



**INDEPENDENT
NATIONAL
WHISTLEBLOWING
OFFICER**

People Centred | Improvement Focused

Findings from NHS boards’ annual whistleblowing reporting 2021—22



1. Executive summary.....	1
2. Introduction.....	2
3. Findings.....	4
4. Quantitative data.....	5
5. Qualitative data.....	9
6. Reporting against key performance indicators	10



1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Boards were required to publish annual whistleblowing reports for the first time in 2021—22 since the launch of the National Whistleblowing Standards (the Standards) on 1 April 2021. This happened during a time of significant challenge for all NHS providers.
- 1.2 All boards produced an annual report in 2021—22.
- 1.3 All boards complied with the requirement to report against the KPIs set out in the Standards but not every board reported against each KPI.
- 1.4 As a result of these findings, we recognised guidance was needed for boards on reporting. The INWO has produced good practice guidance, which will be updated annually.
- 1.5 The INWO will continue to take a leadership role providing support and guidance to NHS organisations. We are here to support NHS organisations in the implementation of the Standards. We are continuing to develop training, guidance, and resources. We encourage boards to visit our webpage to access our latest resources (<https://inwo.spsso.org.uk/guidance-and-resources>).



2. Introduction

2.1 Reporting under the National Whistleblowing Standards

Since 2021-22 all NHS boards are required to report on the Standards by publishing an annual report setting out performance in handling whistleblowing concerns. This report should:

- summarise and build on the quarterly reports produced by the board
- include performance against KPIs as set out in the Standards
- include and comment on the issues that have been raised, and
- set out the actions that have been or will be taken to improve services as a result of concerns (ideally with a supporting action plan against which to track and report progress).

2.2 Boards have a critical role in setting a tone and culture in their organisation that values the contributions of all staff. Their culture and processes should encourage and enable the confidence to speak up as part of every-day business and through the Standards. Effective monitoring and reporting are part of that role.

2.3 This document provides an overview of findings from boards' first year 2021-22 of annual reporting on the Standards.

2.4 The INWO have published good practice guidance for annual reporting, which can be found on the INWO website (<https://inwo.spsso.org.uk/guidance-and-resources>), reflecting the INWO's role in:

- providing support and guidance to NHS organisations
- promoting and sharing good practice in whistleblowing handling
- promoting and sharing good practice in the recording, reporting, and learning from whistleblowing concerns.



- 2.5 All boards produced an annual report in this first year of reporting, in spite of the many competing demands being placed upon them.
- 2.6 The INWO will review board whistleblowing reporting annually and publish an overview of findings. We will also update our good practice guidance annually.



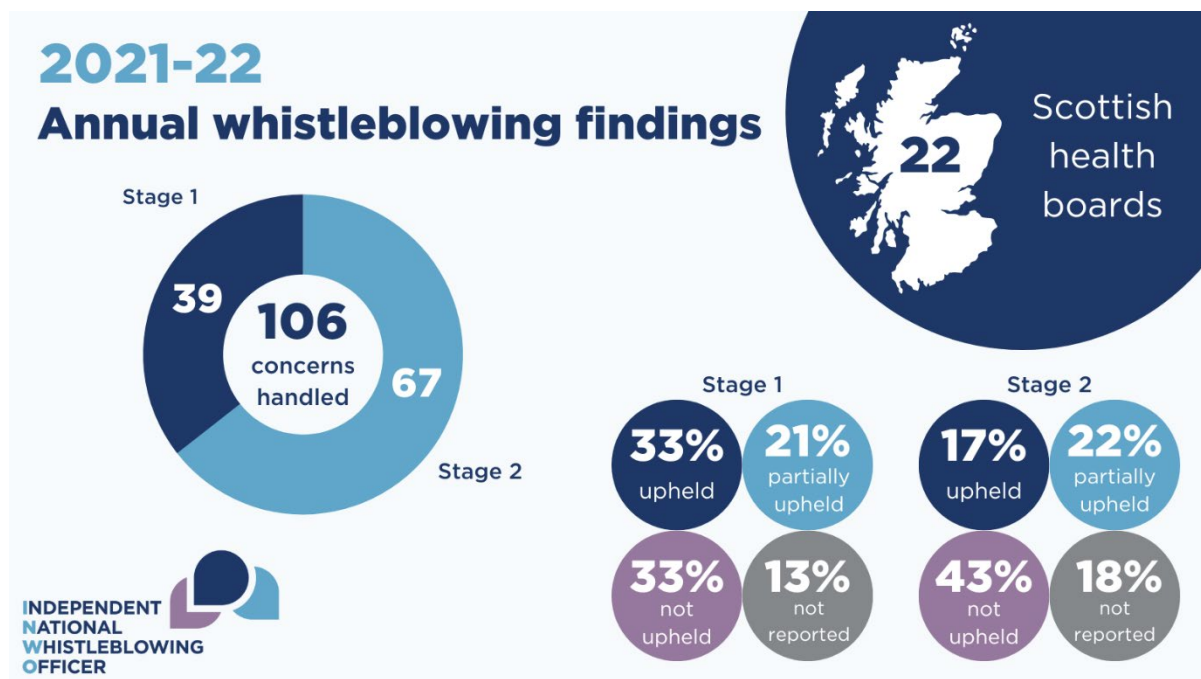
3. Findings

- 3.1 All boards complied with the requirement to report against the KPI's set out in the Standards but not every board reported against each KPI.
- 3.2 Boards used different methodologies to report against KPIs. Comparison was not always possible due to this.
- 3.3 There was inconsistency in the way the KPIs were applied. There was relative consistency in quantitative data with scope to develop greater consistency in qualitative reporting. Qualitative reporting is critical to understand levels of confidence staff have in speaking up.
- 3.4 Boards have made good progress in meeting their reporting requirements.
- 3.5 Many boards described their future plans and ambitions for recording, reporting, and learning from whistleblowing concerns.



4. Quantitative data

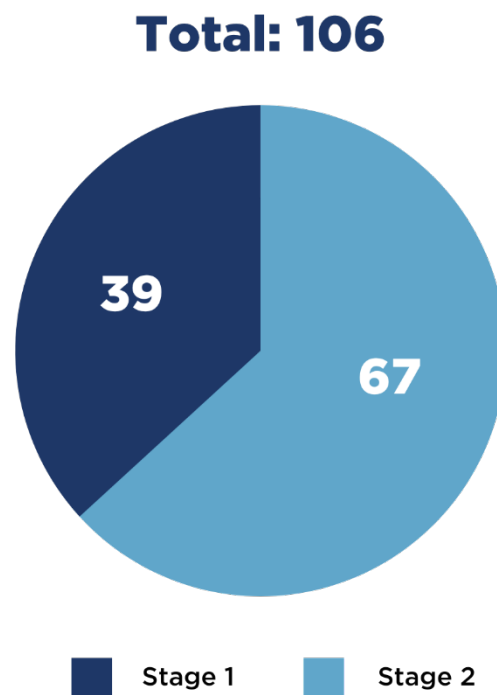
Figure 1: An infographic summary of key findings



- 4.1 106 whistleblowing concerns were handled and closed by boards in 2021—22. [Figure 2](#) shows the total number of concerns closed by 22 boards and at which stage. The majority of whistleblowing concerns closed were stage 2, 63%. These figures do not include any reported concerns not closed and carried forward to the next year.



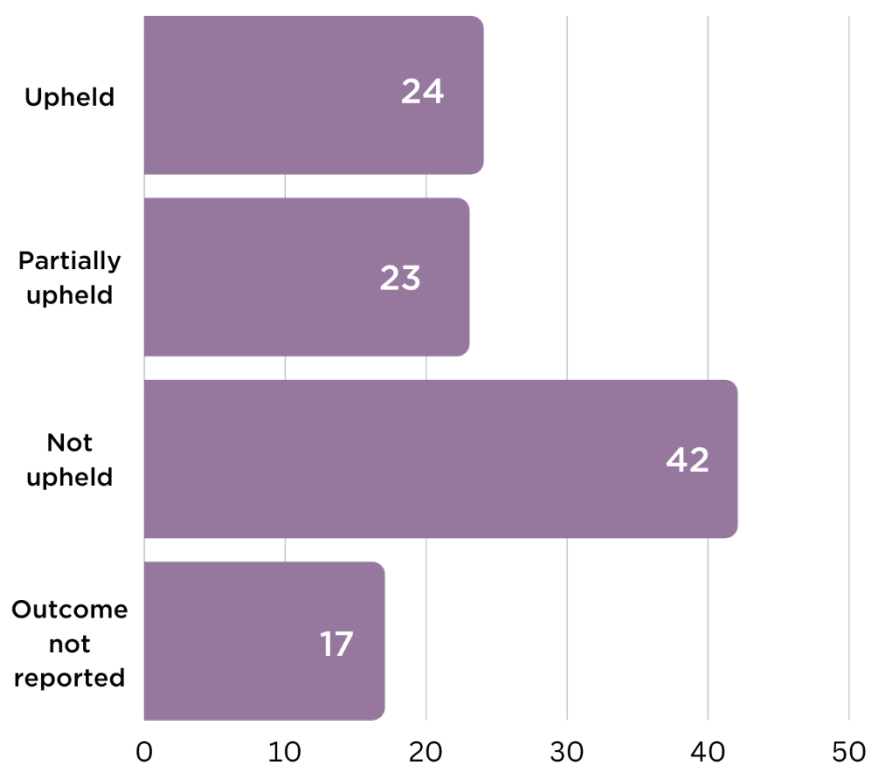
Figure 2: Total whistleblowing concerns handled in 2021-22



4.2 [Figure 3](#) shows the outcomes of all concerns closed in 2021—22. 22% of all concerns closed were upheld, 22% were partially upheld, 40% were not upheld and boards did not report the outcome of 16% of closed concerns.



Figure 3: Outcome of all concerns closed



4.3 [Figure 4](#) shows the total number of stage 1 and stage 2 concerns closed, the number upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and those where no outcome was reported.

4.4 33% of stage 1 concerns closed were upheld, 21% partially upheld, 33% not upheld and boards did not report the outcome of 13% of closed stage 1 concerns.

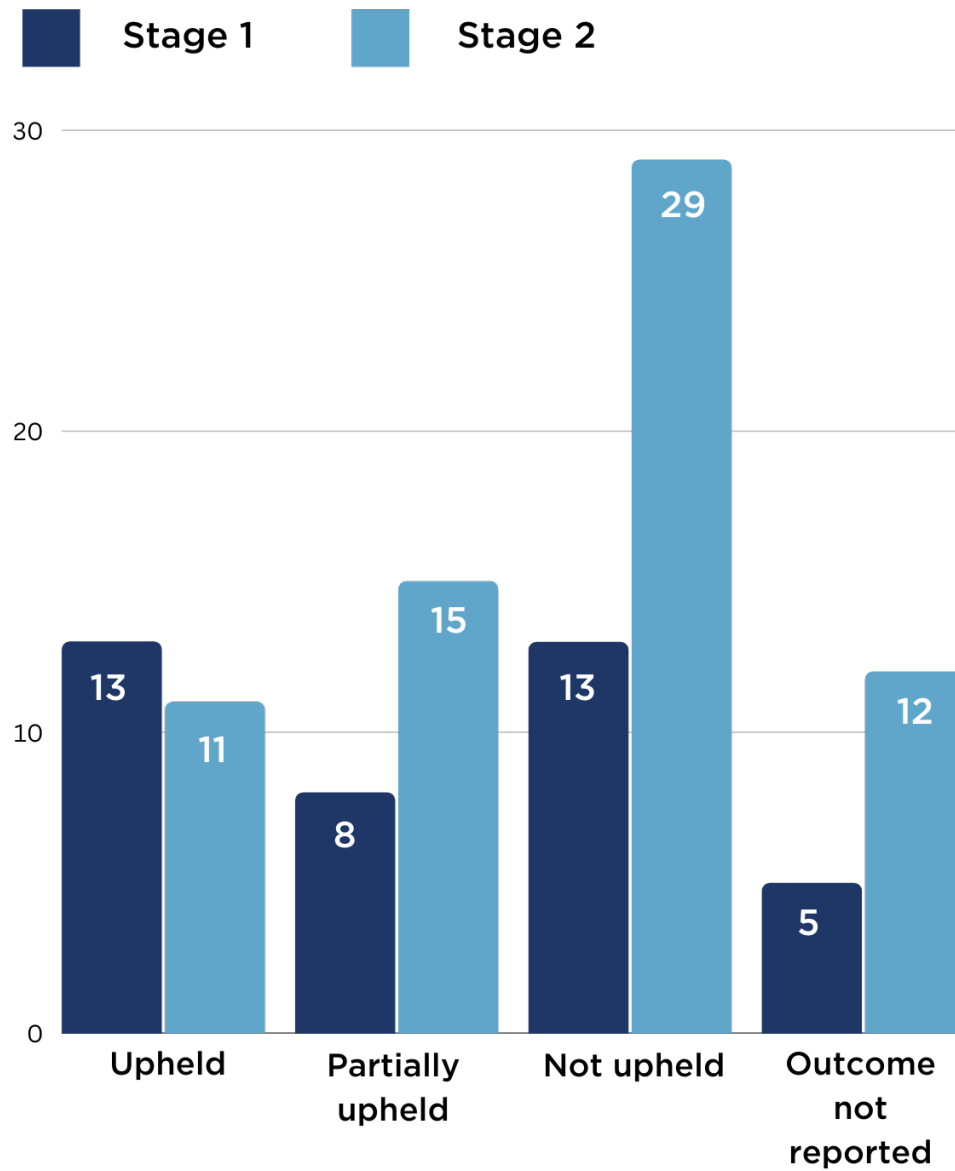
4.5 17% of stage 2 concerns closed were upheld, 22% partially upheld, 43% were not upheld and boards did not report the outcomes of 18% of closed stage 2 concerns.

4.6 Seven concerns were not closed by boards in the year and were carried forward to 2022—23.

4.7 Boards did not report the outcomes of 17 closed concerns.



Figure 4: Outcome of closed concerns by stage





5. Qualitative data

- 5.1 KPIs 1, 2 and 3 require boards to include qualitative statements about whistleblowing.
- 5.2 Boards provided deeper insight through reporting awareness and the experiences of everyone involved in the whistleblowing process. This qualitative data added information about WHY to that of HOW MANY.
- 5.3 We found there is considerable scope for boards to give more meaningful and informative qualitative data and recommend that boards apply our good practice guidance on reporting which can be found on the INWO website (<https://inwo.spsso.org.uk/guidance-and-resources>).



6. Reporting against key performance indicators

- 6.1 We encourage Boards to consider the way in which they are reporting against KPIs 2, 3, 9 and 10, around people's experience of the whistleblowing process, staff perception, awareness and training, and the percentage of extension requests at both stages 1 and 2.
- 6.2 Most boards have scope to expand reporting against KPI 3 a statement to report on levels of staff perceptions, awareness, and training.
- 6.3 All boards reported the total numbers of concerns received, KPI 4.
- 6.4 The Standards give direction on the requirements set out in the 10 KPIs, we recommend that boards follow these KPI's when producing reports. Consistent reporting will aid data analysis, comparison, and benchmarking. The 10 KPIs can be found on the INWO website (<https://inwo.spsso.org.uk/governance-recording-learning-lessons>).