

PETITION PE1495

Response - NHS Westerns Isles

- **What are your views on what the petition seeks and the discussions that took place at the meeting on 26 November?**

The use of any gagging clause designed to prevent an employee from speaking about matters pertaining to any perceived failures relating to the safety or care of patients is not acceptable. NHS Western Isles has in place a Whistle Blowing Policy. The policy has been developed in partnership with Managers and Staff Side and describes the legitimate process for staff to raise concerns. The Whistle Blowing Policy states that:

“NHS Western Isles is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability. In line with that commitment NHS Western Isles encourages staff and others with serious concerns about any aspect of its work to come forward and voice those concerns without fear of reprisal. This policy document makes it clear that staff can do so without the fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage”.

The policy also states that:

“Staff have a right and duty to raise any concerns that they may have about the provision of care or services, or about the management of NHS Western Isles”.

Over the past 7 years NHS Western Isles has issued only two Compromise Agreements. On neither occasion did the Compromise Agreements include gagging clauses preventing the employee from speaking about matters pertaining to patient care.

Compromise Agreements issued by NHS Western Isles have included clauses relating to further claims for personal injury, unfair dismissal and the making of derogatory statements about NHS Western Isles in connection with the terms of the Compromise Agreement.

- **What management training do you have in place to ensure that all staff are enabled and encouraged to raise matters that may affect patient safety and quality of care, as well as employment issues such as workplace bullying?**

There are a number of methods that NHS Western Isles undertake to ensure staff are able to raise matters that affect patient safety and quality of care. All staff are trained in how to report incidents on the risk management reporting system. Within the system there is also a facility should a member of staff not want to be identified so that it can be reported via the Risk Manager.

There are Executive Leadership walkrounds where Directors meet with frontline staff and encourage staff to raise issues around patient safety. At the end of each walkround key actions are noted and agreement made as to how they are taken forward.

A Quality Hub has been set up where staff can network on quality improvement initiatives and where they are supported on using the model of improvement.

Learning packages are available to staff which contain elements of patient safety and quality; -

- Learn Pro;
- IHI online Open School courses; and
- Priority Training Days which cover specific aspects of patient safety.

NHS Western Isles has in place a Dignity at Work policy (Bullying & Harassment). The policy has been developed in partnership with Managers and Staff Side and describes the process for raising issues relating to workplace bullying.

NHS Western Isles has trained a number of employees as Confidential Contacts who act as a first point of contact for staff who may be experiencing workplace bullying.

The NHS Western Isles Corporate Induction programme contains a session on bullying and harassment which is delivered by Occupational Health personnel.

It is mandatory that all new starts attend the Corporate Induction programme.