

# NHS 'is morally wrong' to hound whistleblowers

**Chris Smyth** Health Editor

NHS hounding of whistleblowers is "morally abhorrent", the health secretary will say today as he promises more stringent competency and ethics standards for bosses.

Matt Hancock will promise a central database that logs NHS directors' qualifications as well as a core list of skills they must have, which could include learning from whistleblowers, in a speech to be delivered at the Improving Patient Safety & Care conference today.

He says that better training for managers is needed to ensure they are effective and trustworthy.

A review into how hospitals and NHS bodies check that their leaders are "fit and proper" is due to be published today and Mr Hancock is expected to accept a recommendation to lay out clearer standards for what is expected in terms of professional skills. The review led by Tom Kark, QC, says that all directors, whatever their job, should understand the importance of learning from whistleblowers and encouraging staff to raise concerns.

Mr Hancock links the variable quality of NHS leadership to the wider aim of encouraging staff to admit and learn from their mistakes. "Someone who has the courage to speak up and put their head above the parapet should be encouraged and embraced," he says in his speech. "Yet, sadly, all too often, they're ignored, bullied and worse — forced out. Making someone choose between the job they love, and speaking the truth to keep patients safe, is morally abhorrent and operationally foolish. It's an injustice I am determined to end."

*Times*  
6.2.2019