



THE STATE HOSPITALS BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

WHISTLEBLOWING ANNUAL REPORT

1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

The SPSO (Scottish Public Services Ombudsman) developed a model procedure for handling whistleblowing concerns raised by staff and others delivering NHS services and this was formally published on 1 April 2021. The Independent National Whistleblowing Office (INWO) provides a mechanism for external review of how a Health Board, primary care or independent provider has handled a whistleblowing case. For NHS Scotland staff, these form a 'Once for Scotland' approach to Whistleblowing.

The SPSO worked with NHS National Education Scotland (NES) on the development of training materials, and these are now available to all staff through the TURAS Learn Website. There are two training modules: one for raising general staff awareness of whistleblowing, and a more detailed programme for managers or others who may receive concerns. This provides additional support and guidance on best practice, should a concern be raised through the policy.

In addition to this, the Scottish Government revised and promoted the role of the Whistleblowing Champion as a formal Non-Executive member of each NHS Board, with our appointment finalised in December 2022. Their role is to ensure that the systems are in place to enable staff to raise concerns, and that the culture of the organisation supports the full application of these systems, by valuing staff concerns.

The State Hospital supports and encourages an environment where employees, both current and former, contractors, trainees and students, volunteers, non-executive directors and anyone working within the Board can raise concerns.

The aim of this Annual Report is to be transparent about how Whistleblowing concerns are handled, highlight actions taken and any improvements.

This is the third Annual Report and is for the reporting activity from 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2024.

The Executive Lead remains the Director of Workforce. However, discussions will take place with the new Non-Executive Whistleblowing Champion and will be reviewed in line with the Standards recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND

Whistleblowing is an important process to enable an individual to speak up about any Whistleblowing concerns they may have in the organisation with respect to quality and safety in patient care and service delivery. The way we respond to Whistleblowing concerns raised is important, so that individuals feel that their concerns will be valued and handled appropriately, and that the organisation will take on board what they have to say.

In line with the organisation's values, The State Hospital encourages Whistleblowing concerns to be dealt with at the earliest opportunity and where possible in real time within the management structures that our staff work in within the organisation. Alternate routes for raising Whistleblowing concerns include with the Whistleblowing Champion Non-Executive Director, Senior Managers, trade unions and other staff.

The delivery, adherence, monitoring and review of our implementation of the National Standards is fully supported by all members of the Board who play a role in ensuring communication and development of our approach in line with those standards.

The quarterly and annual reports are scrutinised by the Staff Governance Committee and Board, including performance against the relevant Action Plan.

A collective and proactive approach has been taken in engaging with the organisation and raising awareness of the Standards whilst the Whistleblowing Champion is in post to provide critical oversight of governance mechanisms for reporting on and dealing with Whistleblowing concerns, to complement the oversight provided by the Board.

3. CONCERNS RAISED

Since 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 there was no Whistleblowing concerns raised direct to the Board.

No cases have been raised by any other contractors or anyone linked to the Standard during this time.

4. ACTIONS

Over the last year, it would be noted that the majority of actions in relation to whistleblowing focused on the communication and raising awareness. For example, the State Hospital participated in the “Speak up Week” which took place on 2-6 October 2023. Staff Bulletins were circulated to the service with updates from a number of contributors including the Chair, Chief Executive and Employee Director. Noticeboards provided information to staff on the Standard and the main one was placed in the front reception area.

Furthermore, from a training perspective, work continues in highlighting the requirement for Staff and Managers to complete the on-line module on the Whistleblowing Standards and update to date is:

Introduction for all Staff – 518 (96% of target group)
Managers Training – 88 (85% of target group)

The State Hospital also recently met with INWO in March 24 and received feedback on our current position and also areas in which we could target improvement. This feedback will support our review with a clear focus on how we can continue to develop and improve our overall approach to whistleblowing and promote a ‘Speak Up’ Culture.

5. FUTURE ACTIONS

A refresh of our full approach to (a) implementing the standards, (b) developing our ‘speak up culture’ and (c) actively promoting this change will be our aim for 24/25. This will include:-

- Ensuring that Whistleblowing is seen as independent and objective in terms of how the service is delivered. (how we provide the service, the executive Director responsible)
- Clarity and continued development of how staff access whistleblowing and the process they will follow.
- Refresh of approach to Confidential Contacts, which includes discussions with other National Boards to support this agenda, ensuring complete confidentiality and independence at all stages.
- Alignment of whistleblowing and Speak Up culture with our programmed OD activity during 2024/25.
- Development of a Communication Calendar to focus on whistleblowing and speak up.

6. REPORTING

Reporting of any concerns raised through Whistleblowing is reported through Partnership, Workforce, Wellbeing and OD Delivery Group, Corporate Management Team, Staff Governance and the Board. Ongoing work will continue to improve communication with a dedicated plan to ensure that information is regularly sent to all Staff regarding their access to this Policy and Standard.

All Whistleblowing Complaints are recorded locally via the DATIX system and then updated as and when the case is investigated and concluded.

All the relevant Committees received quarterly updates on any concerns raised which was finally discussed at Board on the following dates:

27 April 2023	-	Quarter 4 update for 1 January to 31 March 2023 and Whistleblowing Standard Annual Report-2022/23
24 August 2023	-	Quarter 1 update, 1 April to 30 June 2023
21 December 2023	-	Quarter 2 update, 1 July to 30 September 2023
22 February 2024	-	Quarter 3 update, 1 October to 31 December 2023
25 April 2024	-	Quarter 4 Update, 1 January to 31 March 2024

7. QUALITY AND PATIENT CARE

Whistleblowing remains an important Policy and process for staff, students and volunteers to enable them to speak up about any concerns they may have in the organisation with respect to quality and safety in patient care. The information in this report has no direct impact on patient care, except in those circumstances when the whistleblowing process is used to highlight patient safety concerns or other quality matters in the organisation. Any recommendations or actions that come out of future whistleblowing cases will help to improve quality of The State Hospital services and patient care.

8. CONCLUSION

Although there were no formal cases raised via Whistleblowing, there is clear focus on the areas in which we can improve and develop on the provision of Standards which in turn will encourage staff to raise their concerns in a safe and secure environment.

The State Hospitals Board for Scotland
12 June 2024