



**Nottingham and  
Nottinghamshire**  
Integrated Care Board

# **Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy**

**July 2022 – July 2025**

<b>CONTROL RECORD</b>			
<b>Reference Number</b> GOV-003	<b>Version</b> 1.0	<b>Status</b> Final	<b>Author</b> Head of Governance
			<b>Sponsor</b> Associate Director of Governance
			<b>Directorate</b> Governance and Assurance Team
<b>Title</b>	Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy		
<b>Amendments</b>	None		
<b>Purpose</b>	To demonstrate the ICB's commitment to an open and transparent culture for its workforce and to set out the arrangements in place for raising concerns.		
<b>Superseded Documents</b>	None		
<b>Audience</b>	All employees of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB (including those working within the organisation in a temporary capacity).		
<b>Consulted with</b>	N/A		
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	Completed – no potential adverse or positive impacts identified.		
<b>Approving Body</b>	ICB Board	<b>Date approved</b>	1 July 2022
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<p><b>This is a controlled document and whilst this policy may be printed, the electronic version available on the ICB's document management systems is the only true copy. As a controlled document, this document should not be saved onto local or network drives.</b></p>			

**Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB's policies can be made available in alternative formats, such as easy read or large print, and may be available in alternative languages, upon request. Please contact [nnicb-nn.comms@nhs.net](mailto:nnicb-nn.comms@nhs.net).**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy applies to the Nottingham and Integrated Care Board (ICB), hereafter referred to as 'the ICB'.
- 1.2 All ICBs have a responsibility for ensuring that high standards of business conduct are maintained across their organisations and all ICB members are expected to show leadership by example in order to successfully influence the behaviour of staff. As such, members of the ICB Board and its established committees must at all times comply with the expectations set out by the Professional Standards Authority in the *Standards for members of NHS Boards and Clinical Commissioning Group Governing Bodies in England*<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.3 The ICB's Board Executive Management and Senior Leadership Team are committed to creating an open, transparent and supportive culture for their workforce. The ICB recognises the valuable contribution its employees make to the running of public services, and to the protection of the public interest. People are encouraged to speak up with any genuine issues that are concerning them and, under this policy, can do so in confidence and without the fear of reprisal.
- 1.4 Speaking up about any concern you have at work is important and can inform those who need to know about unsafe working practices, potential environmental problems, fraud, bribery, corruption, cover-ups, bullying and many other problems. Often it is only through speaking up about a concern that this information comes to light and can be addressed before any real damage is done.
- 1.5 The ICB Board would prefer that matters are raised when they are just a concern, instead of waiting for confirmation. As long as individuals are acting in good faith, it does not matter if there has been a mistake.
- 1.6 Raising a concern should not be confused with a grievance, which is a personal complaint about an individual's own employment situation. The ICB's Grievance Policy should be referred to for further information on this.
- 1.7. The ICB will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern under this policy and individuals will not be at risk of losing their job or suffering any form of retribution as a result. The ICB Board is committed to this policy, and the public interest principle that it promotes.
- 1.8. The ICB will comply with the relevant legislation and national guidance in the management of raising concerns .

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<sup>1</sup> Updated Standards for the ICB Board is expected to be published in 2022

## 2. Definitions

2.1 The following terms and definitions apply for the purposes of this policy and its associated procedure (provided at **Appendix A**):

Term	Definition
<b>Whistleblowing</b>	Someone ‘whistle blows’ when they tell their employer, a regulator, the police, or the media about a dangerous, improper, or illegal activity that they have become aware of through the course of their work.
<b>Concern</b>	<p>For the purpose of this policy, a concern can be defined as a reasonable and honest suspicion about a possible fraud, danger, or other serious risk that threatens patients, colleagues, stakeholders, the public, or the organisation’s reputation.</p> <p>Whilst this is not an exhaustive list, examples of incidents that may constitute a cause for concern are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victimisation or harassment of a colleague.</li> <li>• Criminal acts.</li> <li>• Unethical practices, not necessarily of a criminal nature.</li> <li>• Issues regarding staff conduct, including concerns related to equality and diversity.</li> <li>• Serious maladministration.</li> <li>• Dangerous acts (or omissions) that create a hazard to health, safety or the environment.</li> <li>• Fraud, bribery or corruption<sup>2</sup>.</li> <li>• Non-compliance with the ICBs’ Standards of Business Conduct Policy.</li> <li>• Non-compliance with a legal obligation.</li> </ul>
<b>External Disclosure</b>	<p>This is the term used for raising a concern externally, for example, with a regulator or independent supervisory body, or as appropriate, the police, MPs, or the media.</p> <p>Further information on making external disclosures is set out at <b>Appendix A</b>.</p>
<b>The Public Interest Disclosure Act (The Act)</b>	The Act protects workers from detrimental treatment or victimisation from their employer if, in the public interest, they speak up on any wrongdoing.

<sup>2</sup> If the concern is regarding fraud, bribery or corruption, then the ICBs’ Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy should be referred to for guidance on how to report this.

### **3. Scope**

- 3.1 This policy relates to all employees and appointees of the ICB and others working within the organisation in a temporary capacity. These are collectively referred to as 'individuals' hereafter.
- 3.2 This policy specifically applies to issues of concern relating to the activities of the ICB. This may include but is not limited to concerns in relation to:
- Bullying and harassment
  - Patient safety
  - Staff safety
  - Estates or environment
  - Unsafe working conditions
  - Concerns of mismanagement or corruption
  - Illegal activities
- 3.3 Concern that are identified by individuals within the ICB that relate to other organisations (from which the ICB commissions services), then these should be brought to the attention of the relevant Commissioning Manager (or appropriate senior manager within the ICB) at the earliest convenience. Any such instance would not be classified as speaking up or treated in accordance with this policy.

### **4. Purpose**

- 4.1 The ICB takes all whistleblowing concerns seriously. Therefore, the purpose of this policy is to ensure that individuals feel empowered and assured that it is acceptable and safe to speak up about any concerns they may have, as long as they are made in good faith.
- 4.2 This policy is designed both to inform individuals of how they can raise concerns, both internally and externally, and to protect them from suffering any detriment.

## **5. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998**

- 5.1 Under the [Public Interest Disclosure Act \(PIDA\) 1998](#), a protected disclosure can be made, if in the reasonable view of the individual, it is “in the public interest”. PIDA also affords protection to those who may suffer victimisation where they have made such a disclosure.
- 5.2 In line with the Act, the ICB undertakes that no reprisals will be taken against individuals who raise genuine concerns, internally or externally. The ICB will not tolerate the harassment of anyone raising a genuine concern and it will be a disciplinary matter to victimise employees that have spoken up.
- 5.3 However, this assurance will not extend to individuals who maliciously raise concerns they know to be untrue. All concerns raised will be treated in good faith, however if it is found that an individual has done so with improper motives, disciplinary proceedings may commence against that individual.

## **6. Confidentiality**

- 6.1 The best way for individuals to raise concerns is to do so openly, as this makes it easier for the ICB to gain more information in order to better investigate the matter.
- 6.2 However, the ICB recognises that individuals may wish to raise their concerns in confidence, so if an individual asks that their identity be protected, then it will not be disclosed without their consent.
- 6.3 If a situation arises where a concern cannot be resolved without revealing an individual's identity, then it will be discussed with the individual whether and how the matter can proceed. It should be remembered that if identity is withheld, it will be much more difficult to look into the matter and give feedback, or to protect the individual's position.

## 7. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
<b>ICB Board</b>	The ICB Board is responsible for ensuring that there is an effective system in place for individuals to raise concerns. They are also responsible for promoting a culture of openness and transparency, where individuals feel empowered and assured that they are able to discuss their concerns without fear of reproach.
<b>All Managers</b>	<p>All managers have a responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure this policy is adhered to.</li> <li>• Contribute to a culture where individuals feel safe to discuss concerns.</li> <li>• Take concerns seriously and handle them in accordance with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Appendix A – Procedure for Reporting Concerns; and</li> <li>○ Appendix B – How to handle a concern raised through the Freedom to Speak Up Process: Practical Tips for Managers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Recognise that raising a concern can be a difficult experience for individuals.</li> <li>• Seek appropriate advice as necessary and communicate relevant findings to others where appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>Associate Director of Governance</b>	The Associate Director of Governance has delegated responsibility from the ICB Board for dealing with concerns, where an individual feels unable for whatever reason, to contact their line manager directly.

## 8. Freedom to Speak Up Guardian

- 8.1 Where individuals still have concerns but feel unable to raise these with their Manager or the Associate Director of Governance; the ICB's appointed Freedom to Speak up Guardian can also provide an independent and impartial source of advice to staff at any stage of raising a concern.



## **9. Equality and Diversity Statement**

- 9.1 NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB pays due regard to the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010 in policy development and implementation, both as a commissioner and as an employer.
- 9.2 As a commissioning organisation, we are committed to ensuring our activities do not unlawfully discriminate on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act, which are age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 9.3 We are committed to ensuring that our commissioning activities also consider the disadvantages that some people in our diverse population experience when accessing health services. Such disadvantaged groups include people experiencing economic and social deprivation, carers, refugees and asylum seekers, people who are homeless, workers in stigmatised occupations, people who are geographically isolated, gypsies, roma and travellers.
- 9.4 As an employer, we are committed to promoting equality of opportunity in recruitment, training and career progression and to valuing and increasing diversity within our workforce.
- 9.5 To help ensure that these commitments are embedded in our day-to-day working practices, an Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for, and is attached to, this policy.

## **10. Communication, Monitoring and Review**

- 10.1 The ICB will establish effective arrangements for communicating this policy and will provide appropriate training to line management in relation to their responsibilities.
- 10.2 The Audit and Risk Committee will review the effectiveness of the ICB's Freedom to Speak up arrangements on an annual basis.
- 10.3 The Associate Director of Governance will monitor the use of this policy on an ongoing basis.
- 10.4 This policy will be reviewed by the ICB Board every three years or in light of any legislative changes.

- 10.5 Any individual who has queries regarding the content of this policy, or has difficulty understanding how this policy relates to their role, should contact the ICB's Associate Director of Governance.

## **11. Interaction with other Policies**

11.1 This procedure should be read in conjunction the following ICB policies:

- Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy.
- Standards of Business Conduct Policy.

## **12. References**

This policy has been developed with guidance from the following publications and websites:

- NHS Improvement and NHS England (2016). [Freedom to speak up: raising concerns \(whistleblowing\) policy for the NHS](#)
- NHS Employers (2018), [Whistleblowing: Raising concerns at work](#)
- HM Government (2018). [Whistleblowing for employees](#)
- [Public Concern at Work](#)

## Appendix A: Procedure for Reporting Concerns

### 1. Internal Reporting

1.1 Where there is a concern, the ICB hopes that individuals will feel able to raise it with their line manager in the first instance. This may be done verbally or in writing.

1.2 If an individual feels unable to discuss their concern with their line manager, or is unsatisfied with the response from their line manager, then they should raise the matter with:

Lucy Branson

Associate Director of Governance

Email: [lucy.branson@nhs.net](mailto:lucy.branson@nhs.net)

This member of staff has been delegated responsibility by the ICB Board for dealing with whistleblowing concerns.

1.3 If an individual still has concerns about raising the matter with either of the above, they can contact the ICB's Freedom to Speak Up Guardian.

1.4 Alternatively, if the concern is about fraud, bribery and corruption, then the ICB's nominated Local Counter Fraud Specialist may also be contacted:

Craig Bevan-Davies

Email: [craig.bevan-davies@nhs.net](mailto:craig.bevan-davies@nhs.net)

1.5 If the concern is about conflicts of interest, then the ICB's Conflicts of Interest Guardian should also be contacted. Details are provided in the ICB's Standards of Business Conduct Policy.

1.6 Individuals should report matters where they are still concerns, rather than waiting for proof or investigating concerns themselves.

1.7 At the time of raising the concern, the individual should state whether they wish to remain anonymous whilst the concern is being investigated. Any personal interest in the matter being reported should also be stated at this time.

1.8 The manager (or other individual mentioned in paragraphs 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 above as appropriate) will convene a meeting to discuss the issue with the individual raising the concern, who may wish to be accompanied by a Union representative or a colleague or friend not acting in a professional capacity. Advice from other professionals may be sought as considered appropriate. This meeting will take place no later than **three working days** of the issue being reported.

- 1.9 The manager (or other individual mentioned in paragraphs 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 above as appropriate) will provide the individual with a summary of the concern in writing. It is important that the factual accuracy of this is checked by the individual raising the concern to ensure there are no misunderstandings or inaccuracies.
- 1.10 Those receiving concerns will ensure that they are given full and sympathetic consideration. This is likely to result in one of the following:
- A further investigation being completed under the relevant ICB Policy and Procedure.
  - The concern being forwarded to another body or organisation for their attention.
  - The issue not being considered a priority for attention at present, but the situation continuing to be monitored.
- 1.11 A response detailing the agreed course of action will be provided to the individual raising the concern within **10 working days** from when the concern was first raised.
- 1.12 Wherever possible, feedback will be provided on the outcome of any investigation. However, individuals may not be able to be informed of the precise actions taken where this would infringe a duty of confidence owed to another person.
- 1.13 Whilst no guarantees can be given that all matters will be responded to in the way that individuals might wish, all concerns will be handled fairly and properly in accordance with this policy and procedure.
- 1.14 Those receiving concerns should ensure that the following details are recorded and forwarded to the Associate Director of Governance following feedback to the individual concerned:
- Details of the concern and the date it was raised.
  - Who raised the concern (stating 'unable to disclose' where anonymity is requested).
  - Who the concern was raised with.
  - Details of action taken.

## **2. External Disclosures**

- 2.1 Any individual that does not wish to raise their concern internally, or feels that a concern previously raised has not been properly addressed under this policy and procedure, is able to raise their concern externally. The [Public Interest Disclosure Act \(PIDA\) 1998](#) provides further information on this.

- 2.2 Individuals are advised to seek advice from the organisation Public Concern at Work (see **Appendix C**) before making an external disclosure. They will be able to provide free, independent and confidential advice in relation to concerns and also advise on any legal implications.
- 2.3 All NHS employees must fulfil their duty of confidentiality to the ICB. Unauthorised disclosure of personal information about any patient or colleague will be regarded as a most serious matter, which may result in disciplinary action.
- 2.4 In cases where employees are considering disclosing confidential information (even if their opinion is that it would be in the public interest) they should first seek specialist advice. Organisations from which advice may be sought is given at **Appendix C**.

## **Appendix B: Handling Whistleblowing: Practical Tips for Managers**

As a manager you can lead by example. Be clear to staff what sort of behaviour is unacceptable and practise what you preach. Encourage staff to ask you what is appropriate if they are unsure before – not after – the event. If you find wrongdoing or a potential risk is present, take it seriously and deal with it immediately.

### **Responding to a concern**

- Thank the staff member for telling you, even if they may appear to be mistaken.
- Respect and heed legitimate staff concerns about their own position or career.
- Manage expectations and respect promises of confidentiality.
- Discuss reasonable timeframes for feedback with the member of staff.
- Remember there are different perspectives to every story.
- Determine whether there are grounds for concern and investigate if necessary as soon as possible. If the concern is potentially very serious or wide-reaching, consider who should handle the investigation and know when to ask for help. If asked, put your response in writing.
- Always remember that you may have to explain how you have handled the concern.
- Feedback any outcome and/or remedial action you propose to take to the whistle blower but be careful if this could infringe any rights or duties you may owe to other parties.

*This information has been adapted from 'Speak up for a healthy NHS: How to implement and review whistleblowing arrangements in your organisation'.*

## **Appendix C: External Contacts**

### **Protect**

Protect is an independent charity, who have trained advisers to offer free, confidential practical and legal advice if you have concerns with regard to the ICB.

**Telephone:** 020 3117 2520

**Online Contact Form:**

**Website:** <https://protect-advice.org.uk>

### **The National Whistleblowing Helpline**

The National Whistleblowing Helpline provides free, confidential, and independent advice for those working in the NHS.

**Telephone:**

08000 724 725

**Email:**

[enquiries@wbhelpline.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wbhelpline.org.uk)

### **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)**

The HSE can advise on matters relating to the health or safety of any individual at work or affect the health and safety of any member of the public arising out of, or in connection with, the activities of persons at work.

**Telephone:**

0300 003 1647

## Appendix D: Equality Impact Assessment

<b>Date of assessment:</b>	June 2022			
<b>Name of Policy:</b>	Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy			
<b>For the policy, and its implementation, please answer the questions against each of the protected characteristic and inclusion health groups:</b>	Has the risk of any potential adverse impact on people in this protected characteristic group been identified, such as barriers to access or inequality of opportunity?	If yes, are there any mechanisms already in place to mitigate the adverse impacts identified?	Are there any remaining adverse impacts that need to be addressed? If so, please state any mitigating actions planned.	Are there any positive impacts identified for people within this protected characteristic group? If yes, please briefly describe.
<b>Age<sup>3</sup></b>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Disability<sup>4</sup></b>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Gender reassignment<sup>5</sup></b>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Marriage and civil partnership<sup>6</sup></b>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Pregnancy and maternity<sup>7</sup></b>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Race<sup>8</sup></b>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A

<sup>3</sup> A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32 year olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30 year olds).

<sup>4</sup> A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

<sup>5</sup> The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

<sup>6</sup> Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple.

Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'.

<sup>7</sup> Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

<sup>8</sup> Refers to the protected characteristic of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.



<b>Date of assessment:</b>	June 2022			
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<b>For the policy, and its implementation, please answer the questions against each of the protected characteristic and inclusion health groups:</b>	Has the risk of any potential adverse impact on people in this protected characteristic group been identified, such as barriers to access or inequality of opportunity?	If yes, are there any mechanisms already in place to mitigate the adverse impacts identified?	Are there any remaining adverse impacts that need to be addressed? If so, please state any mitigating actions planned.	Are there any positive impacts identified for people within this protected characteristic group? If yes, please briefly describe.
<b>Religion or belief<sup>9</sup></b>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Sex<sup>10</sup></b>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Sexual orientation<sup>11</sup></b>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Carers<sup>12</sup></b>	No	N/A	N/A	N/A

<sup>9</sup> Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

<sup>10</sup> A man or a woman.

<sup>11</sup> Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex, to both sexes or none. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>

<sup>12</sup> Individuals within the ICB which may have carer responsibilities.