

INWO decision report



Case: 202406717, Scottish Ambulance

Service

Subject: Treatment of the individual

Decision: Fully upheld

Summary

The complainant (C) complained to the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer (INWO) about being treated unfairly by the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) after raising concerns through business-as-usual processes and under the whistleblowing procedure.

We investigated several aspects of the complaint, including

- lack of cooperation with C's work and projects
- a change to C's line management, and
- changes to C's roles and responsibilities.

We reviewed evidence from both C and SAS and carried out interviews. We found that C had repeatedly raised concerns about unfair treatment, but SAS did not take sufficient steps to address their concerns or follow the National Whistleblowing Standards (the Standards), which set out how staff should be supported and protected when they raise concerns.

The INWO asked SAS to put a plan in place to protect C from potential unfair treatment in the line with the Standards. SAS gave assurance this would happen, but no plan was implemented, and no reasonable explanation was given.

We found that they did not manage the risks to C and could not show that any unfair treatment was not linked to the whistleblowing.

On the balance of the evidence available and taking account of SAS' responsibilities under the Standards to protect and support C, we upheld the complaint and made several recommendations. We also provided feedback to SAS.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for each of the findings identified. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.
- SAS should take an NHS Scotland approach to resolving workplace relationship and communication issues.

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

- Recommendations from local investigations should be fully implemented. Where recommendations are not carried out, or where alternative actions have been taken, the reasons should be clearly recorded and shared appropriately.
- SAS should ensure all managers are aware of their responsibilities under the grievance and Organisational Change policies.
- SAS should ensure that it has effective mechanisms in place to protect staff who raise concerns from unfair treatment as a result.