

**West Yorkshire Association of Acute Trusts  
c/o Trust HQ  
Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust  
St James' University Hospital  
Beckett Street  
Leeds  
LS9 7TF**

**21 September 2023**

Dear colleagues

We write to you as the six Medical Directors for the West Yorkshire Association of Acute Trusts (WYAAT) following the findings of the recent British Journal of Surgery paper, which reported the scale of sexual harassment and abuse in the UK surgical workforce (1). We are sure that you share our deep concerns about the results of the study and also our desire to ensure that this is a mark time moment for the medical profession, where we all commit to ensuring that this abhorrent behaviour is stamped out once and for all.

It is timely that the updated GMC Good Medical Practice standards newly identify a “focus on behaviours and values which support good team work, make everyone feel safe to speak up, and empower doctors to provide quality care”. We can all agree that creating a culture where everyone feels valued, respected, and able to raise concerns is paramount, not just in the NHS, but also across the Royal Colleges and Specialty Societies. Furthermore, the recently launched “sexual safety in healthcare organisational charter” (2) adds strength to our firm view that organisations across the healthcare system need to work together and individually to tackle unwanted, inappropriate and/or harmful sexual behaviour in the workplace, as we all have a responsibility to ourselves and our colleagues and must act if we witness these behaviours.

We fully appreciate how difficult it can be for individuals to speak up and raise concerns, particularly our doctors in training and SAS doctor colleagues. Although there are many routes to speaking up within Trusts, the governance of this may be difficult to navigate, particularly if you are only in an organisation for a short period of time. In view of this, we want to offer our support as identified individuals who pledge to listen to any concerns raised by colleagues in any of our six partner Trusts. Whilst we would encourage you to make any concerns known immediately to your current organisation, it may be as a rotating doctor you do not feel able to speak up until you have left the organisation where the concern arose, in which case we urge you to speak to one of us or a member of the medical directorate or medical education team at your next Trust who can help you with your concern.

Bullying, harassment, or abuse have no place in the medical profession. We are committed to doing all we can to ensure findings such as those reported in the BJS never occur again in our profession.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Jacqueline Andrews**

Executive Medical Director, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust

**Dr David Birkenhead**

Executive Medical Director, Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust

**Mr David Crampsey**

Executive Medical Director and Deputy CEO, Airedale NHS Foundation Trust

**Dr Magnus Harrison**

Chief Medical Officer, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

**Dr Richard Robinson**

Chief Medical Officer, Mid Yorkshire Teaching NHS Trust

**Dr Ray Smith**

Chief Medical Officer, Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

**Where to find further help and support:**

Freedom to Speak Up	<a href="http://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/freedom-to-speak-up">www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/freedom-to-speak-up</a>
Yorkshire and Humber Deanery	<a href="http://www.yorksandhumberdeanery.nhs.uk">www.yorksandhumberdeanery.nhs.uk</a>
GMC	<a href="http://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-hub/speaking-up">www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-hub/speaking-up</a>
BMA	<a href="http://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/complaints-and-concerns/raising-concerns-and-whistleblowing/raising-a-concern-guide-for-doctors">www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/complaints-and-concerns/raising-concerns-and-whistleblowing/raising-a-concern-guide-for-doctors</a>

**References:**

- (1) Christopher T Begeny et al, Sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape by colleagues in the surgical workforce, and how women and men are living different realities: observational study using NHS population-derived weights, *British Journal of Surgery*, 2023;, znad242, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjs/znad242>
- (2) [www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/sexual-safety-in-healthcare-organisational-charter](http://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/sexual-safety-in-healthcare-organisational-charter)