

PE1605/R

NHS Orkney Letter of 24 October 2016

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

NHS Orkney considers that there is no requirement to change from the current helpline with a replacement as outlined. Currently, there are opportunities for Boards to invite another NHS Board, professionals or 'team' to investigate unprofessional conduct, misconduct or mismanagement. In addition, external scrutiny already exists as employees are able to approach the Scottish Government or Health Improvement Scotland directly. To date there have been examples of external scrutiny and learning from such incidents has improved as we look to adopt and spread lessons learned and good practice. NHS Orkney is of the view that having flexibility to invite external scrutiny should continue to be supported.

In Orkney we actively promote the values of NHS Scotland and use Scotland's staff governance standards in our everyday practice. Locally we have established a 'confidential contacts' service and have invested in 3 day bespoke training programme for staff (supported by their managers) who were interested in this role. The "agreement" with those who did the training was that they were available, and able to provide the staff members with support and assistance outwith our formal structures. This buddy type support can help signpost people to appropriate policies or specialist advice. This is fully endorsed by staff side.

NHS Orkney is also fully committed to and promotes the role of our Non-Executive Whistleblowing Champion. This role provides our Board with additional level of scrutiny and accountability on reported concerns of misconduct, unprofessional conduct, patient safety and malpractice/mismanagement allowing as required necessary challenge on the progress and handling of such cases. A key advantage and purpose of the role is to offer independent assurance to the Board. Investing in a further understanding of the role and how it could be enhanced may be a better way forward. The outcome of the Scottish Government consultation on the role of an Independent National (Whistleblowing) Officer (INO) is also awaited and this may conclude that the Officer has 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.

Yours sincerely

Cathie Cowan
Chief Executive