

## **PE1605/T**

Rab Wilson Letter of 25 October 2016

As a long time campaigner on health issues, and as a whistleblower in the NHS, I would like to support this petition calling for a whistleblowing hotline for NHS staff. As a nurse who was victimised and bullied for exposing malpractice at NHS Ayrshire and Arran I can assure Parliament that current measures are quite inadequate.

The Health Board Chief Executives who have written to you to comment on the petition have been generally negative, with few apparently having even read the petition fully. NHS Grampian, having just squandered £5M of public money in bullying Prof Krukowski out of his job for blowing the whistle, state that "A replacement helpline which would operate often without recourse to NHS managers would be contrary to the current way of working and not considered necessary". Perhaps he does not care for the word "Hotline"- or fails to understand the difference. In any event, he fails to acknowledge that his current way of working has cost the NHS a huge and needless amount of money, has ruined clinicians lives and has put patients at risk.

Most Chief Executives have failed to grasp that hotline calls would be split into "minor" and "major", with NHS managers getting to sort the former but not the latter. It is disappointing that most of them haven't even read the petition properly before drafting their responses. It undermines their claims to seek to assist staff in speaking up when they have concerns. It reflects a lack of imagination in that they can't conceive how existing arrangements can be improved. Many point to the unions as being another route for whistleblowers, but under the partnership arrangements, union branch executive officers have grown so close to management that for many staff they are indistinguishable, and most certainly not the place to take workplace concerns to.

There is a repeated factual error by the various NHS Boards on what constitutes a safe external body as a place of last resort for whistleblowers. NHS Grampian, NHS Fife and the Government itself generally refer to Healthcare Improvement Scotland as being "external". This is not the case. HIS is not independent in any way. It has no regulatory status (though there is a false and pervading general implication that it does!). But the greatest concern is its very close partnership with the Scottish Government. HIS are politically expedient. They are "improvers". Whilst it has good intentions, it is wholesale reductionism of the McDonalds brand type. Some staff like it; most feel powerless to do anything about the dumbing down and shortcuts that are part of this so-called "improvement".

Quite a few Chief Executives refer to the Whistleblowing Champions on their Board. The Government makes it clear they do not form any part of whistleblowing policy. I have documentary evidence of staff being told that they are not allowed to make personal contact with the WB champion, and that their role is not to directly deal with WB cases, as this could potentially compromise their independence and subsequently their oversight and

assurance role. However, given that there is no way they can hear from whistleblowers and there is no mechanism in Health Boards for measuring the number or seriousness of whistleblowing reports, or if they are being acted upon or if the staff making them are suffering as a result, it is impossible to see what the point of these 'champions' is?

Contrary to Government assertions, there are no "named whistleblowing contacts in every NHS Scotland Board" unless these are the champions? Why name them, if they cannot take reports?

To summarise, the present arrangements are completely ineffective, contrary to the claims of NHS Chief Executives! They are messy and pointless- and just another 'tick box' exercise for health board annual 'Monitoring Returns' reports to government where they try and justify their existence with meaningless PR stunts to please government ministers. I'm afraid that's how it looks to me, and many other frustrated, angry and demoralised frontline staff in our NHS.

We urgently need this Hotline – and we need it now!

Yours sincerely,

Rab Wilson