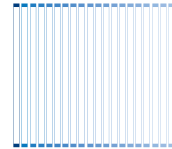


Directorate for Health Workforce, Leadership and Service Reform

Victoria Bowman,
Deputy Director
Health and Social Care Pay, Practice and Partnership

T: 07770703752

E: Victoria.Bowman@gov.scot



All NHSScotland Board:

Chief Executives

Chairs

Whistleblowing Champions

Designated Whistleblowing Contacts

Employee Directors

HR Directors Deputy

HR Directors

Members of the Scottish Workforce and Staff Governance Committee

05 February 2021

Dear Colleagues

NHSSCOTLAND WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY SOFT LAUNCH

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport wrote to all Health Boards on 15 October 2020 regarding the role of the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer (INWO) for NHSScotland and the Whistleblowing Standards, that the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) has developed as a model procedure for handling whistleblowing concerns raised by staff and others delivering NHS services.

We anticipate that the implementation date will remain as 1 April 2021. Whilst there is an element of uncertainty associated with the pandemic, the INWO have advised that, based on current circumstances, there is no indication that this implementation date will change. On this basis, we would encourage Boards to continue to work towards the implementation date of 1 April 2021.

The Whistleblowing Standards that are available to view on <https://inwo.spsso.org.uk/national-whistleblowing-standards> will be formally published by the SPSO on the same date as the INWO goes live. Whilst they have not been developed using the NHSScotland Partnership approach, these Whistleblowing Standards are underpinned by legislation and have been subject to full consultation. When they come into force on 1 April 2021, they will form the 'Once for Scotland' Whistleblowing Policy for NHSScotland.

The Whistleblowing Policy (the Standards) is available on the NHSScotland Workforce Policies test site as a 'soft launch' in advance of the INWO go live date. It can be accessed through: <https://tdiprototype.nes.digital/policies/whistleblowing-policy-overview/>. This offers a preparatory period for HR Departments and Staffside to ensure NHSScotland Board readiness for the policy live date.



Staff training will be vital to ensuring the success of the Standards. The INWO has developed two learning programmes to help.

- One for staff who need an overview of the Standards, which takes around an hour to complete.
- The other for managers, which takes two to three hours to complete.

The learning programme for managers is longer and more in-depth. This reflects their extra responsibilities for responding to concerns raised under the Standards. The programmes are hosted on the NHS Education Scotland's Turas website: <https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/40284/national-whistleblowing-standards-training>. A certificate is available on completion of each learning programme. If you have any questions about the training please contact the team at INWO@sps.gov.scot.

The INWO now provides an advice line for all NHS providers, staff and members of the public. This can be accessed via Freephone 0800 008 6112 or through the INWO website: <https://inwo.sps.gov.uk/what-we-do>. This replaces the bespoke NHSScotland advice line previously provided by Protect.

The INWO also offers regular updates. To receive these to your inbox, you can register by signing up for the INWO news e-bulletin through the INWO website: <https://inwo.sps.gov.uk/news>. We would also suggest that this e-bulletin provision is widely communicated to staff.

In each Board, the Non-Executive Whistleblowing Champions; Designated Whistleblowing Contacts as defined in the extant [Implementing and reviewing whistleblowing arrangements in NHSScotland PIN Policy](#); Employee Directors; and HR Directors will have a role in ensuring communication and engagement with staff to successfully implement the Standards and raise awareness of the new INWO role. The Whistleblowing Champions will have a pivotal role in ensuring successful implementation and will seek and provide assurance that their Health Board is complying with the Whistleblowing Standards. The SPSO and the Scottish Government will continue to work with the Whistleblowing Champions to enable them to support their Boards with implementation.

The 'soft launch' period also offers an opportunity for feedback prior to the planned policy go-live date. As the Standards were developed and created by the SPSO in consultation with stakeholders and are underpinned by legislation, the content of the Whistleblowing Standards cannot be changed. Following early feedback from The Once for Scotland Workforce Policies Programme Board, the Whistleblowing Policy has been presented in a different format from the other Once for Scotland national workforce policies.

We are keen to adopt a user focussed approach and welcome feedback about format and presentation on the NHSScotland Workforce Policies website. Boards and National Staff Side are therefore invited to feedback to the Once for Scotland Workforce Policies Programme Board in this regard. Please can you send feedback to Suzanne Thomas, Head of Staff Governance in the first instance: Suzanne.Thomas@gov.scot by COB Friday 19 March 2021. In addition, a short pop up survey will soon be made available to viewers of the policy during the soft launch period to gather user feedback.

The Once for Scotland Workforce Policies Programme Board will provide oversight during the 'soft launch' period and review recommendations for changes to the portal prior to the Whistleblowing Policy live date on 1 April 2021.

As advised in the letter of 15 October 2020, other organisations that deliver NHSScotland services, such as primary care providers and contracted services, must also implement the Standards, ensuring their procedures are fully compliant. This means that health boards need to ensure there are systems in place for primary care providers in their area to report their concerns handling performance data to the board.

The letter of 15 October also advised that the Scottish Government have engaged with the Datix User Group to develop a tool to help Boards consistently record whistleblowing concerns as required by the Whistleblowing Standards. The group have developed guidance to upload the required data fields onto the Datix system or where the Board doesn't have Datix, onto an alternative system. This is available as a supporting document that can be viewed on: [Whistleblowing Policy Overview | NHSScotland \(nes.digital\)](#)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport recognises the service delivery pressures that are arising from our continuing efforts to provide the best possible care in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. She remains clear that everyone who works in our Health Service must have the confidence to raise any concerns they may have, particularly in these unprecedented and challenging times. I look forward to your continued support in implementing the Whistleblowing Standards to further ensure that Boards encourage and support staff to speak up.

Yours sincerely



Victoria Bowman
Deputy Director
Health and Social Care Pay, Workforce Practice and Partnership