

# Freedom to Speak Up Review – briefing on research

## Quantitative research

NHS workers, employers, regulators, professional bodies and trade unions will be invited to complete a confidential online survey over the summer. Responses will be anonymised and collated by Middlesex University on behalf of the review.

### Aims

The **staff survey** will seek to:

- establish levels of awareness of confidential reporting/whistleblowing procedures at work;
- examine whether or not respondents have used their employer's procedure, how many raised a concern at different levels internally, and how many made external disclosures and to whom;
- identify whether respondents sought advice, were aware of any investigation that was conducted, and received feedback about any confirmed wrongdoing being dealt with by the employer;
- assess the extent of respondents' satisfaction with the way their concerns were handled, and ask if they would be inclined to blow the whistle again in similar circumstances;
- attempt to obtain a profile of NHS whistleblowers in terms of their job title, length of service and gender.

The **survey of employers** will look (amongst other things) into:

- who has responsibility for confidential reporting/whistleblowing procedures
- who can use the procedure and how
- what advice is available
- who investigates concerns and whether or not feedback is offered
- how staff are made aware of procedures
- how many staff have invoked the procedure and the types of concern raised
- the extent of satisfaction with existing procedures and the provision for monitoring/review.

**Regulators, professional bodies and trade unions** will each be asked about their respective role in the whistleblowing process. In particular:

- the provision of information about how to report a concern to themselves
- the availability of advice, telephone hotlines and feedback
- the number and types of concern raised with them
- the nature of their involvement in resolving workplace disputes
- satisfaction with the current arrangements for raising concerns about suspected wrongdoing in the health service.

## **Methodology**

Anonymised data will be obtained via Qualtrics. The surveys will be conducted by Middlesex University on behalf of the review and Sir Robert will approve the research questions. The research team at Middlesex University will collect, collate and analyse the information supplied and will prepare a report by the end of September 2014. The project will be led by Professor David Lewis who will be assisted by research staff with experience both of online surveys and whistleblowing issues.

## Qualitative research

### Aims

The qualitative study aims to identify a deeper understanding of the issues by identifying both strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of whistleblowing policies in the NHS. The University of Greenwich has been commissioned to conduct the research on behalf of the Review. The qualitative research study will be conducted through a desktop study and in-depth interviews.

### Methodology

#### Part 1: Desk Research

The desk research is being conducted during August and September. It will look comparatively at whistleblowing arrangements nationally and internationally by mapping policies from NHS organisations against international standards. It will review learning, policies and practice in other sectors and other countries.

#### Part 2: In-depth interviews

Confidential, in-depth interviews will be conducted during August and September 2014 and will aim to identify the operational aspects of whistleblowing policies. Specifically, the researchers will seek to obtain views in relation to the following points:

- perceptions, attitudes and organisational norms towards raising and listening to concerns
- the effectiveness of internal whistleblowing procedures
- the challenges related to whistleblowing policies and an open and honest culture.

The researchers are seeking the views of NHS workers at any level, NHS employers, trades unions, professional bodies and healthcare regulators. Participation will be entirely voluntary and confidential. Selection will be carried out by staff at the Whistleblowing Helpline and the University. If you choose to participate in this research, your identity or details will not be passed on to anyone else and the information you provide will be anonymised prior to analysis.

For more information about how you can volunteer to be considered to be a participant in this research, please visit the Whistleblowing Helpline website at [www.wbhelpline.org.uk/freedom-to-speak-up-review/](http://www.wbhelpline.org.uk/freedom-to-speak-up-review/) by **22 August 2014**.

The findings from the qualitative research will be published in a report written by Dr Wim Vandekerckhove.