

**Abstract Title:**

**The mistreatment of NHS staff who raise valid concerns must stop**

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The NHS has a serious problem in its response, or lack of response, to staff who raise concerns in the public interest. In many if not all NHS scandals which have come to light, including the former Mid-Staffordshire foundation trust, Bristol paediatric heart surgery, Baby 'P', Savile, Paterson, Gosport etc, some staff did speak up but were ignored/ vilified/ disciplined, whilst others kept silent for fear of: futility of raising a concern because nothing would be done about it; and/or repercussions for themselves and their careers. The 2015 Freedom To Speak Up review [1] refers to *shocking accounts of the way some people have been treated*.

Senior leaders in the DHSC and NHS know that this problem is widespread in many parts of the NHS; it exists within the imaging and oncology community. There is recognition that there is need for culture change such that speaking-up becomes normal practice, though the current approach to promoting such change is controversial. At present it is apparent from many cases that NHS staff cannot be sure that it is safe to speak up when things are not right. Legislation which supposedly protects 'whistleblowers' - i.e. staff who raise concerns in the public interest - is weak, and typically provides only paltry financial compensation to the few who succeed against the legal and financial odds in winning cases at employment tribunals.

This is a complex and often misunderstood area, in which education is sorely needed. This talk will outline salient issues, and suggest appropriate ways forward.

**References**

1. Francis, R.F. (2015) *Freedom to Speak Up: An independent review into creating an open and honest reporting culture in the NHS*. Executive Summary para 3, page 8.  
<http://freedomtospeakup.org.uk/>