



How to... raise a concern

A guide to whistleblowing
for neonatal healthcare
professionals



We all have a duty to speak up if we have concerns about patient care and patient safety in our work place.

Medical, nursing, midwifery and allied health professional bodies support us in raising concerns. National reports have highlighted that it is our responsibility to do so.

This guide aims to provide you with information about how to raise concerns and where to seek support and guidance within the neonatal safety community.

“The prime responsibility for ensuring the safety of clinical services rests with the clinicians who provide them.”

Dr. Bill Kirkup (1)

Raising a concern

What concerns can I raise?

You can raise concerns about any aspect of work that you believe is harming the service your organisation delivers. Examples may include unsafe patient care, including individual clinical practice, your working conditions or bullying.

How do I raise concerns, who do I speak to first?

Raising concerns within your team and approaching your line manager should be your initial step. Resolving the issue through local processes or a “business as usual” approach, may be possible. You should expect your safety concerns to be taken seriously and addressed appropriately by your line manager. If not resolved, you can seek additional support and advice from whistleblowing champions within your organisation. If your concerns remain unresolved following these processes, you can seek external support from national bodies.



Raising a concern

Local policies and national standards

Your region/health board will have a local policy which will refer to national standards. Familiarising yourself with these, will give you confidence to raise your concerns and give you knowledge of the response you should expect from your employer.

The [GMC policy on whistleblowing](#) is a quick guide from the GMC outlining the structure for raising concerns.

Medical, nursing, midwifery and AHP bodies give advice and outline the process for raising and escalating concerns (these are the web links).

- [Raising and acting on concerns about patient safety - professional standards - GMC \(gmc-uk.org\)](#)
- [Raising and acting on concerns flowchart - ethical learning material - GMC \(gmc-uk.org\)](#)
- [Standing Up - RCM \(rcm.org.uk\)](#)
- [Whistleblowing policy - \(hcpc-uk.org\)](#)



Raising a concern

Who will support me if I raise concerns?

We are there to support each other and your colleagues can be a valuable source of emotional support for you. As a trainee your clinical or educational supervisor can support you locally and you can also raise a concern with your deanery. The professional body for your occupation can provide you with support and guidance and can be contacted directly. The Professional nurse advocate role has been created to provide support to nursing colleagues.

Support is available through a number of additional organisations such as:

- [British Medical Association advice and support](#).
- [Protect Charity](#) also exists to support individuals who are raising an issue.

Resources and further information applicable to your nation can be found below.



NHS England

Neonatal safety champions

Trusts delivering neonatal care have an appointed neonatal safety champion, whose role it is to ensure babies receive the safest care possible. Your local governance lead can help you identify who this is if you are uncertain. Neonatal Safety Champions can escalate your safety concerns via the Board Level Safety Champion, to whom they report.

The Operational Delivery Network (ODN) leads for governance can act as an additional source of support beyond your trust. Raising concerns to the ODN also allows the network to view issues raised from a wider perspective and consider themes.

Your board level Safety Champions will act as a conduit to National Maternity and Neonatal Safety Champions. By raising unresolved concerns with your local neonatal safety champion this will escalate your concerns to this national oversight group. Information and resources about the safety champions can be found at [NHS England » Maternity safety champions](#)



NHS England

Who are your Safety Champions?

National Maternity Safety Champion <i>Name & contact details here</i>	Insert photo
Your Clinical Network Safety Champion is: <i>Name & contact details here</i>	Insert photo
Your Trust Board level Safety Champion is: <i>Name & contact details here</i>	Insert photo
Your Midwifery Safety Champion is: <i>Name & contact details here</i>	Insert photo
Your Obstetric Safety Champion is: <i>Name & contact details here</i>	Insert photo
Your Neonatal Safety Champion is: <i>Name & contact details here</i>	Insert photo

ASK ABOUT YOUR SAFETY CHAMPION

If you are not certain who your Neonatal Safety Champion is, ask your line manager.

GOOD PRACTICE POSTERS

It is good practice to display a poster such as this example adapted from the [NHS England Maternity and neonatal safety champions toolkit](#), to ensure staff are aware of whom to contact.

NHS England

Standards

NHS England Standards can be found here: [NHS England » Speaking up to NHS England](#).

Independent advice in NHSE is via the National Guardians Officer. NHS England has appointed Freedom to speak up guardians who can be contacted directly for support. Contact details for local support can be found here: [Find My FTSU Guardian - National Guardian's Office](#).

Training is freely available to those working in NHS England; [Training - National Guardian's Office](#). This “Speak Up, Listen Up, Follow Up” training aims to help learners understand the role they play to develop a Speaking Up culture and has modules aimed at all workers, managers and senior leaders.

A Speaking up Support scheme has also been developed and can be found here: [NHS England Speaking Up support scheme](#).



NHS Scotland

National Whistleblowing Standards

National Whistleblowing Standards for NHS Scotland came into force in April 2021. These standards apply to anyone working in NHS Scotland. These standards can be accessed here:

- [National Whistleblowing Standards - Independent National Whistleblowing Officer](#)
- [Whistleblowing Policy Overview - NHSScotland](#)

If you feel the issue you have raised has not been resolved via “business as usual” processes, you can raise your concern formally with a more senior manager in your organisation or by contacting your health boards Confidential Contact. Look at your health board’s Human Resources website to find information and contact details for the confidential contacts in your area.



NHS Scotland

Support and advice

In Scotland, independent advice for those raising concerns, who are not satisfied the issue has been resolved locally, is via the [Independent National Whistleblowing Officer \(INWO\)](#). The INWO is an independent service that can review, investigate and make recommendations.

Support can be found from the Independent National Whistleblowing officer's advice line: Phone 0800 0086 112. They can be contacted at any time for advice.

You can also raise concerns to [Healthcare Improvement Scotland](#). HIS can be contacted in confidence. To raise an issue you can submit an information [template by email](#).

If you are a trainee in Scotland there is useful information from your deanery here: [Report a Concern | Trainees | Scotland](#).



NHS Wales

The national [Speaking Up Safely Framework](#) was launched by Welsh Government in collaboration with Trade Unions and NHS Wales employers in September 2023. The Framework sets out the responsibilities of organisations, their Executive teams and Boards, along with those of managers and individual members of staff (and volunteers) in creating a culture in which 'Speaking Up', alongside timely and appropriate response to any concerns raised, is supported within a psychologically safe environment.

NHS organisations in Wales are expected to implement the Speaking Up Safely approach outlined in this framework and assign Speaking Up Safely leads or equivalent. Staff are encouraged to approach these individuals or teams for advice and support. If you are not certain who holds these positions, speak to your line manager.

The framework supports the [All Wales Procedure for NHS Staff to Raise Concerns](#)* which encourages staff to discuss concerns and safety issues as soon as possible and provides guidance as to how to raise those concerns.

*The procedure within this link is applicable to Public Health Wales staff but all Health Boards/Trusts across Wales follows the same procedure.

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NHS Wales

Health Inspectorate Wales has published guidance for people who work, or worked for a healthcare organisation and who have concerns about poor care. It sets out their role and what they can, and cannot, do when they receive whistleblowing information.

- [Raising Concerns about Healthcare in Wales : Advice for Healthcare Workers.](#)

For trainees in Wales useful information about reporting safety concerns can be found here: [Raising training concerns - HEIW \(nhs.wales\)](#).

MatNeoSSP

The Maternity and Neonatal Safety Support Programme (MatNeoSSP) published its report in July 2023 [MatNeoSSP Cymru Discovery Phase Report](#). The report recommends all maternity and neonatal units appoint a Freedom to Speak up Champion who can be approached to provide you with support when raising concerns. It further recommends that each health board/trust has a Neonatal Consultant Safety Lead and Senior Neonatal Nurse to ensure neonatal safety issues are visible to executive board members.

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Northern Ireland

Raising Concerns

Trusts in Northern Ireland may have a Raising Concern Champion who can support you to speak up when raising concerns within your department. Your trust will have a local policy which will be based on the national raising concerns policy.

Northern Ireland's national policy was published in June 2023, [Raising concerns policy - Department of Health](#). The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) has also published guidance for health and social care workers: [RQIA Guidance for Whistleblowers](#).

If you feel that the concerns you have raised have not been resolved through local procedures then you can raise a concern directly with RQIA.

If you are a trainee in Northern Ireland useful information and advice can be found here: [How to Raise a Concern](#).



Further reading

Resources

- [Making Speaking Up Business As Usual - National Guardian's Office](#)
- [Annual Report laid before Parliament - National Guardian's Office](#)
- [Legislative reforms and whistleblowing - BMA](#)
- [RCM Position Statement - Raising Concerns](#)
- [DC5900-Whistleblowing-guidance_pdf-57107304.pdf \(gmc-uk.org\) 2018 publication.](#)

References

1. [The Report of the Morecambe Bay Invesitgation. Dr Bill Kirkup CBE. March 2015](#)



BAPM

Leading Excellence in Perinatal Care

This document was produced by the
British Association of Perinatal Medicine (BAPM).

BAPM is a membership organisation that is here to support all those involved in perinatal care to optimise their skills and knowledge, deliver and share high-quality safe and innovative practice, undertake research, and speak out for babies and their families.

We are a professional association of neonatologists, paediatricians, obstetricians, nurses, midwives, trainees, network managers and other health professionals dedicated to shaping the delivery and improving the standard of perinatal care in the UK.

Our vision is for every baby and their family to receive the highest standard of perinatal care. Join us today.

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5-11 Theobalds Road, London, WC1X 8SH