

Whistleblowing policy communications plan 2023

1. Background

A new whistleblowing process, the [National Whistleblowing Standards](#) (referred to as the Standards), was introduced in April 2021 to help staff raise concerns about patient safety or other harm.

The two-stage process developed by the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer (INWO) focuses on helping staff raise concerns as early as possible and supporting and protecting staff when they do raise concerns, giving them confidence to raise concerns if they see something wrong.

Staff may also contact the INWO at any point in the process for advice and support. The INWO may also conduct an independent external review of the way in which the concern has been addressed.

Under the Standards, all staff will have access to a 'confidential contact'. Their role is to provide a safe space to discuss your concerns and to give you the information you need. They also have the knowledge and skills to help you to raise your concern with the appropriate manager. Staff can also raise concerns directly with their line manager or any other senior member of staff.

As a result of concerns being raised, from patient safety and patient care to poor practice, unsafe working conditions and abusing authority, action plans have been developed towards improving both the working conditions for staff as well as patient care.

They have also enabled key learning outcomes, recommendations and service improvements to be shared across departments.

2. Communications model

In delivering this strategy it will implement the internationally-recognised system of communication known as OASIS, (Objective, Audience, Strategy, Implementation and Scoring). This will ensure all communications:

Have a defined and measurable outcome

Present a clear and consistent narrative tailored to the audience

Are creative and innovative to maximise reach

Are clearly and demonstrably geared to supporting strategic objectives.

An evaluation framework will also be agreed to demonstrate the impact of communications.

The OASIS framework is based on identifying a series of steps **to help** bring order and clarity to planning campaigns and wider communications around partnership working which can sometimes be complicated and challenging. The five stages of OASIS are:

Objective (outcome): Establish what strategic objective the communication action is seeking to support. The objective should be specific and clear. Identifying objectives will also establish what success will look like when the communication action has been carried out.

Audience: Who are we communicating with and why? How does the audience consume information? For example, it may be the case the target audience tend to read printed materials as opposed to digital communications. The communications will attempt to

consider all the factors that might influence the behaviours/attitudes of the audiences we are trying reach.

Strategy: The framework considers the key messages that will have most impact on the target audience.

Implementation: This will set out how key messages will be delivered, by who and when. This includes key media and publicity platforms and channels.

Scoring: Establishing the difference the communication activities are making with feedback of relevant data. This will return to the objective/what success will look like and if this has been fulfilled.

3. Objective

The overall objective of the communications plan is to educate staff by raising awareness of the whistleblowing process and to encourage staff to raise concerns about patient safety or other harm.

The whistleblowing Standards can be used to improve patient care, safety and experience as well as promoting an open, transparent and supportive working environment.

Everyone benefits if concerns can be raised early and dealt with promptly and professionally. The new process under the Standards is a formal process. But we want staff to feel free to raise concerns before they get to the formal stage, and for managers to listen and learn from staff's concerns.

4. Audiences

The Standards are applicable across **all** NHS services and are accessible to anyone working to deliver a service for NHS Lanarkshire, whether directly or indirectly. This includes current and former employees, bank and agency workers, contractors, trainees and students, volunteers and anyone working alongside NHS staff such as those in health and social care partnerships.

5. Strategy

Key messages:

- Raise awareness on the Standards to ensure all staff understand how and when to raise concerns.
- Promote a speak up culture within NHS Lanarkshire
- Focuses on helping staff raise concerns as early as possible and supporting and protecting staff when they do raise concerns
- Giving staff confidence to raise concerns if they see something wrong
- Everyone benefits if concerns can be raised early and dealt with promptly and professionally.
- People who raise a whistleblowing concern are protected by law against being treated unfairly as a result of doing so and are assured of receiving support, feedback and having their confidentiality protected.
- Highlighting the important role of the confidential contacts in providing a safe space to discuss concerns and give staff information they need
- Promote training opportunities available, including the TURAS whistleblowing training module to help NHS Lanarkshire create a culture where staff feel safe to raise a concern as well as INWO's learning programmes

- Highlight successes of whistleblowing process and how they have helped improve patient care and safety
- Staff may also contact the INWO at any point in the process for advice and support
- Further information is available on the [INWO website](#), including FAQs, cases studies and contact details. Further details on whistleblowing is also available [here](#).

6. Implementation

Key messages will be delivered via:

- Regular articles in the Pulse and staff briefing on the process, educating staff on how to raise a concern, importance of confidential contacts, training available and highlighting all the key messages in the above strategy
- Video of whistleblowing champion Lesley McDonald, shared on social media as well as in Pulse
- Video of confidential contacts to explain the importance of their role
- Engage in Speak up Week which is a new initiative launched by INWO to raise awareness of how to raise a concern and promote a speak up culture. Promote via internal channels and social media
- FirstPort banner promoting the Standards and Speak Up Week
- Raise awareness via line managers
- Posters shared across sites
- Chief executive to promote importance in her weekly video to staff

7. Scoring

We should monitor and evaluate feedback through:

- Number of staff who engage with process
- Social media activity, engagement and interaction
- Number of views on Pulse articles

Richard Hendry
Senior communications officer
March 2023