Response to Equality and Human Rights Commission's publication of the treatment of lower-paid minority ethnic workers

We welcome the review into the treatment of lower-paid minority ethnic workers. Its findings highlight how critical it is to foster an inclusive speaking up culture in the workplace.

Sir Robert Francis, in the **Freedom to Speak Up Review**, found that some people faced more significant barriers to speaking up and being heard – such as student nurses, medical trainees, bank staff, volunteers, or workers from black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds.
It is disappointing this latest review carried out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission has found that these barriers persist. This report notes that there "… are several reasons why workers are afraid to raise concerns, but the fear of job loss was considered a primary one. This was a particular issue for workers with insecure roles and zero-hours contracts. We were also told that workers who did raise concerns were sometimes victimised afterwards."
These findings are consistent with the most recent **NHS Staff Survey**, where 58.9% of minority ethnic respondents said they feel safe to speak up about anything that concerns them, compared to 63.2% of white respondents.

Addressing the imbalance between health and social care
Similar to the inconsistent experiences of some minority ethnic workers, the report also found that those working in social care had fewer opportunities to speak up, compared to their counterparts in healthcare. We are pleased to be working with the government to explore ways in which Freedom to Speak up Guardians can be introduced in the social care sector as an additional route for workers to speak up. The Department of Health and Social Care set out plans in their **White Paper**.

In response, Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark, National Guardian for the NHS, said: *"It is unacceptable for any worker to be victimised for speaking up.*
We support the recommendation that "NHS organisations and Local Authorities and Integrated Care Systems in England should ensure … leaders model behaviours they expect of others and make diversity and inclusion a priority."
As yesterday's Messenger report highlighted, leaders must do more to foster an inclusive workplace. This is one where everyone regardless of race, background or job role, feels safe to speak up – knowing they will be thanked, heard and their feedback acted upon."
Read full report here