

8 May 2026

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Tēnā koe Hannah

Your request for official information, reference: HNZ00202624

Thank you for your request for information, which was partially transferred from the Office of Hon Simeon Brown to Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) on 13 April 2026, asking for the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

- 1. What national policies, frameworks, or directives are currently in place to support healthcare staff (including doctors and nurses) to raise concerns or provide feedback?*
- 2. What evidence, research, or expert advice has informed the development of these policies?*
- 3. How is the effectiveness of “speak up” systems measured at a national level? Please include any key performance indicators, staff survey measures, or reporting frameworks used.*
- 4. What mechanisms exist to ensure that concerns raised by staff result in observable action or system-level change?*
- 5. What protections are in place nationally to prevent retaliation or negative career impact for staff who raise concerns?*
- 7. Are there any identified gaps, risks, or challenges in current “speak up” systems that have been raised at a national level?*

You will receive a response to item six of your request in due course.

Response

For the sake of clarity, I will address each question in turn.

- 1. What national policies, frameworks, or directives are currently in place to support healthcare staff (including doctors and nurses) to raise concerns or provide feedback?*

Health NZ has a number of pathways for kaimahi wishing to raise concerns or provide feedback through both formal and informal channels. This includes:

- The Protected Disclosure Policy, which sets out the processes for disclosing serious wrongdoing, in accordance with the Protected Disclosures (Protection of Whistleblowers) Act 2022. It assists our people when making a protected disclosure and ensures they receive support during the process.
- Health NZ's has an 0800 Health Integrity Line. This is a national whistleblowing line available to anyone working at Health NZ, allowing anonymous reporting to an independent third party.

- Information on speaking up is provided on organisational intranet (Te Haerenga) and has been recently updated to align with new policies and Public Service Commission (PSC) guidance.
- Our Health and Safety policy provides pathways for staff to raise concerns, about matters affecting staff, including both physical and psychosocial concerns. All staff are able to report hazards through the Health and Safety incident reporting software or via their local Health and Safety Representative (HSR), their manager or directly to the Health and Safety Team in their area. Staff can also raise issues in partnership with HSRs via Provisional Improvement Notices (PINs) or directly with WorkSafe New Zealand, if they feel concerns are not adequately addressed.
- Our National People Policies provide avenues for staff to raise employment-related concerns, including people management, bullying, or conduct issues through People and Culture teams. The Code of Conduct includes a specific section on speaking up.
- Respect at Work, an organisational culture programme available to all Health NZ staff, provides the culture foundation necessary for safe and effective speaking up across the organisation.
- There is currently no single, national speaking up programme across Health NZ. Instead, a range of approaches are used across a small number of districts, with approximately five speaking up type district programmes currently in place.

2. *What evidence, research, or expert advice has informed the development of these policies?*

The policies were developed with reference to published guidance from the Office of the Ombudsman and Public Service Commission, including:

- Ombudsman guidance for receivers of Protected Disclosures: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/sites/default/files/2026-03/Guidance%20for%20receivers.pdf
- Ombudsman's guidance on internal policies and procedures: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/sites/default/files/2023-07/Protected%20disclosures%20-%20internal%20policies%20and%20procedures%20-%20July%202022_0.pdf
- Public Service Commission (PSC) guidance on Protected Disclosures (Protection of Whistleblowers) Act 2022: www.publicservice.govt.nz/publications/protected-disclosures-act-2022

Health NZ has a process for development of policies including due diligence using subject matter experts such as clinical, cultural, disability and legal expertise, followed by engagement with unions and the final step is to undertake staff consultation prior to finalisation and implementation of policies.

Over the last two years we have undertaken this process for several people policies including Code of Conduct, Health and Safety Policies and Bullying Harassment and Discrimination Policy.

Health NZ has also developed Respect at Work, which is an organisational culture programme available for all Health NZ staff that provides the culture foundation necessary for safe and effective speaking up across the organisation. Respect at Work addresses these risks by promoting shared behavioural expectations, strengthening compassion and civility, and reinforcing accountability at all levels.

3. *How is the effectiveness of “speak up” systems measured at a national level? Please include any key performance indicators, staff survey measures, or reporting frameworks used.*

Currently there is no singular national speak up programme in Health NZ but a range of approaches are available across some districts. The organisation is establishing a working group to explore and identify potential options that could support a national initiative aligned to the PSC Speaking Up Model Standards.

There have been a range of speak up programmes, some based on the Speaking up for Safety (SUFS), in the past. The SUFS program helps create a workplace where everyone feels comfortable speaking up about safety issues. It also teaches staff how to listen to and address concerns from their colleagues to prevent harm to patients, staff, and visitors.

These have not been evaluated for effectiveness at a national level, hence the work to explore national response to speak up systems.

4. *What mechanisms exist to ensure that concerns raised by staff result in observable action or system-level change?*

Reported psychosocial risk-related incidents are reviewed by Health and Safety Teams, with steps taken to address issues with appropriate stakeholders, although this may vary across services.

Sensitive or confidentially raised events/incidents are reviewed locally by Health and Safety teams and staff are supported - all events are reviewed nationally for themes to inform strategic work plans.

PINs and WorkSafe NZ notifications are reviewed centrally, and comprehensive work plans are undertaken - these are reviewed by theme to see where strategic work plans can be strengthened or further targeted to support emerging risks.

Existing programmes provide some feedback for improvement at local levels and in the past feedback from Staff Pulse surveys have provided opportunities for action and system change. Work is currently underway on developing new employee voice initiatives that will further support.

As a result of feedback national initiatives such as Respect at Work and Health Leadership Development programmes have been established, as well as new or updated development of policies and practices.

5. *What protections are in place nationally to prevent retaliation or negative career impact for staff who raise concerns?*

Protections are outlined in the Protected Disclosure Policy, alongside recently updated intranet guidance aligned with PSC requirements and the Respect at Work programme.

7. *Are there any identified gaps, risks, or challenges in current “speak up” systems that have been raised at a national level?*

As Health NZ is still a relatively new organisation having been merged from over 20 district or health entities which had different or varied approaches implemented in the past, it has been recognised that there is no national programme and that “speak up” is not managed consistently in districts. The organisation is establishing a working group to explore and identify potential options that could support a national initiative aligned to the PSC Speaking Up Model Standards.

It had also been identified that there are currently issues with making anonymous reports on incidents and that all confidential reports must be put through as sensitive. This has been addressed through enhancements to the new health and safety incident reporting system.

At times it can often be a challenge for staff to see how concerns raised have led to improvements at a systems level, and that our communication on improvements resulting from reports needs to be more explicit, where possible.

How to get in touch

If you have any questions, you can contact us at h.nzOIA@tewhatuora.govt.nz.

If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "PP P Bradley". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Danielle Coe

Manager (OIAs), Government Services

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora