

Item 15.1.1



Whistleblowing Standards

Quarter Four Report
2025/26

Safety, Quality and Risk Team

Lead Executive for Whistleblowing: Dr Anna Lamont, Medical Director
Author: Kat Jenkin, Head of Patient Safety, Quality and Risk

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Background	3
3. Speaking Up.....	4
4. Confidential Contacts	4
5. Outcomes and Performance Against the Whistleblowing Indicators.....	5
Staff Awareness and Training (indicator 3).....	5
Concerns and Management of Concerns (indicators 4-9)	6
Learning From Concerns Raised (indicator 1)	7
Experience For Those Raising Concerns (indicator 2)	7
6. Action plans and Progress on Upheld Concerns	7
7. Executive Assurance Summary.....	7

NHS Orkney Whistleblowing Standards

Quarterly Report – Q4 2025/26

1. Introduction

NHS Orkney recognises the importance of ensuring that staff and those delivering NHS services feel safe and supported to raise concerns.

Effective whistleblowing arrangements are a core component of the organisation's wider approach to patient safety, quality, staff wellbeing and organisational learning. In line with the National Whistleblowing Standards, NHS Orkney routinely monitors whistleblowing activity and reports performance against the national indicators on a quarterly basis. This includes oversight of concerns raised by NHS Orkney staff and information received from independent contractors who deliver NHS services on behalf of the Board. These reporting and assurance arrangements form part of NHS Orkney's routine governance processes.

This report presents whistleblowing activity and performance for the period 1 January 2026 to 31 March 2026, covering Quarter Four of the 2025/26 financial year. It provides assurance on the effectiveness of local whistleblowing arrangements during the reporting period, reflects on engagement and learning activity, and highlights areas of continued focus to support awareness, accessibility and confidence in speaking up.

NHS Orkney remains committed to fostering an open, respectful and supportive culture in which concerns are listened to, addressed proportionately and used to inform improvement. Whistleblowing continues to be viewed as an important learning mechanism, supporting patient safety, service quality and staff wellbeing across the organisation.

2. Background

The National Whistleblowing Standards, established by the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer (INWO), provide a consistent framework for how NHS organisations in Scotland must support individuals to raise concerns and how those concerns should be received, assessed and managed. The Standards are designed to promote openness, protect those who speak up from detriment, and ensure that concerns are addressed fairly, proportionately and with a focus on learning and improvement.

NHS Orkney is required to monitor whistleblowing activity and report performance against the national indicators on a quarterly basis. This includes oversight of concerns raised by NHS Orkney staff, as well as information provided by independent contractors who deliver NHS services on behalf of the Board. Reporting

is structured to support transparency, Board oversight and assurance that local arrangements remain aligned with national expectations.

Whistleblowing arrangements within NHS Orkney are embedded within the organisation's wider safety, quality and governance structure. Clear routes are in place for raising concerns, supported by confidential contacts, executive leadership and whistleblowing champion for oversight. These arrangements are complemented by ongoing engagement activity to promote awareness, encourage early advice-seeking and support a culture in which speaking up is viewed as a normal and valued part of maintaining patient safety and staff wellbeing.

Quarterly reporting enables NHS Orkney to reflect not only on whistleblowing activity, but also on learning, engagement and system maturity. This approach recognises that assurance is derived from how concerns are listened to and handled, rather than solely from the number of concerns raised, and supports continuous improvement in line with the intent of the National Whistleblowing Standards.

3. Speaking Up

NHS Orkney provides several ways for staff to raise concerns and seek advice. These include the formal whistleblowing process, an anonymous reporting form, and the option to speak directly with senior leaders such as the Chief Executive, the Whistleblowing Champion or the Executive Lead for Whistleblowing, as well as Confidential Contacts.

During this reporting period, no concerns were raised directly with the Chief Executive or the Executive Lead for Whistleblowing. The Whistleblowing Champion was approached for advice and support in relation to a concern about detriment; this matter is being addressed through management processes. One concern was received via the anonymous reporting form which related to the behaviour of an individual and was addressed and resolved through normal line management routes.

4. Confidential Contacts

Confidential Contacts are well established as part of the speaking-up arrangements within NHS Orkney. Each quarter, a regular meeting takes place involving the Confidential Contacts, the Whistleblowing Champion, the Executive Lead for Whistleblowing and the Head of Patient Safety, Quality and Risk. These meetings provide an opportunity to share themes, reflect on organisational culture and consider ways to promote speaking up and early advice-seeking across the organisation.

No concerns were raised with Confidential Contacts during this reporting period, which provides assurance that staff continue to seek support through a range of

established speaking up routes and that arrangements remain accessible and trusted.

5. Outcomes and Performance Against the Whistleblowing Indicators

The National Whistleblowing Standards outline a series of key performance indicators (KPIs) against which each NHS Board is required to report. These indicators are designed to ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in the handling of whistleblowing concerns.

This report presents NHS Orkney's performance against these indicators and includes separate reporting for NHS Orkney and its independent contractors. The independent contractors are only required to report against KPI's four – nine. While the indicators are not presented in numerical order, they have been arranged to enhance clarity and readability. For ease of reference, the corresponding indicator number is included alongside each heading.

The indicators are as follows:

1. Learning from concerns raised
2. Experience for those raising concerns
3. Staff awareness and training
4. The total number of concerns received
5. Concerns closed at each stage in the process
6. Concerns upheld, partially upheld and not upheld
7. Average times
8. Number of concerns closed at each stage with the set timescales
9. Number of cases where extension was authorised

Staff Awareness and Training (indicator 3)

Count of Learning Status				2025/26			
Course Title	Completed all time	In Progress all time	Total	Completed Q1	Completed Q2	Completed Q3	Completed Q4
Whistleblowing: an overview	111	0	111	0	2	2	2
Whistleblowing: for managers & people who receive concerns	7	0	7	0	0	0	0
Whistleblowing: for senior managers	24	0	24	0	0	0	0

Whistleblowing e-learning is available to all staff through Turas and is promoted via topic specific pages and regular internal communications. While completion of the e-learning is not mandatory, it is highlighted for managers when they join the organisation and as part of ongoing development. Uptake has remained low during

this reporting period; however, NHS Orkney is exploring additional ways to build understanding and confidence around speaking up that are meaningful, practical and accessible for all staff.

Concerns and Management of Concerns (indicators 4-9)

NHS Orkney

Indicator	Performance 2025/26			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
The total number of concerns raised	0	0	0	0
Concerns closed at each stage of the process	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Concerns upheld, partially upheld, and not upheld	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Average times (working days)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of concerns closed at each stage within the set timescales	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of cases where extension was authorised	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

No concerns were raised by NHS Orkney staff this quarter.

Independent Contractors

Indicator	Performance 2025/65			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
The total number of concerns raised	0	0	0	0
Concerns closed at each stage of the process	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Concerns upheld, partially upheld, and not upheld	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Average times (working days)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of concerns closed at each stage within the set timescales	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of cases where extension was authorised	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

No Concerns have been raised by independent contractors in this quarter.

Learning From Concerns Raised (indicator 1)

No whistleblowing concerns were raised during the 2025/26 reporting year.

Experience For Those Raising Concerns (indicator 2)

No whistleblowing concerns were raised during the reporting period; therefore, no direct feedback has been sought from whistleblowers.

6. Action plans and Progress on Upheld Concerns

There are no outstanding action plans carried forward into this reporting period. All previously identified actions have been completed or closed following review and resolution processes.

7. Executive Assurance Summary

This report provides assurance that NHS Orkney's whistleblowing arrangements remain in place, operational and proportionate to the level of activity during the reporting period. No whistleblowing concerns were raised by NHS Orkney staff or independent contractors, and there were no upheld cases, action plans or outstanding matters requiring escalation. On this basis, no risks have been identified in relation to the management of whistleblowing concerns during Quarter Four.

Activity through other speaking up and reporting routes remained low. Where issues were raised, they were reviewed promptly and directed to the most suitable organisational processes, including workforce and support routes. This reflects consistent application of the National Whistleblowing Standards and effective working relationships between the Executive Lead for Whistleblowing, the Whistleblowing Champion, Confidential Contacts and the Patient Safety, Quality and Risk Team. These arrangements support early advice, proportionate handling and consistent decision-making.

Engagement with independent contractors has continued, with whistleblowing reporting now embedded within routine quarterly processes. Uptake of whistleblowing training has remained limited during the year; however, this reflects the absence of active whistleblowing cases rather than a lack of organisational capability. The planned inclusion of whistleblowing within the forthcoming Managers' Programme provides an opportunity to strengthen awareness and reinforce roles and responsibilities in a targeted and sustainable way.

Looking ahead, NHS Orkney will continue to focus on maintaining awareness of whistleblowing routes, strengthening relationships across the system and enhancing support mechanisms. Work to expand and diversify the pool of Confidential Contacts is ongoing, alongside further consideration of how learning and awareness can be supported through approaches that complement e-learning and organisational

communications. A review of the whistleblowing guidance is underway, as agreed at the point of ratification, to improve clarity and address areas where further explanation has been requested through consultation.

Overall, the position at the end of Quarter Four provides assurance that whistleblowing governance is functioning as intended, aligned with national standards and supported by effective leadership and collaborative working.