

Whistleblowing Annual Report

April 2023 – March 2024

Version 1.0

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Prepared by Patient Services

Introduction

This report outlines whistleblowing activity for NHS Dumfries and Galloway (NHS D&G) and performance against standards.

Key notes:

- Data was extracted from Datix on 20 September 2024 and includes data up to and including 31 March 2024.
- Time limits for whistleblowing concerns are based on working days, i.e. Monday to Friday.

1. Whistleblowing

The National Whistleblowing Standards and Once for Scotland Whistleblowing policy (the standards) were introduced on 1 April 2021. Data is presented to reflect national indicators as determined by the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer (INWO). Full details of the Standards and associated indicators can be found at <https://inwo.spsso.org.uk/>.

1.1 Indicator 1

A statement outlining learning, changes or improvements to services or procedures as a result of consideration of whistleblowing concerns.

One complaint from the previous reporting period, which had been investigated at Stage 2 of the National Whistleblowing Standards, was raised with the INWO in this reporting period.

In the Investigation Report, the Board described their methodology and approach to assess the reported issues. The Board did not consider the concerns were substantiated. Advice was provided and steps that could be taken to address issues under business as usual arrangements was confirmed within the response.

The complainant raised the complaint to the INWO and questioned whether the health and safety issues had been appropriately investigated, including whether the issues had received full consideration.

The INWO considered the information provided by the Board including the complaint investigation file. The INWO made further enquiries of the Board and the complainant.

While the Board considered the level of investigation they had carried out was appropriate and consistent with applicable standards, they proposed further action to ensure the issues that were raised by the complainant were fully addressed and mitigated; including further assessment of equipment and review of set-up.

As all parties agreed to specific and deliverable action that would resolve the complaint, the INWO's decision in this case was to discontinue the investigation, subject to monitoring of the actions agreed.

Both the Board and the INWO recognised the complainant's public-spirited approach in raising concerns. The INWO also recognised the Board's commitment to

improving services and learning through the whistleblowing process and pragmatic engagement with the resolution.

You can read the full report on the INWO Website: [Dumfries & Galloway NHS Board | INWO \(spsso.org.uk\)](https://www.dumfries-galloway.nhs.uk/inwo)

1.2 Indicator 2

A statement to report the experiences of all those involved in the whistleblowing procedure (where this can be provided without compromising confidentiality)

As there have been no new cases in the period, there has been no feedback regarding experience.

1.3 Indicator 3

A statement to report on levels of staff perceptions, awareness and training.

An internal audit of the Board's implementation of the Whistleblowing Standards was conducted in October 2022. As part of the audit, a staff survey was conducted which included questions around awareness and training. The results showed that 58% of those surveyed were aware of the Standards. However, it was identified that awareness and understanding of the associated processes was an area for development.

During the reporting period 10 staff completed the 'Whistleblowing Overview' e-learning course, three staff completed the 'Whistleblowing – Line Manager' course and one member of staff completed the "Whistleblowing – Senior Manager" course. It is recognised that there is scope to build on these numbers and in response to that there will be further focussed promotion of the courses in Core Briefing and as part of 'Speak Up' week in 2024.

The audit made several recommendations, including the following in relation to this indicator:

Recommendation 1 - *Following the recruitment process and appointment of Confidential Contacts, awareness exercises should be undertaken to promote the new and existing confidential contacts and ensure all staff are aware of how to contact these individuals with any concerns.*

Update - The recruitment of new Confidential Contacts was undertaken in the first quarter of 2024/25. Associated training was planned for the second quarter of 2024/25 and awareness raising was planned for Speak Up Week 2024, however this has been delayed, as the Board responded to the Cyber Attack on NHS Dumfries and Galloway in March 2024. The Patient Services team, who oversee Whistleblowing for the Board have also experienced significant capacity challenges.

Recommendation 4 - *Promotion of the training available should be carried out to all members of staff to ensure a greater uptake and regular monitoring in place to establish areas where greater focus may be required to promote and raise awareness of the training.*

Update –There was a focussed promotion of the Standards, training and support during Speak Up Week in October 2023. Further promotion is planned during Speak Up Week 2024.

Recommendation 5 - *Regular promotion of the National Whistleblowing Standards should be carried out to ensure all staff are aware of the standards and the process.*

Action –It is recognised that there is more work to do in terms of awareness raising and should be continuous throughout the year. A communications plan to promote the Standards, encourage a Speak Up culture and staff training throughout the remainder of the year and beyond is currently being developed.

1.4 Indicator 4

The total number of concerns received.

The Board received no concerns during the period.

Speak Up enquiries continue to be received, with support, resolution and/or signposting offered as appropriate.

In the reporting period less than five enquiries were received, which did not fit the criteria for the Standards.

2. Speak Up Week 2024

Promotion of Speak Up Week 2024 and the INWO Speak Up Programme of events has been circulated to all Board staff via the Staff News and bespoke all user emails. Links to the INWO website, NHS Dumfries and Galloway Website – Whistleblowing page and Beacon (staff intranet) – Speak Up and Whistleblowing site have been shared as part of those communications.

Posters have been displayed across the estate

Promotional pop-up stands placed in main foyer at DGRI, MHTC, Midpark and GCH

Social Media posts

Teams backgrounds

Review and update to NHS D&G website and intranet – planned

Launch and promotion of Confidential Contacts - planned