure of the Standards

May 2019

1. These Standards set out how the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer expects all NHS service providers to handle concerns that are raised with them that meet the definition of a whistleblowing concern.
2. These Standards are underpinned by a suite of supporting documents, which provide instructions on how the INWO expects concerns to be handled. Together these documents form a framework for the delivery of the National Whistleblowing Standards. A comprehensive list of the documents is provided below.
3. The Standards consist of:
 - Whistleblowing Principles, which underpin the approach that must be taken to handling any concerns raised by staff or those working in NHS services. This includes definitions of whistleblowing and whistleblower. (Part 1)
 - Procedure Overview, which provides an explanation of what is a whistleblowing concern, who can raise a concern, and a brief description of the procedure for handling these concerns. (Part 2)
 - Detailed supporting information which sets out how the INWO expects the Procedure to be applied together with the governance arrangements that must be in place. (Parts 3-12)
4. The aim is to provide a suite of documents and guidance which enable you to refer readily to the parts you most often use. The table of contents on page four of this document gives an overview of what each document contains and links to them.
5. These Standards are applicable across all NHS services. This means they must be accessible to anyone working to deliver an NHS service, whether directly or indirectly, as an employee, a student or a volunteer. Instructions are provided for:
 - NHS service providers (both Primary Care Services and contracted services) setting out what the INWO expects and how this should be achieved.
 - Those involved in student placements, setting out expectations relating to students raising concerns.
 - Arrangements for volunteers, setting out how they should be given access to these Standards.
 - Arrangements for Integration Joint Boards (IJBs), setting out expectations in relation to joint working arrangements between local authority and NHS staff, to ensure concerns can be effectively raised, supported and responded to in relation to any NHS service, whoever is delivering it.
6. To ensure effective leadership and oversight, the INWO has developed governance requirements for Boards, both in relation to their own internal processes and in relation to management of their primary care and other contractual services.
7. Further information about the INWO and additional resources for implementation of the Standards will be available on the INWO website.

8. Text marked in [square brackets] indicates a link or development that will be available in the final version of the Standards, but which is still currently under development. These developments will include improved accessibility in terms of links between documents, or alternative formats including links.

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The National Whistleblowing Standards - contents

Part 1: Whistleblowing Principles

- Improvement focused
- Objective, impartial and fair
- Accessible
- Supportive to people raising concerns and all staff involved in the procedure
- Simple and timely
- Thorough, proportionate and consistent

Part 2: Overview of the procedure

- Definitions
- What is whistleblowing?
- Who can raise a concern?
- Overview of the procedure for raising concerns

Part 3: When to use the whistleblowing procedure

- Initial actions
- Business as usual
- Who to raise a concern with
- Initial discussion
- Immediate threat to safety
- Getting information or advice
- Involvement of other organisations
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- The difference between a grievance and a concern
- Support and protection through the procedure
- Contact details for support agencies and professional bodies

Part 4: The 2 stage procedure

- Overview of the procedure
- Stage 1: Early resolution
- Stage 2: Investigation
- Independent external review
- Further guidance on exploring the concern

Part 5: Board and staff responsibilities

- Role of the Board of Directors
- The Whistleblowing Champion
- The role of NHS staff
- Training
- Handling concerns about senior staff
- Working with other organisations

Part 6: From recording to learning lessons

The importance of recording and reporting
IT systems
What to record
Key performance indicators
Learning from concerns
Annual reporting and monitoring performance
Sharing the learning

Part 7: Board requirements and external services

Requirement to meet the Standards
Board oversight
Ensuring compliance through contracts
Boards and Integration Joint Boards
Working with Higher Education Institutions
Working with voluntary sector providers
Providing a confidential contact

Part 8: Information for primary care providers

Promoting raising concerns
Requirement to meet the Standards
Options for small organisations
Recording of concerns
Monitoring, reporting and learning from concerns

Part 9: Information for Integration Joint Boards

Promoting raising concerns
Requirement to meet the Standards
Ensuring equity for staff
Channels for raising concerns
Recording of concerns
Monitoring, reporting and learning from concerns

Part 10: Arrangements for students

Student access to the Standards and the INWO
Students raising concerns within NHS services
Students raising concerns through course advocates
Recording student concerns
Support for the student
Signposting to the INWO

Part 11: Arrangements for volunteers

Volunteers' access to the Standards and the INWO
Volunteers raising concerns within NHS services
Volunteers raising concerns through the charity's representative
Recording volunteer concerns

Support for the volunteer
Signposting to the INWO

Part 12: Case studies and examples

Concerns being addressed through business as usual vs. those appropriate for Stage 1 of this procedure

Distinguishing between whistleblowing and grievance/bullying & harassment issues

Case studies

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