

## **PE1605/F**

NHS Tayside Letter of 10 October 2016

Consideration of Petition PE1605 (Whistleblowing in the NHS – a safer way to report mismanagement and bullying)

I refer to your letter of 16 September 2016 regarding the above matter.

NHS Tayside has appointed a non-executive member as a Whistleblowing Champion. The Whistleblowing Champion meets regularly with the Employee Director and the Whistleblowing Officer to review cases and determine if there is any further learning or action which the Board should consider.

Formal reports on whistleblowing are submitted to the Staff Governance Committee highlighting any significant issues. All Designated Contacts have been fully trained and an internal training pack has been developed to ensure a consistency of approach. Contacts who are newly appointed to the role receive personalised training from the Whistleblowing Officer.

In considering the petition NHS Tayside supports the need for robust whistleblowing measures to be in place which have the confidence of staff and the public. The Board is unaware that the current measures, although relatively new, do not have such a local confidence.

Public Concern at Work (PCA) currently support the National Confidential Alert line. PCA is already an independent body and should be able to provide, via its legally trained staff, impartiality in addressing concerns.

In addition the Independent National Officer should also provide independent scrutiny. NHS Tayside feels that the existence of these safeguards, some of which are relatively new, should have high a degree of public consciousness so that there is an awareness of how these resources can be accessed by the public.

NHS Tayside does not feel that a further change to the current arrangements is required and may cause uncertainty in the public mind as to what the process of raising a concern might be.

The potential exclusion of NHS managers from any investigation may complicate and extend any investigative process, particularly if the concern raised is deemed to be of a vexatious nature. In addition any outcomes may require NHS Tayside to implement its own formal procedures which could also complicate matters and extend the period of investigation.

Organisational learning and improvement is a key part of the outcome from any whistleblowing concern and therefore it is important that Boards are seen to be directly accountable for their own effective management and also for addressing deficiencies where these are identified. The exclusion of NHS managers from any investigation will dilute this approach which, in the long-term, may not be to the benefit of the service as a whole.

However NHS Tayside will be content to work within any national framework which encourages openness and promotes the confidence of staff and the public to raise concerns which may require further scrutiny.