

INWO decision report



Case: 202302615, Scottish Ambulance Service

Subject: Complaint handling

Decision: Fully upheld

Summary

C raised concerns with the Board about the investigation into controlled drug discrepancies, including an inaccurate statement made by a manager and the management and storage of controlled drugs at their Ambulance Station. The Board considered C's concerns under Stage 2 of the National Whistleblowing Standards, C was dissatisfied with the response and complained to the INWO.

Based on the information provided by C and the Board, I identified shortcomings in the Board's handling of C's concerns and their investigation. This encompassed inadequate investigation into the concerns raised by C including a failure to separate HR concerns from whistleblowing concerns and non-compliance with the Standards relating to timescales, providing updates, and the support provided to the whistleblower.

As a result of my findings I upheld C's concerns and asked the Board to implement a number of recommendations to improve their concern handling, to apologise to C and to ensure clear procedures are in place for access to support.

My investigation also identified areas of good practice by the Board which has been included in my feedback.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the shortcomings in handling and investigating their whistleblowing concerns. Apologise to C for failing to provide them with appropriate support and treat them in line with the Standards.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

In relation to compliance with the Standards, we recommended:

- The Board has implemented or plans to implement the following:
 - A draft whistleblowing process, to be finalised
 - Training and support for managers undertaking business as usual investigations when concerns are raised
 - Recruitment of additional investigators
 - Formation of a Confidential Contact Peer Review Group
 - Membership of the NHS Scotland Whistleblowing Practitioners' Network
- Concerns handled under the National Whistleblowing Standards must meet the definition set out in the National Whistleblowing Standards. If there are other concerns that do not meet this definition the organisation should consider whether there is an alternative process and inform and advise the person raising the concerns.
- The Board must be aware of its responsibilities under the National Whistleblowing Standards to provide support to whistleblowers throughout the process.
- The Board must be aware of its responsibilities under the National Whistleblowing Standards when handling concerns.
- Staff investigating whistleblowing concerns need to be aware of their requirements under the Standards and of robust investigative processes. Staff must feel confident and equipped to carry out whistleblowing investigations and must be given the time to carry out this work.