

What will this document cover?

- Designed to **support staff** in raising their concerns regarding the safety culture within teams or their organisation
- Outlines what **Safety Culture** is, and the importance of **Speaking Up**
- Provides **links** to relevant resources, and signposts channels to raise concerns
- Recent SHOT surveys have indicated that improvements in safety culture are needed to ensure staff feel that their concerns are listened to and addressed



What is Safety Culture? It is a combination of workplace attitudes, values, and perceptions that influence how something is actually done. A **positive safety culture** is one where everybody (staff, teams, donors, patients, families, and carers) can flourish. It ensures excellent, safe care with a system of continuous learning, collaboration and improvement of safety risks. It provides a supportive environment of psychological safety where staff feel enabled and empowered to speak up

What can you speak up about?

Everyone should be able to respectfully raise any concerns about safety. If it doesn't feel right, then speak up.
Your voice counts

Why is it important to raise concerns?

Raising concerns allows issues to be tackled, problems to be put right and lessons to be learnt for the benefit of patients and colleagues

NHS staff surveys state:

- only **~60%** of staff feel safe to speak up about concerns
- only **~50%** were confident that their organisation would address their concerns

Five critical elements have been identified for an engaged organisation with a good safety culture (Haddon-Cave 2009):



Reporting culture - an organisational climate where people readily report problems, errors and near misses



Just culture - an atmosphere of trust where people are encouraged and even rewarded for providing safety-related information; and it is clear to everyone what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour



Flexible culture - a culture that can adapt to changing circumstances and demands while maintaining its focus on safety



Learning culture - the willingness and competence to draw the right conclusions from its safety information and the will to implement major safety reforms



Questioning culture - it is vital to ask, 'What if?' and 'Why?' questions. Questions are the antidote to assumptions, which so often incubate mistakes

Potential impacts from not raising concerns If staff do not speak up regarding safety issues, then **opportunities for improvement are missed** and patients and/or staff continue to be put at risk. **Moral distress** and **moral injury** can occur when organisational behaviours do not align with personal moral principles, leading to long-term psychological distress as a result of a feeling of shame, guilt, anger or betrayal from the organisation. Healthcare professionals can experience significant personal or professional impact as a result of patient safety incidents and if unmanaged, can adversely impact their physical and psychological health

What are my responsibilities?

Safety and wellbeing of patients and NHS service users are seen as the responsibility of everyone involved in the provision of health care. All healthcare professionals must follow their professional code of conduct and where possible raise your concerns within your organisation first

Who can I speak to?



Reporting concerns within local organisation routes

1. Read your **organisation's local policy** detailing how to raise a concern and who to contact
2. Usually, your **line manager** would be your first contact to report any concerns to
3. If you feel unable to report to your line manager, or have already done this and your concerns were not addressed, you can speak to your **local organisation's Speak Up Guardian or equivalent**



Reporting concerns externally

3. If you have raised your concern locally but feel that your concern has not been addressed, or feel that you are not being listened to, you can raise your concern externally. **See Resources and Signposts on page 4**
 - i. **External regulators** – if reporting internally is not appropriate you can report your concerns to the relevant regulator
 - ii. **Professional bodies** – if your concern is about professional conduct, you may wish to speak to the relevant professional body
 - iii. **Support organisations** – it may be helpful to also contact organisations which can offer support



What systems are in place across the UK?

In England Freedom To Speak Up Guardians (FTSUG) are appointed by NHS organisations to aid staff to raise concerns. The National Guardian's Office ([NGO](#)) is an operationally independent body funded by NHS Improvement, NHS England (NHSE) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) providing leadership, support and guidance on speaking up freely at work, without fear of detriment, and ensure that their concerns are responded to appropriately

In Scotland Confidential Contacts (CC) are appointed by NHS organisations to give advice and information on the whistleblowing process and help people to raise their concerns with the right manager. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (**SPSO**) has taken up the role of the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer ([INWO](#)) to make sure everyone delivering NHS services is able to speak out to raise concerns. This uses the National Whistleblowing Standards which provide instructions on how the INWO expects concerns to be handled by NHS providers

In Wales you can raise your patient safety concerns with your local **Raising Concerns Champion**, or if you are unable to raise your concern locally, or you feel you have not been listened to or concerns addressed, you can report your concerns to the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales ([HIW](#))

In Northern Ireland you can raise your concerns with your local speak up guardian, or if you are unable to raise concerns locally, or you feel you have not been listened to or concerns addressed, you can report issues to the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority ([RQIA](#)) who work with local organisations to encourage people to engage with the process of raising a concern and ensure they feel safe while doing so

See Resources, Support and Guidance on page 4



Role of SHOT and MHRA

[SHOT](#) and [MHRA](#) promote an **open reporting culture**, which is an **essential pillar of an effective quality system**; where concerns can be raised and incident investigations are carried out in a fair and blame-free process to optimise learning from events

MHRA has established a dedicated and confidential reporting process which can be used by employees, ex-employees or even third-party employees of a company or organisation to raise safety concerns. Refer to [MHRA whistleblowing hotline](#)



RESOURCES, SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

PATIENT SAFETY

England	www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/the-nhs-patient-safety-strategy/
Scotland	https://ihub.scot/improvement-programmes/scottish-patient-safety-programme-spsp/
Wales	www.gov.wales/nhs-quality-and-safety-framework
Northern Ireland	www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/safety-and-quality

SPEAKING UP

www.rqia.org.uk/RQIA/media/RQIA/Resources/Whistleblowing/NIAO-wb_good_practice_guide.pdf

England	Wales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://nationalguardian.org.uk/speaking-up/how-to-speak-up/ https://nationalguardian.org.uk/speaking-up/find-my-ftsug-guardian/ to find your local FTSUG www.cqc.org.uk/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> www.hiw.org.uk/whistleblowing-raising-concerns-about-healthcare-wales www.hiw.org.uk/speaking-keep-people-safe www.hiw.org.uk/?skip=1&lang=
Scotland	Northern Ireland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://inwo.spsos.org.uk/ https://inwo.spsos.org.uk/whistleblowing-procedure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> www.rqia.org.uk/ www.rqia.org.uk/contact/complaints-feedback/whistleblowing/

PROFESSIONAL BODIES

General Medical Council UK	www.gmc-uk.org/concerns
Nursing and Midwifery Council	www.nmc.org.uk/concerns-nurses-midwives/
Health and Care Professional Council	www.hcpc-uk.org/concerns/
General Pharmaceutical Council	www.pharmacyregulation.org/reporting-concerns

RESOURCES

MHRA referrals	www.gov.uk/guidance/contact-mhra#whistleblower-referrals
NHS Staff survey	www.nhsstaffsurveys.com/results/national-results/
SHOT Bites	www.shotuk.org/resources/current-resources/shot-bites/
Moral distress	www.bma.org.uk/media/4209/bma-moral-distress-injury-survey-report-june-2021.pdf

HELP, SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

www.hsib.org.uk/help-and-support/support-for-nhs-staff/	Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch
https://speakup.direct/	Provide free, independent, confidential advice on speaking up process
https://protect-advice.org.uk/	Charity who provide legal advice about speaking up
www.tuc.org.uk/joinunion	Trade union who can help give individuals a voice
www.lawsociety.org.uk/public/for-public-visitors/	Independent professional body for solicitors in England and Wales
www.acas.org.uk/	Give advice regarding employment disputes
www.samaritans.org/	Volunteer based charity for people who need someone to listen