



**Scottish
Ambulance
Service**
Taking Care to the Patient

NHS
SCOTLAND

Whistleblowing



Annual Report
April 2021 - March 2022

Introduction

This report describes the Scottish Ambulance Services response to the new Whistleblowing arrangements, the approach taken within the service as well as an overview of the concerns raised through the Whistleblowing route and the themes and organisational learning as a result of the process to investigate the concerns during the first year of implementation of the standards, from April 2021 to March 2022.

Approach

A short life working group (SLWG), led by the Executive lead for Whistleblowing, supported by the Whistleblowing Champion was established. This group consisted of Human Resources (HR), Communications, Risk Management, Partnership and the Executive Lead. The internal processes were developed and refined through the group, with updates and support from the Whistleblowing Champion. Planning and development of processes were developed through the group and tasks were allocated across the group membership and reported back at subsequent meetings.

A whistleblowing phone line and email address were identified and are staffed Monday to Friday 9am- 4.30pm. Staff can access these resources out with these times, and they are responded to in hours. In the out of hour's period there are escalation routes via the business-as-usual arrangements which can be logged as whistleblowing thereafter.

The governance route for whistleblowing has been agreed as the Clinical Governance Committee, however regular verbal updates on whistleblowing are given to the Staff Governance Committee and the Audit Committee for further assurance.

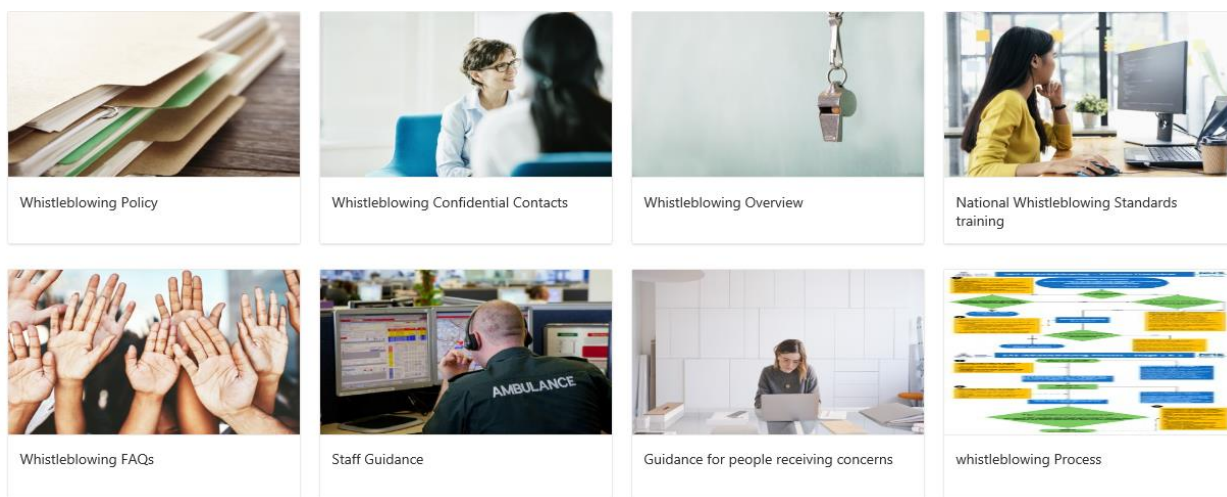
Communications and Staff Engagement

The approach we took to staff engagement in the development and the communication of the new standards and processes was planned with partnership colleagues and delivered in partnership. This was to support staff engagement and ownership of the processes and was well received across the organisation.

As part of the wider communications and engagement of staff, the SLWG developed a dedicated range of resources on our intranet pages on Whistleblowing which supported staff understanding of the new processes, as well as details on the public website for contractors to access our whistleblowing arrangements. This included:-

- 'Frequently Asked Questions'
- process flow diagrams
- details of Confidential Contacts and Lead Investigators across the service
- links to the INWO resources and additional training materials.

We have made the link to Confidential Contacts very prominent to encourage staff to contact them in the first instance. This section of the website has been visited 1,265 times by 705 viewers.



Whistleblowing Training

Training on the Whistleblowing Standards and Once for Scotland Policy has been a priority for the Service and details of, and a link to, the online training via TURAS is available for all our employees. The whistleblowing standards and TURAS training have been widely communicated throughout the Service via staff engagement sessions, staff bulletins and our intranet.

We have identified a series of confidential contacts and dedicated whistleblowing investigators to deal with stage 2 concerns across the organisation from a variety of corporate and clinical services, ensuring system resilience in supporting staff raising concerns. Given the importance of their role, the online training via TURAS has been completed by the confidential contacts and the lead investigators.

The TURAS training is also being undertaken by HR Managers and HR Advisers to ensure they have a good understanding of the standards and the procedure for raising and dealing with concerns. To date we have had 32 staff undertake the general awareness training and 29 managers complete the managers training.

We have taken the decision that our line managers will deal with stage 1 (early resolution) concerns. We have developed a short session called 'Introduction to Whistleblowing' on-line for all our managers and this is included in our induction programme for new managers.

The purpose of this session

- It gives an introduction and overview of whistleblowing and the standards, explaining the role they play as a manager
- Explains the role of the INWO
- Explains how to identify a whistleblowing concern
- It summarises the procedure for handling a whistleblowing concern and provides details of our confidential contacts.
- It signposts managers to the comprehensive on-line training modules on TURAS and encourages them to complete the same.

The roll out of this session commenced in November 2021. This has allowed staff to be guided on the process through an alternative medium and allowed access to staff who were unable to attend any of the staff engagement sessions. This video clarified

some of the misconceptions around whistleblowing and support the development of staff understanding of what whistleblowing was and more importantly, what it was not. The video has been watched 116 times.



Whistleblowing Process



On @SAS there is a clear description of the Whistleblowing process and also where concerns are not whistleblowing and should be considered via the Grievance route.

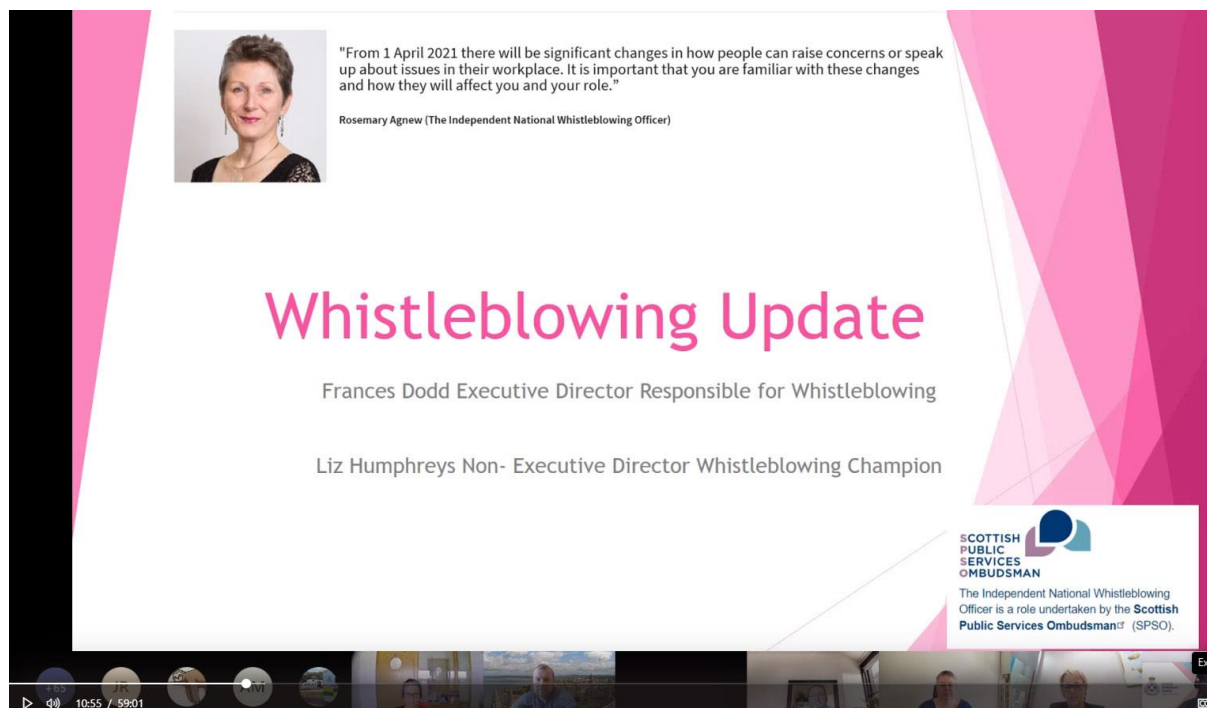
Staff Engagement Sessions

As mentioned above, there are weekly staff engagement sessions which all SAS staff are welcome to join. These sessions are recorded on MS Teams and are posted for viewing after the event. The recorded sessions and the PowerPoint presentations were posted for staff to view and refer to in the future. The initial session was delivered by the Executive Lead supported by the Whistleblowing Champion and the National Convenor for Unite, this session covered general principles and the new guidance, as well as the emerging sources on information on the intranet site.

There was an initial staff engagement session before the implementation of the standards in March 2021 to introduce the standards and to familiarise staff with the developing arrangements for whistleblowing.

The second staff engagement session, delivered in July 2021, gave an overview of the processes so far, the learning from early implementation, as well as any developments in the approach to date. Both sessions were well received by staff and were opened for any questions to allow staff to have their questions addressed by the team leading the implementation of the new arrangements.

Staff Engagement Session 01/07/21



The screenshot shows a Microsoft Teams meeting interface. The main content area displays a presentation slide titled "Whistleblowing Update" in large pink letters. Above the title, there is a quote from Rosemary Agnew, The Independent National Whistleblowing Officer, stating: "From 1 April 2021 there will be significant changes in how people can raise concerns or speak up about issues in their workplace. It is important that you are familiar with these changes and how they will affect you and your role." Below the quote is a small portrait of Rosemary Agnew. The slide also lists two speakers: Frances Dodd, Executive Director Responsible for Whistleblowing, and Liz Humphreys, Non-Executive Director Whistleblowing Champion. In the bottom right corner of the slide, the logo for the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is visible, along with text explaining that the role of the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer is undertaken by the SPSO. The bottom of the screen shows the Microsoft Teams interface with a video player, a timeline bar, and a grid of participant video feeds.

Through the regular Chief Executives Bulletin, a whistleblowing update has been included in this bulletin on four occasions, in the lead up to the launch of the new processes, to alert staff to the changes and the opportunity to review the whistleblowing resources on the intranet site, in preparation for the launch at the beginning of April 2021, as well as an update on progress. An example of one of these updates can be seen below.

[@SAS](#)
[Departments](#)
[Human Resources](#)
[Toolbox](#)
[Applications](#)
[Useful Forms](#)
[Online Directory](#)
[Work Area](#)
[Edit](#)

[New](#)
[Send to](#)
[Promote](#)
[Page details](#)
[Immersive Reader](#)
[Analytics](#)

[Posted](#)
[Edit](#)

Covid Vaccine and Lateral Flow Testing

The second phase of our Covid-19 vaccine programme continues and as of Sunday 28 March, 6461 staff, students and volunteers have had their first dose and 3575 their second dose. We expect to complete the Pfizer 2nd dose vaccination week commencing 5 April.

Please also continue to use your Lateral Flow Devices (LFD) and record test results - both positive and negative - on [@SAS using the form here](#). It's also important to report your results under the 'Scottish Ambulance Service' option on the dropdown box, and then other if your base location is not on the list.

Welfare Provision

As we are now in spring, we have taken time to update the welfare provisions we put in place to support crews through the winter months. From 6 April 2021, welfare vehicles at busy sites will be active for key dates where we may see a surge in activity as we come out of lockdown and restrictions are eased. The Regional Cells are working with our volunteer partners to identify these dates to ensure plans are in place for crews to have access to a hot drink and a snack.

Please feel free to thank the volunteers from the British Red Cross and St Andrews First Aid who have supported us over the last few months, giving up their own time to make sure our crews have access to a cup of tea and a friendly chat.

Whistleblowing

A new process for raising whistleblowing concerns has been launched today. Whistleblowing is when someone within the organisation raises a concern which they are a witness to, such as malpractice, fraud or regulatory breaches. The new process complements the existing processes of escalation and it focuses on helping staff raise concerns as early as possible and supporting and protecting these staff. It is very important that we hear about any whistleblowing concerns you have as soon as possible, and I would encourage you to familiarise yourself with the new process.

[More information about the process, the difference between a whistleblowing concern and a grievance, and how to raise a concern can be seen on @SAS.](#)

The Dying to Work Charter

The Executive Lead for whistleblowing has developed a network of support for the Confidential Contacts and the Lead Investigators. This was initially delivered separately, where the discrete roles of each group were rehearsed and the opportunity for questions and explanations were created. The Confidential Contacts and the Lead Investigators then proceeded with the INWO training and were brought back together collectively and now meet 3 monthly to support their learning, support organisational learning from the use of the processes, as well as developing a network of support for each other to utilise in the absence of the Executive Lead.

All members of the Whistleblowing Network have been invited to join the Scottish Speak Up Network. This network meets on a monthly basis and provides a valuable forum for members of our network to share learning across the wider NHS. SAS have shared their experience of developing the arrangements for Whistleblowing with the Scottish Speak Up Network and have helped to craft the terms of reference and the function of this national network.

Confidential Contacts	Contact email	Contact phone	Profiles
Rebecca McQueen	Rebecca.McQueen@nhs.scot	07385421961	
Moraig Rollo	moraig.rollo3@nhs.scot		
Barbara O'Donnell	Barbara.odonnell@nhs.scot	07385421936	
Steph Jones	Stephanie.Jones@nhs.scot	07970334474	
Jacquie Loye	Jacqueline.Loye@nhs.scot	07920271649	Find out more about Jacquie
Agnieszka Stephen	agnieszka.stephen2@nhs.scot	07385513215	Find out more about Agnieszka
Dave Bywater	davidlee.bywater@nhs.scot	07881356347	
Mel Barnes	melanie.barnes1@nhs.scot	01313140124	
Brian Laughland	brian.laughland@nhs.scot	07786357596	

The Whistleblowing Executive Lead and the Whistleblowing Champion have regularly met throughout the last year to feedback on organisational learning, as well as keep abreast of the developments through the Whistleblowing Champions network. This has resulted in a range of developments to the processes internally within SAS, as well as the sharing of SAS developments across the wider NHS Scotland system.

This has proved to be an invaluable way of continually refining and developing the Whistleblowing processes for the benefit of the patients and staff of SAS. During one of these sessions the Whistleblowing Champion had engaged with the INWO and had shared some very useful self-assessment questions to support reflection and learning within the processes to further refine and develop the arrangements.

Whistleblowing Toolkit

A Whistleblowing Toolkit is currently being developed which includes a Managers Guide which provides managers with information in relation to the standards, their role in the process, how they should manage concerns and how a Stage 1 concern should be progressed under the standards. The guide also provides managers with a suite of template letters to communicate outcomes and advise Whistleblower's of the options available to them should they remain unhappy with the actions taken and wish to progress matters further.

An Information Pack for Investigators is also being developed and provides Investigators with information regarding the processes that should be followed when investigating Stage 2 concerns (see Appendix 1 & 2). This pack includes

- a template Terms of Reference document
- an investigation report template
- a template to record contact with the Whistleblower
- template response letters

- a template for recording any learning activities that require to be implemented as a result of the investigation.

In addition to this a Whistleblowing Satisfaction Survey has been developed to allow those involved in the Whistleblowing process to provide some feedback on how they felt their concerns were handled throughout the process.

Work has also been undertaken to improve the internal communication processes in relation to handling Whistleblowing concerns to ensure improved decision making and more effective reporting and recording mechanisms.

Whistleblowing Concerns and Themes

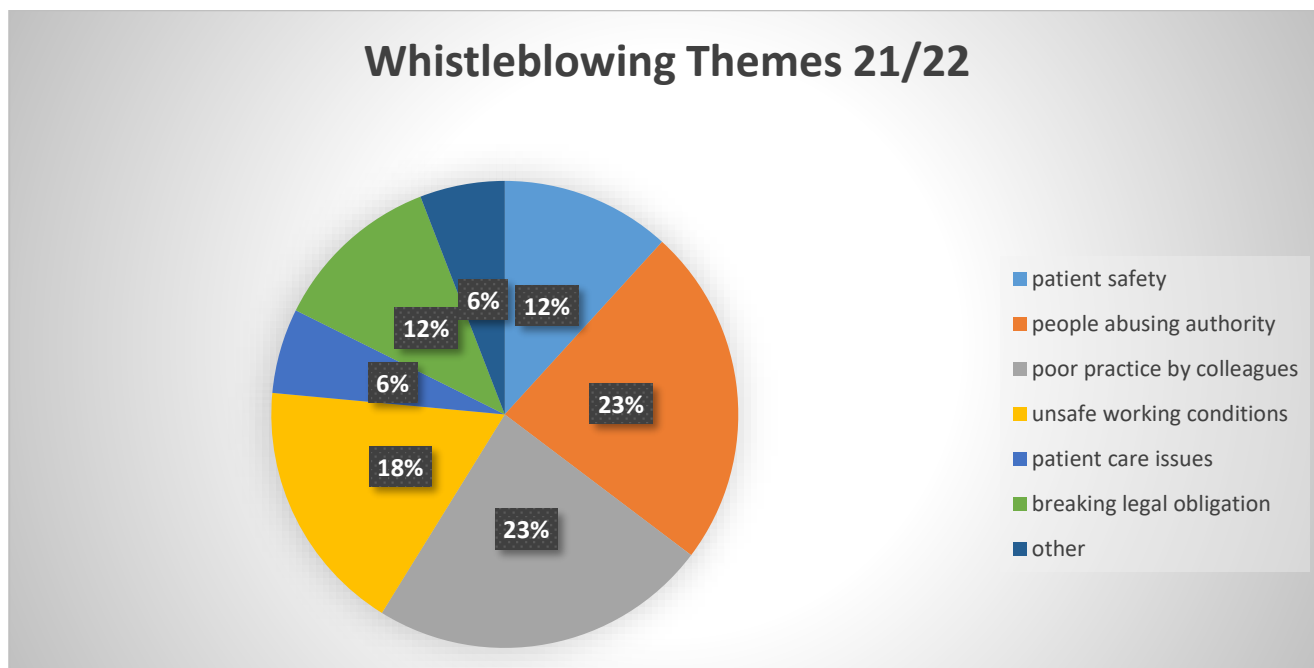
There have been a small number of concerns raised since the implementation of the new arrangement which were initially raised under whistleblowing and were assessed and were deemed not to be whistleblowing. They generally related to an individual staff grievance and these staff were offered the support of HR to pursue their concerns through the grievance route.

There have been no concerns raised from contractors working for SAS during the first year of the standards being in place. Initially we were not recording the decision making processes, however as the processes have been developed and refined, these decisions are now being recorded as potential whistleblowing concerns and the rationale for them not being whistleblowing is recorded against the Datix entry. This still remains an evolving process as we continue to develop and refine the arrangements.

There have been six formal reports of whistleblowing from April to March 2022. These incidents were all investigated, four of which were a Stage 1 concern, all investigated by the local line manager and resolved. There were two incidents which were more complex concerns and these were both investigated under a Stage 2 process, one of these investigations was delayed due to operational challenges. The whistle-blowers were kept apprised of progress regularly by the Lead Investigator and supported by the Confidential Contact throughout these investigations.

SAS have further refined processes by ensuring all contact with the whistle-blower, prior to, during and after the investigation, are recorded on the Datix entry by the Confidential Contact, this includes, calls of support, Occupational Health referrals and any other support mechanisms. This will require ongoing monitoring and reliability checking to ensure this is happening consistently.

Key Themes



Actions Taken as a result of Whistleblowing concerns

There have been a number of actions taken, these include:-

- Reassertion and confirmation of processes in vehicle certification checking
- Refinement of local escalation processes where concerns were raised
- Local review of management practice in relation to abuse of authority

Reflections

In relation to the current processes, there is the need to continually learn and reflect on the evolving whistleblowing processes. In particular there is a need to focus on timeframes, in relation to completion of processes, as well as continually refining and developing the engagement with the whistle blower during the investigation to ensure their welfare. All of these aspects will be a focus as the processes iterate within SAS.

Next Steps

- Exploration and discussion around the impact of any additional barriers to speaking up for staff with protected characteristics
- Continue with the Whistleblowing support networks locally and nationally
- Continue to refine processes based on learning
- Continue to refine template documents based on learning
- Continue to refine the Datix process for capturing data based on learning
- Explore the opportunities to continue to share learning from whistleblowing concerns and how these reach across and into the organisation at the appropriate levels
- Explore the opportunity to develop a self-assessment similar to the Counter Fraud self-assessment to understand further areas of refinement

Conclusion

The local whistleblowing network, supported by the Executive Lead and the Whistleblowing Champion is firmly established, this will continue to the end of 2022 and be reviewed in relation to added value at this stage and a decision made of the need going forward. The whistleblowing arrangements will continue to be refined based on experience, staff feedback, as well as feedback from the network members. There will be regular updates to the Clinical Governance Committee on whistleblowing as the governance route agreed within the service. SAS will continue to participate and collaborate around whistleblowing via the Executive Lead and the Whistleblowing Champion to ensure the governance arrangements are continually strengthened to support staff who whistle blow.

Professor Frances Dodd

Director of Care Quality and Professional Development

Executive Lead for Whistleblowing

May 2022

Appendix 1



Draft Whistleblowing
Managers Guidance.d

Appendix 2



Draft Whistleblowing
Investigators guidance