

Date: 21/08/2015

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST FOI/012353 – Whistleblowing.

Please see below our response to your request for information on the Trust's monitoring of our whistleblowing processes.

The Trust sought to learn and develop its processes following the Sir Robert Francis reports and has over the last few years undertaken work to enhance these processes. Below is a summary of work we have undertaken in this area.

We have reviewed our whistleblowing arrangements in each of the last two years utilising our Internal Auditors. The assessment made last year incorporated Internal Audit undertaking a survey of our staff's attitude to whistleblowing and their view of the Trust's Board and Managements attitude whistleblowing. Internal Audit also undertook a review of a sample of reported concerns to ensure that the Trust's whistleblowing policy and process had been applied thoroughly. Their review found that our Policy had been correctly applied, in their sample of cases reviewed, and that staff had confidence if they needed to raise a concern they would be supported and of those that had raised a concern they felt supported. The work being undertaken this year by Internal Audit is helping us as a Trust enhance our framework for learning from these incidents in the same way we embed learning from incidents and complaints. This work has yet to formally be reported to the Trust.

In respect to your specific questions please see below

1) "collect data on the nature and number of concerns raised"

Our records are maintained on a financial year so for 2013/14 we had 4 cases and for 2014/15 we had 9 cases.

2) "Is there evidence of constructive and timely feedback?"

Timely feedback is given where the whistleblower is known.

3) "Have there been any difficulties with confidentiality?"

None been brought to our attention.

4) "Have any events come to the board's attention that might indicate that a staff member has not been fairly treated as a result of raising a concern?"

No instances have come to the attention of Management or the Board that a staff member has not been supported throughout the process.

5) "could the issues have been picked up or resolved earlier? If so, why weren't they?"

We would say no as we seek to deal with matters as they arise. We seek to learn from each investigation and seek out if there are improvements that can be made to our processes to alert us earlier should things not be operating or happening as intended to reduce the need for whistleblowing.

6) "information from exit interviews"

Such information is sought from our exit interviews and none have been raised through this route. However, we are looking at making the exit interview process easier for our staff by using an on line survey which would contain the option of personal meeting where such information can be provided.

7) "information from...PIDA or other legal claims"

As part of our claims process we would capture concerns but we have had no whistleblowing concerns raised from a claim. We have not received any via the PIDA route.

8) Survey staff experience, using these questions:

As said at the start of our reply we have utilised our internal auditors to undertake a staff experience survey. Their questionnaire asked questions similar to those suggested by the guidance you refer to. An extract of the questionnaire is below:-

9) If your organisation has monitored whether staff have "not been fairly treated as a result of raising a concern?", please could you advise what data parameters are used, and specifically whether disciplinary action, suspensions and dismissals of staff, subsequent to their raising of concerns, are monitored.

We do monitor immediately as the concern is raised and as part of our process but we do not then undertake further on-going reviews, that said we would pick repeated instances on the same subject, same area, same person etc. which would give us an indication as to the subsequent treatment of staff after a concern has been raised and dealt with.

10) Finally, please note that the legal definition of whistleblowing is the raising of qualifying disclosures under PIDA, whether internally within an organisation or via external reporting routes. This applies whether or not staff explicitly raise a concern under an organisation's whistleblowing policy. If your organisation applies a different definition of whistleblowing when collecting the above data, please could you advise what definition is used.

Our definition of Whistleblowing accords with the legal definition of whistleblowing in respect of qualifying disclosures. However, should staff wish to raise a concern that does not fit within this definition then that concerns would still be followed through with the same diligence to allow the Trust to learn and improve.