

The Draft National Whistleblowing Standards

Part 1

Whistleblowing Principles

May 2019

Whistleblowing Principles for the NHS

An effective procedure for raising concerns in a supportive environment is:

1. Improvement focused
2. Objective, impartial and fair
3. Accessible
4. Supportive to people raising concerns and all staff involved in the procedure
5. Simple and timely
6. Thorough, proportionate and consistent

1. Improvement focused

- 1.1. Staff are actively encouraged to report concerns they have about patient safety and/or malpractice.
- 1.2. The procedure for raising concerns in a supportive environment should reflect and promote an open, transparent culture and excellence in service delivery.
- 1.3. The outcomes of such concerns should be used to identify and demonstrate learning and improvement and sharing best practice in service delivery.
- 1.4. Organisations have systems in place to monitor appropriately, and to ensure that all reported whistleblowing concerns are investigated in a timely and appropriate way.
- 1.5. Data from cases where concerns have been raised in a supportive environment should be used to:
 - 1.5.1. inform organisational performance, targets and standards, and
 - 1.5.2. identify trends and highlight problems so that they can be addressed and resolved, with the overall purpose of contributing to the continuous improvement of service delivery.

2. Objective, impartial and fair

- 2.1. Procedures for raising concerns in a supportive environment should be objective, evidence-based and driven by the facts and established circumstances; they should not be based on assumptions. This should be clearly demonstrated.

- 2.2. Relevant facts should be gathered and established in an impartial, confidential and sensitive manner.
- 2.3. Staff investigating concerns raised in a supportive environment should be impartial, independent and accountable. They must not be involved in investigations where they have a conflict of interest.
- 2.4. Procedures for raising concerns in a supportive environment should be fair to the person raising the concern, staff investigating concerns, staff implicated in the concern being raised, and witnesses involved in the investigation.

3. Accessible

- 3.1. Procedures for raising concerns in a supportive environment should be clearly communicated, easily understood and accessible to all.
- 3.2. Senior staff must welcome concerns and ensure they are handled by informed and empowered staff.
- 3.3. The National Whistleblowing Standards and any procedures for raising concerns in a supportive environment should be well publicised.
- 3.4. Procedures for raising concerns in a supportive environment should be written in plain, clear language, avoiding jargon and technical terminology as far as possible. They should be clear to all staff and unambiguous in the organisation's support for whistleblowing.

4. Supportive to people raising concerns and all staff involved in the procedure

- 4.1. All staff must be offered support and protection when raising a concern.
- 4.2. Staff should be listened to, supported, shown dignity and respect, and treated sensitively and professionally.
- 4.3. The organisation should offer alternative channels for staff who may not want to raise concerns with their line manager.
- 4.4. The organisation should respect the confidentiality of a member of staff raising a concern as far as is legally possible, unless that confidentiality is explicitly waived by that member of staff.
- 4.5. Staff should be made aware of all forms of support and guidance available to those involved in whistleblowing.
- 4.6. Staff raising a concern should not be victimised or suffer detriment as a result of raising a concern. This includes by bullying and harassment, inappropriate use of policies, breach of contract, financial loss and causing reputational or professional damage.

5. Simple and timely

- 5.1. Procedures for raising concerns in a supportive environment should have as few steps as necessary within an agreed and transparent timeframe.
- 5.2. The process for dealing with concerns should be timely, with timescales which are clear, published and adhered to.
- 5.3. Thoroughness of an investigation should not be compromised by attempts to meet timescales and flexibility is afforded for particularly complex cases. Where timescales cannot be met for good reason, all staff involved should be informed of the reason and provided with a revised timescale for completion.

6. Thorough, proportionate and consistent

- 6.1. Procedures for raising concerns in a supportive environment should provide quality outcomes for all concerns raised, through a robust but proportionate investigation and meet clear quality standards.
- 6.2. There should be detailed, well publicised quality standards for handling concerns supported by a clear explanation of what action will be taken if these standards are not met.
- 6.3. Investigation and resolution methods should be proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances of the case.
- 6.4. All concerns should be treated seriously and investigations should be thorough and consistent.
- 6.5. Outcomes should be appropriate to the findings made, and set out what actions will be, or have been, taken to ensure safe practice.
- 6.6. Findings and conclusions should be based on analysis and weighing of the facts and circumstances established. How they were made should be clearly demonstrated.