



THE STATE HOSPITALS BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

WHISTLEBLOWING ANNUAL REPORT

1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

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 fourth Annual Report and is for the reporting activity from 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2025.

The Executive Lead remains the Director of Workforce and this is a pragmatic decision reflecting the size of our organisation, which will continue to be reviewed.

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.

3. CONCERNS RAISED

Since 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 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

The State Hospital undertook a review of their approach to and implementation of the Whistleblowing Standards during the year 2024/25. Working closely with the Non-Executive Whistleblowing Champion, we focused on a number of key areas:-

- a) Re-establishing the role of Non-Executive Whistleblowing Champion, with communication briefs in the run up to Speak Up week.
- b) Raising general awareness of (i) the importance of Speaking Up and (ii) the Whistleblowing Process, which was largely completed in the lead up to, and over, Speak Up Week.
- c) Ensure multiple routes are available to our staff who require support in any way, principally through our Wellbeing Centre.
- d) Establish the independence and confidentiality of the Whistleblowing Process by ensuring the administration and governance of the process is managed through the Corporate Administration Team
- e) Revised training and awareness for confidential Contacts, with up-to-date contact details provided on the intranet.
- f) Setting up of a confidential Contact Forum quarterly with the Non-Executive Whistleblowing Champion to provide support and establish any general trends.
- g) Ensuring continued high compliance on Whistleblowing Standards Modules: 99% on General Awareness and 89% on Managers.
- h) Provide additional training sessions on how to handle complaints or concerns from your staff.
- i) As part of the Speak Up Week awareness, we highlighted the standards, the approach and importantly how to access support or to make a complaint under whistleblowing standards. We also provided reassurance over how such a concern would be handled

The State Hospital participated in the “Speak up Week” which took place from 30th September to 4th October 2024. Staff Bulletins were circulated to the service with updates from a number of contributors including the Chair, Chief Executive and Employee Director, including Speak Up Pledges from the Corporate Management Team.

A stall was in the reception area all week, with staff handing out key information and informing others of how the importance of Speak Up and how the Whistleblowing Process works

5. FUTURE ACTIONS

Work continues to improve our processes and means by which individuals can raise concerns, which include:

- Alignment of whistleblowing and Speak Up culture with our programmed OD activity during 2024/25, with a focus on culture and also on working environment, physically and psychologically.
- Continued awareness raising of the importance of Speaking Up and ensuring numerous routes to support this.
- Reviewing training and support for Confidential Contacts, including through national forums.

6. REPORTING

Reporting of any concerns raised through Whistleblowing is reported through Partnership, Workforce Governance Group, Corporate Management Team, Staff Governance and the Board.

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:

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| 25 April 2024 | - | Quarter 4 update for 1 January to 31 March 2024 |
| 22 August 2024 | - | Quarter 1 update, 1 March to 30 June 2024 |
| 19 December 2024 | - | Quarter 2 update, 1 July to 30 September 2024 |
| 27 February 2025 | - | Quarter 3 update, 1 October to 31 December 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

Whilst there were no formal cases raised via Whistleblowing in the past year, we have been able to fully review our approach to Whistleblowing and make positive improvements in this regard. This will also form a key part of our approach to Organisational Health, which will closely align to 'Speak Up' and Whistleblowing, in terms of developing an environment where staff feel safe to raise their concerns in a safe and secure environment.