



Press Release

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EMPLOYERS SET TO HELP NHS STAFF BLOW THE WHISTLE

Employers in the NHS are being urged to build a culture where staff are able to expose bad practice in order to make the NHS the best health service in the world.

A new guide, *Speak up for a Healthy NHS*, will advise employers how to set up arrangements to ensure staff feel comfortable and secure if they want to report bad practice. The guide, launched today at the NHS Confederation's annual conference, will also help employers to review current whistleblowing arrangements so staff can raise concerns about malpractice or potential risks to patient safety. This underlines Health Secretary Andrew Lansley's commitment to high standards of clinical care and governance.

Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley, said:

"Publication of this guide is an important step in developing a culture of patient safety. NHS staff need to be free to raise concerns and shielded from any backlash. To make sure staff know about their rights, and are supported, the local NHS must champion this guide in their own organisations."

The guide is designed to help employers, working in partnership with the trade unions, to achieve best practice when devising, implementing and auditing their whistleblowing arrangements. It was commissioned by the NHS Social Partnership Forum (NHS Employers, NHS trade unions and the Department

of Health) and has been written by the independent whistleblowing charity, Public Concern at Work.

The pack looks at what is expected of NHS boards and their executives, and publicises the availability of support for staff from the independent telephone helpline run by Public Concern at Work with Department of Health funding. It sets out some simple steps to help employers ensure their whistleblowing arrangements work.

Gill Bellord, director for core services at NHS Employers said;

“NHS Employers supports NHS organisations in promoting a climate of openness in which staff feel free to raise concerns in a reasonable and responsible way, without fear of victimisation. We believe that in most organisations there are effective systems in place in the NHS to allow staff to raise such issues however there have been a number of high profile cases where this has not happened. As such this guide has been launched to help ensure all employers are aware of what they need to do to ensure their organisations have fostered the right environment for raising concerns.”

Karen Jennings, chair of the NHS staff side on the SPF, said;

“Too often there is a climate of fear within the NHS that makes it difficult for staff to raise concerns about patient safety or malpractice. The NHS trade unions welcome this guidance as a tool that will promote a culture of openness so that everyone understands the process for raising concerns within their organisation. We strongly encourage local employers to work with the trade unions in partnership to promote this guidance so that staff will feel confident about raising issues of concern without fear of exposure.”

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Editor's note:

The Social Partnership Forum is a partnership between the DH, NHS Employers and NHS trade unions established to discuss, debate and involve partners in the development and implementation of the workforce implications of policy in the NHS. The SPF ensures high standards of employment practices, providing a streamlined structure for early Employer and union engagement, leading to effective implementation of policy.

Copies of the guidance are available here: www.socialpartnershipforum.org