

## **Enquiries, complaints and whistleblowing - access and escalation policy**

### **Access to NHS Improvement staff**

All telephone calls from members of the public or whistleblowers should be put through to the Enquiries, Complaints and Whistleblowing team, for the Enquiries and Complaints Officer to deal with in the first instance. (However, directorates have discretion for their staff to speak to these individuals if they are happy to do so, provided a note of the call is passed to the Enquiries, Complaints & Whistleblowing team to log on CRM).

The only NHS Improvement staff telephone numbers that should be given out to members of the public, callers with a complaint, or callers who will not identify themselves, are those of the Enquiries, Complaints & Whistleblowing team: the Enquiries and Complaints Officer; the Head of Enquiries, Complaints and Whistleblowing; and the Director of Corporate Communications. The latter two can be interrupted if they are in meetings to take calls.

If callers do get through to other members of NHS Improvement staff, those staff will not be expected to talk to callers nor to return any messages left for them. The NHS Improvement staff member will explain that the Enquiries, Complaints & Whistleblowing team handles all enquiries and complaints in the first instance and will offer to put them through to the team. If the caller does not accept this and their behaviour becomes unreasonable/unacceptable<sup>1</sup>, the NHS Improvement staff member will be able to terminate the call. Any messages for NHS Improvement staff members (voicemail or left with Reception, for example) will be passed to the Enquiries and Complaints team to handle/respond to.

### **Escalation**

If someone wants a matter (whether it's an enquiry, whistleblower concern, complaint about a provider, or a complaint about NHS Improvement) to be escalated above the Enquiries and Complaints Officer, it should be escalated in the first instance to the Head of Enquiries, Complaints and Whistleblowing and then to the Director of Corporate Communications.

Where the Enquiries and Complaints team is aware of a caller who wants to escalate a matter above its team and may phone again, an email will be sent to reception, all PAs and Private Office to make them aware of who the caller can speak to (either the Head of Enquiries, Complaints and Whistleblowing or the Director of Corporate Communications). Telephone calls will not be put through to any other NHS Improvement staff members.

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<sup>1</sup> See NHS Improvement's policy for dealing with unreasonably persistent contact and unacceptable behaviour

Where a caller says they want a matter (whether it's an enquiry, whistleblower concern or complaint about a provider) dealt with by someone more senior (for example, a member of the Executive team or Board), the Executive Director of Corporate Affairs and/or the Board Secretary will be notified. The Executive Director of Corporate Affairs will be given a summary of the issues and NHS Improvement's action to date to check they are happy with how we are proceeding. The Executive Director of Corporate Affairs, in liaison with the Board Secretary, can also decide to agree to a request for an Executive Team or Board member to speak to the caller if considered appropriate (although this will be at the discretion of the Executive Director of Corporate Affairs).

If the caller remains persistent and there is no other course of action open to us, they will be signposted to NHS Improvement's complaints procedure.

If a caller wishes to make a complaint about NHS Improvement, and wants this dealt with by a senior staff member (either because it's a complaint about a member of the Enquiries, Complaints & Whistleblowing team, or they simply want to escalate it), the Enquiries, Complaints & Whistleblowing team will liaise with the Executive Director of Corporate Affairs and, if necessary, the Board Secretary, to agree how the complaint will be handled and by whom.