

Concern handling and protection from retaliation

Standard operating procedure (SOP) | WRK-SOP-010

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Replaces	None (new document)
Standards and criteria supported	Standard 2E, criterion 2E.10 (non-negotiable)
Evidence basis	E-006, E-009
Status of this document	Recommended best-practice model. A hospital may adopt, adapt or replace it with an equivalent that meets the same criteria.

At a glance: what to do

1. Handle every speak-up report under WRK-POL-005.
2. Protect the reporter from any detriment, and record every protection step.
3. Investigate retaliation complaints as a separate matter.
4. Check on protection at 3 and 6 months.

Stop and get help straight away if: a retaliation complaint has been made and no investigation has started within 10 working days.

1. Purpose

To set how speak-up reports are investigated and how the people who raise them are protected [EC].

2. Scope

Applies to	All speak-up reports and all retaliation complaints
Locations	All services
When	From the day a report is received until protection is confirmed at 6 months
Does not apply to	Routine grievances (WRK-SOP-005)

3. Definitions and abbreviations

Term	Meaning in this SOP
Retaliation	Any unfair treatment, such as dismissal, demotion, exclusion or a hostile change of duties, because a person raised a concern
Protection plan	A short written plan for how the reporter will be protected

4. Background and rationale

Protection is what makes speak-up real. Without it, staff stay silent. A written protection plan is the test of whether protection is taken seriously.

5. Responsibilities

Role	Duties in this SOP	Competence needed
Speak-up lead	Receives and logs reports, and writes the protection plan	Trained in confidentiality
Investigating officer	Investigates the concern and any retaliation	Independent of the issue
Chief executive	Acts on immediate danger and receives the outcome	Executive

6. Equipment, materials and resources

Item	Specification or standard	Check before use
Speak-up report log	Confidential	Kept in a locked or access-controlled system

7. Safety and infection prevention

- The reporter's identity is protected. Share it only with those who need it, and only with the reporter's agreement where possible.

8. Before you start

- Confirm the protection plan template is available to the speak-up lead.

9. Procedure

Follow the steps in order. Where a step says "If", take the action for the case that applies. Do not skip a step. If a step cannot be done, use section 11 and section 12.

Step	Action	How to do it	Key point
1	Log and assess.	- Log the report on the speak-up log. - Assess immediate risk to patients and to the reporter.	Immediate danger goes to the chief executive the same day.
2	Write the protection plan.	- Agree with the reporter what protection they need. - Record it on the plan, with a named contact.	Protection starts before the investigation ends.
3	Investigate.	- Start the investigation within 10 working days. - Keep the reporter informed at least every 4 weeks.	Regular contact is a protection.
4	Check protection.	- Check at 3 and 6 months for any detriment. - Record each check and any action taken.	Detriment after a report is treated as a new, serious matter.

Decision points

- If a retaliation complaint is upheld, the chief executive decides the remedy and any action against the person responsible.

10. Special situations

Situation	What to do
Reporter leaves the organisation	Protection checks continue for 6 months after leaving, where the reporter agrees.

11. Problems and escalation

- Any upheld retaliation, or any report that cannot be investigated, is reported to the board chair within 10 working days.

12. Monitoring and compliance

What is checked	Target	How often	Who	If the target is missed
Protection plans in place for each reporter	100%	Each report	Speak-up lead	Escalate to chief executive
Protection checks at 3 and 6 months	100%	Quarterly	Speak-up lead	Escalate to chief executive

13. Records

Record	Where it is kept	Kept for
Speak-up report log and protection plan	Confidential speak-up files	Employment plus 6 years

14. Training and competence

- Speak-up leads and investigating officers are trained in confidentiality, protection and fair investigation.

15. Related documents

ID	Title	Relationship
WRK-POL-005	Speak-up policy	Policy this procedure supports
WRK-SOP-005	Staff grievance and investigation procedure	Separate route for routine issues

16. Evidence

ID	Source and status
E-006	ASF Policy Framework v1.2. Adapted.
E-009	ASF Expert Committee consensus.

EC = ASF Expert Committee consensus. Items marked EC are reviewed by the Committee each year.

17. Change history

Version	Date	What changed	Approver and signature
1.0	{{document.effective_date}}	First version	Pending Expert Committee approval