

**NHS Western Isles**



**Whistleblowing Annual Report**  
**2024/2025**



## **Executive Summary**

### **1. Introduction**

Whistleblowing in its truest form is an ethical and moral thing to do, and NHS Western Isles is supportive of any member of staff who may have reason to utilise the process. The decision to whistleblow is rarely taken lightly, and NHS Western Isles is therefore committed to offering a compassionate and objective whistleblowing service. Whistleblowing is an important form of feedback and gives NHS Western Isles a chance to receive direct and candid accounts of staff concerns. This in turn offers a key opportunity to learn and strive for improvement.

NHS Western Isles had a Whistleblowing Policy in place which was superseded by the new National Whistleblowing Standards which were launched on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. This report details whistleblowing activity in 2024/25 which will include performance information and an overview of cases that was handled within the reporting period for assurance purposes.

### **2. Performance**

Information about the activity in 2024/25 will refer to the following stages of whistleblowing, as per the Whistleblowing Standards.

- Stage 1 concerns should result in an on-the-spot explanation and/or action to resolve the matter, with the aim of doing so within 5 working days.
- Stage 2 concerns involve a more thorough investigation, with the aim of responding within 20 working days. Some stage 2 concerns will have originated from stage 1 but escalated if the whistleblower was unhappy with the outcome.
- Stage 3 – If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the conclusion of the investigation of their stage 2 case, they have the option of contacting the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer for an independent review.

The below table breaks down the information for 2024/25.

Indicator	Performance
Total number of concerns received	There were 2 concerns received in 2024/25. Stage 1 – 1 Stage 2 - 1
Timescales for closure	Stage 1 concern – 20 working days Stage 2 concern – 15 working days
Concerns closed at each stage of the process	Stage 1 concern was not closed within the timeframe. Stage 2 concern closed within the timescale.
Concerns upheld, partially upheld and not upheld	Stage 2 concern was upheld.
Number of cases where extension was authorised	Stage 1 concern had an authorised extension.
Learning from concerns raised	Learning from whistleblowing concerns are detailed in an improvement plan which is monitored by the Risk Review group.
Experience for those raising concerns	The number of whistleblowing cases raised and concluded each year remains small. The informal feedback from staff involved were satisfied with the process.

There are 3 modules available to staff on the TURAS learn platform to complete, the below figures were extracted from TURAS to monitor completion of module:

- Whistleblowing: an overview:
  - Completed – 449
  - In progress – 26
- Whistleblowing: for line managers:
  - Completed – 89
  - In progress – 14
- Whistleblowing: for senior managers:
  - Completed – 62
  - In progress – 12

NHS Western Isles migrated to TURAS Learn from Learn Pro in November 2023, and prior to this date could not monitor the completion of the Whistleblowing Modules. Now that the data is available, we will ensure there is a focus on encouraging increased completion rates in the coming year.

### 3. Learning

Any learning which is identified from whistleblowing investigations is input into an improvement plan and these are monitored at the Risk Review Group.

#### 4. Improvement Work

##### a. Launch of the Standards

Although NHS Western Isles launched the Standards in April 2021 there was a significant amount of work ongoing thereafter to ensure that NHS Western Isles would be compliant. The standards were very welcome from an NHS Western Isles perspective, as they gave a focussed opportunity to consider what improvements could be made to the whistleblowing process to greater ensure an efficient, fair and compassionate approach.

##### b. Internal Audit

An internal audit on Whistleblowing Arrangements took place in October 2023. All actions from the audit were monitored through the Risk and Audit Committee. The improvements identified are:

- For the Whistleblowing Guidance to clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Encourage staff to complete TURAS training and include figures in reports going forward.
- Ensure any actions identified from any concern are added to the Datix actions module to ensure completion.

These actions have all been completed.

#### **Statement from the Board Whistleblowing Champion (Non-Executive Director):**


All Health Boards in Scotland have a Non-Executive Director Whistleblowing Champion in place, and in NHS Western Isles it is Sheena Wright. She has offered the following comments on her experience and perspective of whistleblowing work over the reporting period:

*“Whistleblowing continues to be embedded in the operating environment of the Board. In order to make this sustained, and to avoid any complacency, whistleblowing features in both NHS Board and its committee structures.*

*Regular Staff Engagement Walkabouts take place with the Whistleblowing Champion (WBC), and a schedule of visits continues to take place to ensure that the WBC meets with a wide range of staff in various locations. A visit took place to all Community Nursing Teams in Lewis and Harris including Specialist Nursing, Health Visiting and School Nursing. I very much welcome the opportunity to meet with staff, face to face and online, across the NHS Board areas. This includes engagement during Speak Up Week.*

*The WBC also engages at a national level to ensure that experiences and best practice are shared across NHS Scotland.*

*Regular communications take place via a variety of mediums, to ensure staff are reminded of the whistleblowing standards and contact details for those involved in supporting the process, as well as ensuring all staff continue to have an awareness of whistleblowing.*



*It is clear that a positive culture is continuing to be developed, and that staff feel supported. Work is ongoing to encourage a supportive culture.*

*Finally, recognition and thanks should be given to Louise Sullivan, Head of Clinical Governance & Professional Practice and her team for their continued efforts in supporting the whistleblowing process.”*

## **5. Conclusion**

During 2024/2025 there were 2 concerns received, one was Stage 1 and one was Stage 2.

Communication is regularly sent out to all staff via email through the weekly Team Brief which contains information on the role of the confidential contacts. The staff intranet page has a page dedicated to Whistleblowing section which contains useful information for staff on what whistleblowing is, how to raise concerns etc. Posters have also been put up in areas where staff are able to view them with information on what Whistleblowing is and how to raise concerns as well. The Boards Whistleblowing champion (Non-Executive Director) has had articles in the Team Brief also highlighting her role and raising the profile of Whistleblowing.

Speak Up Week took place from the 30<sup>th</sup> September to 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2024 with a number of events held to raise awareness on the Whistleblowing process. Locally we worked with the Communications team to share information and links to national webinars. Staff information Boards were set up in all 3 hospitals to help raise awareness. On Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October our Whistleblowing Champion/Non-Executive Director, NHS Western Isles Chair and Head of Clinical Governance & Professional Development were available at the hospital for staff to ask questions. Whistleblowing Champion and Head of Clinical Governance & Professional Practice visited a few clinical areas where there were further opportunities to discuss Speaking Up. Also on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October a Western Isles Nursing Education Session took place on Teams where staff attended and a presentation was delivered and an opportunity for questions – this session was recorded and is available for staff to watch retrospectively.

Recruitment has been successful in the Confidential Contacts team.

A forum has been established for the Confidential Contacts where they can link with the Whistleblowing Champion, Director of Human Resources and Head of Clinical Governance and Professional Practice.