

**RAISING A CONCERN IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST
(WHISTLEBLOWING) HSC FRAMEWORK AND MODEL
POLICY – A CONSULTATION DOCUMENT
JUNE 2022**

Introduction from Minister

Quality and patient safety are of paramount importance in relation to the delivery of services carried out by all organisations within HSC. The right for anyone to raise a concern in the public interest in relation to these organisations is integral to ensuring levels of quality and patient safety are not just maintained, but continuously improving. Therefore, It is vital that the policy and process that enables individuals who wish to raise a concern is clear, robust, consistent and will ensure confidence in taking their concern forward.

HSC Trusts and Trade Unions have collaborated in development of a draft framework policy which sets out the accountability and governance within HSC organisations to encourage people to engage with the process for raising a concern and ensure they feel safe while doing so.

The Department of Health (DoH) is conducting a consultation on the final draft of the Raising a Concern in the Public Interest (Whistleblowing) HSC Framework and Model Policy. I would encourage everyone with an interest to read the document and respond to the consultation. It is vital everyone responds to support or challenge the proposals within this policy. It is not uncommon that most respondents to consultation tend to be organisations or individuals raising issues in relation to the policy in question but it is also important that individuals in agreement with the current draft of the policy also respond to ensure the consultation captures an accurate representation of viewpoints.

Freedom of Information

Please see the Appendix to the consultation response document concerning the confidentiality of responses to consultations.

Purpose of Consultation

This consultation seeks views on the final draft of the Raising a Concern in the Public Interest (Whistleblowing) HSC Framework and Model Policy.

Scope of the Consultation

We are keen to hear the views of all those with an interest in this issue including:

- members of the public;
- community and voluntary sector organisations;
- health bodies;
- health professionals;
- local councils; and
- other Government Departments and agencies.

Body/Bodies Responsible for the Consultation

This consultation is being undertaken by the Pay and Employment Branch in the Department of Health.

Duration

This consultation will be open from 27 June 2022 to 26 August 2022.

Enquiries

For any enquiries about the consultation, please write to Workforce Policy Directorate, Room D1, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 3SJ or e-mail the Department at: P&E@health-ni.gov.uk.

How to Respond

The draft framework and model policy and its associated consultation documents can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/raising-concern-public-interest-whistleblowing-hsc-framework-and-model-policy>

Online:

You can respond online by accessing the Raising a Concern in the Public Interest (Whistleblowing) HSC Framework and Model Policy and Consultation Documents on the 'Citizen Space' web service and completing the online survey there. The online version can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.health->

[ni.gov.uk/consultations/raising-concern-public-interest-whistleblowing-hsc-framework-and-model-policy](https://www.ni.gov.uk/consultations/raising-concern-public-interest-whistleblowing-hsc-framework-and-model-policy)

Hard Copy or Email:

Alternatively you can respond using the consultation response document and returning it to Workforce Policy Directorate, Room D1, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 3SJ or via email to P&E@health-ni.gov.uk, **however we would much prefer responses by Citizen Space.**

When you reply, it would be very useful if you could confirm whether you are replying as an individual or submitting an official response on behalf of an organisation. If you are replying on behalf of an organisation, please include:

- your name;
- your position (if applicable);
- the name of your organisation;
- an address of your organisation (including postcode); and
- an e-mail address.

Consultation Response

We will consider the responses received and publish an outcome report on the Department's website.

Accessibility

Alternative formats of this consultation document and the questionnaire (such as other languages, large type, Braille, easy read and audio cassette) may be made available on request. Please contact the Department (at the address below) to discuss your requirements.

Consultation Principles

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Fresh Start Agreement – (Appendix F6 – Eight Steps to Good Practice in Public Consultation Engagement)¹.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/479116/A_Fre

These eight steps give clear guidance to Northern Ireland departments on conducting consultations.

Feedback on the Consultation Process

We value your feedback on how well we consult. If you have any comments about the consultation process (as opposed to comments about the issues which are the subject of the consultation), including if you feel that the consultation does not adhere to the values expressed in the Eight Steps to Good Practice in Public Consultation Engagement or that the process could be improved, please address them to:

Workforce Policy Directorate, Room D1, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 3SJ or e-mail: P&E@health-ni.gov.uk

Equality and Rural Screening

As per the Department of Health's Equality Scheme² and in order to comply with the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016³, this policy has been screened for both Equality/Human Rights and Rural Needs impacts. These screening documents are both available at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/raising-concern-public-interest-whistleblowing-hsc-framework-and-model-policy>. These screenings have indicated that there are no adverse impacts in relation to the policy proposals.

As part of this consultation, we welcome comments on these screening documents or inputs on areas where those responding may feel we should take further information into consideration in any future screening.

[sh Start - The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan - Final Version 20 Nov 2015 for PDF.pdf](#)

² <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/doh-equality#toc-0>

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2016/19/contents>

Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Consultation Responses

For this consultation, we may publish all responses except for those where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity (e.g. a member of the public). All responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity will be published. We will remove email addresses and telephone numbers from these responses; but apart from this, we will publish them in full. For more information about what we do with personal data please see our consultation privacy notice⁴.

Your response, and all other responses to this consultation, may also be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR); however all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) (EU) 2016/679.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential, so that this may be considered if the Department should receive a request for the information under the FOIA or EIR.

DoH is the data controller in respect of any personal data that you provide, and DoH's Privacy Notice, which gives details of your rights in respect of the handling of your personal data, can be found at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/raising-concern-public-interest-whistleblowing-hsc-framework-and-model-policy>
