

PE1605/A

Accountability Scotland Letter of 23 March 2016

On behalf of members of Accountability Scotland I write to support Petition PE01605.

It is unarguable that NHS staff should be able to report inefficient, dangerous or corrupt practices confidentially, safely and without fear of retribution. The present whistle-blowing arrangements are unsatisfactory because people distrust their efficacy and fear the consequences for themselves. Acceptance of the petitioner's proposal would benefit not only whistle blowers, but also the NHS as more faults are corrected.

When one individual or public body investigates another, it is essential that they be fully independent of each other so that there is no suspicion of bias. An important and land-mark case establishing this principle of 'structural independence' is the appeal of Kevin Ruddy against the Chief Constable of the Strathclyde Police and the Lord Advocate (3 September 2013). This principle should apply equally to whistle blowing.

Dr. Richard Burton