# Health Secretary Advocates for NHS Whistleblowers to Enhance Patient Safety



Health Secretary Victoria Atkins has emphasized the importance of listening to whistleblowers within the NHS to ensure patient safety. In statements published on May 18, 2024, Atkins highlighted that NHS management should not prioritize reputations over patient safety.

Atkins revealed that each NHS trust in England now has a "freedom to speak up guardian" to support staff in reporting concerns. These guardians have handled over 100,000 cases, and most staff felt comfortable raising issues again. Additionally, a national independent guardian and helpline service have been established.

The Health Secretary stressed standardizing background checks for NHS board members to prevent irresponsible leaders from evading accountability. An ongoing review of the NHS whistleblowing framework aims to identify common issues and consider appropriate actions to foster a positive culture for speaking out.

Atkins's remarks followed an investigation by The Telegraph, which reported on the mistreatment of NHS staff who raised patient safety concerns. Prof Phil Banfield of the British Medical Association and Dr. Salam Al-Sam of Justice For Doctors highlighted the risks and investigations faced by whistleblowers.