

Letters to the Editor



Whistleblower law

Sir, Tomorrow is the anniversary of Sir Robert Francis's report into how NHS whistleblowers are treated. Since its publication there has been no evident, meaningful change. To our knowledge, not a single sacked whistleblower has been found comparable re-employment. Not a single trust director has been reprimanded under the fit and proper persons regulation. Sir Robert recommended a system of "guardians" to act independently and to help to protect whistleblowers. Controversially, the part-time national guardian is overseen by the Care Quality Commission and has a restricted remit and no statutory powers. NHS bodies have also appointed mostly internally to local guardian posts. Injustices continue, with particular impact on "protected" groups. We urgently need the following: an independent body, reporting to parliament, with powers to investigate and remedy poor whistleblowing governance by public bodies; enforcement of effective investigation of concerns and an appeal mechanism against ineffective local investigations by employers; full reform of whistleblower protection legislation; reform of NHS disciplinary processes and fully independent appeal panels, to discourage kangaroo courts; managerial regulation to apply to all grades of managers; interim financial relief for whistleblowers who are seriously struggling, pending establishment of NHS England's re-employment scheme, which is many months away.

We urge the health committee to consider our proposals and to hold hearings on whistleblowing.

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 DR PHIL HAMMOND; DR KIM HOLT
Plus a further nine names at
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