

Written evidence from the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch (HSIB)¹ (PHS37)

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman scrutiny 2021-22 inquiry

1. HSIB enjoys a well-established and positive stakeholder relationship with the PHSO, which spans both our policy and our operational activities. This has helped us to build cooperative working relationships across areas of common interest and where our functions are similar, as well as to reach constructive ways forward where there have been divergent views on key policy issues such as the provision of 'safe space' provisions for our national investigations.
2. At the policy level, the PHSO have demonstrated that they value HSIB as an important partner organisation and understand our unique purpose and remit within the healthcare system. We have regularly scheduled conversations at senior policy level, where we share information about our work priorities and seek to identify matters of common interest, particularly as they relate to evidence of systemic patient safety risk in the NHS. Most recently, HSIB's newly appointed interim Chief Investigator met with the Ombudsman and the PHSO chief executive, to reaffirm the relationship. The PHSO has been invited to contribute as a key stakeholder to HSIB's strategy development. To ensure that PHSO's concerns about 'safe space' provisions are heard and considered, they have agreed to participate in roundtables we are holding with national organisations to explore the implications and ensure that the PHSO's statutory responsibilities will not be impeded. HSIB's interim Chief Investigator will also be presenting in mid-November to the PHSO Quality Governance Committee.
3. At the operational level, HSIB and PHSO benefit from the following ongoing mutual collaboration and exchange:
 - National investigations - The PHSO has offered to provide support and assistance to HSIB as we develop our protocols for operating under the enhanced investigation powers. PHSO have been willing to share information on recruitment and training of cohorts of PHSO staff that HSIB can learn from, for future recruitment into HSSIB investigation teams. PHSO have attended HSIB seminars to share their work and HSIB staff have attended PHSO internal events to share information on our role and

¹ Formed in 2017, the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch (HSIB) works to improve patient safety through independent patient safety investigations into NHS-funded care across England. Most harm in healthcare comes from problems within the systems and processes that determine how care is delivered. Our investigations identify any factors that have harmed or may harm to patients. The safety recommendations we make aim to improve healthcare systems and processes, to reduce risk and improve safety. We work closely with patients, families and healthcare staff affected by patient safety incidents, and we never attribute blame or liability. We are funded by the Department of Health and Social Care and currently hosted by NHS England until April 2023 when we will become a fully independent arm's length body.

function. These interactions have been helpful, friendly, and providing constructive feedback in both directions to support improved outcomes from our work.

- Intelligence sharing - PHSO have referred a patient safety concern to HSIB for consideration as a national safety investigation, demonstrating how they can share learning across the system. PHSO hosted our referral manager for interesting discussions about how to communicate with members of the public who wish to make referrals and who have experienced difficulties with their care in the NHS. This has been helpful in reviewing our processes and signposting of referrers.
 - HSIB investigation education and training - PHSO staff are engaging with the HSIB's Level 2 programme – *A systems approach to learning from patient safety incidents*. We are also exploring some bespoke training for the senior PHSO leadership team about to HSIB's education programmes, which is intended to assist PHSO caseworkers with referring healthcare organisations to HSIB training as part of their improvement plan in response to complaints.
4. Finally, HSIB will be working with partners including the PHSO to explore how we can better ensure that patients and families who've experienced harm are treated with fairness, kindness and transparency by the national organisations that they come to seeking assistance, including joined-up and easier navigation of the healthcare system. Too often this is not the case. We welcome the PHSO's willingness to contribute their expertise in support of this work and look forward to working with them collaboratively in future.

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