

PE1605/H

NHS Grampian Letter of 13 October 2016

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

Calling on the Scottish Parliament's to urge the Scottish Government to establish an independent national whistleblower hotline for NHS staff to replace the current helpline. It would differ in that it would investigate reports about mismanagement and malpractice, often without recourse to NHS managers.

Response from NHS Grampian

NHS Grampian considers that there is no requirement to change from the current helpline with a replacement as outlined.

A proposal to investigate reports about mismanagement and malpractice, often without recourse to NHS managers implies that NHS managers cannot appropriately investigate reports or that there is insufficient avenues for external scrutiny. NHS Grampian does not believe this to be the case.

A Board, as an Employer within NHS Scotland, must adhere to the Staff Governance Standard which has clear expectations of management. If the actions of a manager falls short of that Standard then it appropriate for this to be handled internally, within existing policies.

External scrutiny already exists as employees are able to approach the Scottish Government or Health Improvement Scotland (HIS) directly. Either Body may determine if an external to the Board investigation is necessary.

The role of the Non-Executive Whistleblowing Champion will provide Boards with an additional level of scrutiny and accountability on reported concerns of patient safety and malpractice, and allow where necessary challenge on the progress and handling of those cases. The key purpose of the role is to offer independent assurance to the Board. There is an increased understanding of the role as discussions continue with the Scottish Government.

In addition, the outcome of the Scottish Government consultation on the role of an Independent National (Whistleblowing) Officer (INO) is awaited which may have a role in considering complaints about the application of the local whistleblowing process, including examination of the decision making and outcome of the whistleblowing complaint. The role may be hosted within the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) due to its independence from health and social care bodies.

A replacement helpline which would operate often without recourse to NHS managers would be a contrary to the current way of working and not considered necessary in relation to the many other initiatives regarding Whistleblowing, which give scrutiny and assurance.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Wright
Chief Executive, NHS Grampian