Raising concerns in the workplace

Workshop Facilitators: David Drew and Rachael Pope

The workshop included

Part 1 (Rachael) - Experiences of NHS whistle-blowers, Steve Bolsin and Edwin Jesudason

Programme - "How whistleblowing cost two men their careers"

http://blogs.channel4.com/victoria-macdonald-on-health-and-social-care/blowing-whistle-cost-men-nhs-careers/1580

Raising concerns is a very risky and damaging business

> "...being savaged by a mob of wild dogs, still baying for blood around me" referring to more senior manager behaviour
>
> "Corporate thuggery" (Doctorate research participant)

'BMA calls for review of whistle blowing laws' Health Service Journal 8 October, 2012

Anonymous | 8-Oct-2012 4:10 pm

> 'The present process seems to be:
> Whistleblower raises concerns
> Whistleblower suspended
> Whistleblower investigated
> Whistleblower sacked
> Whistleblower goes to court
> Whistleblower receives substantial compensation' out of court' as the Establishment covers up the problem.
> Shameful.'

Alford (2001) Whistleblowers: Broken lives and organizational power

Whistleblowers offer truths which are "...experienced as a threat to power" (p.3).

To "...run up against the organization is to risk obliteration" (p.4).

Discussion: Why are there such extreme reactions to whistleblowers?

E.g. people want to hide their incompetence and failure; organisations want to hide the 'bad news'

One person suggested that perhaps the fact of the NHS having had Crown Immunity still impacted on the culture in the NHS

Consideration of different terms used for raising concerns

- Title [Raising concerns] deliberately broad – Covers a range of situations/all levels
- Whistleblowing – history of term?

- Ethical resistance (Glazer and Glazer, 1989)
- Truth telling (Pink, 2013)
- Conscientious objectors (Beardshaw, 1981)
- Silence breaking (Zerubavel, 2006)
- Parrhesis

Zerubavel (2006) The Elephant in the Room: Silence and denial in everyday life

"Rather than ordinary secrets the very existence of which we were unaware, silence breakers "reveal" open "secrets" of which we are aware yet unwilling to publically acknowledge... "background" rather than "backstage information...they help uncover "elephants" rather than the "skeletons" a whistle blower might bring to light" (p.65)

Parrhesis

> "The politics of hierarchy ensures that parrhesis – the speaking of truth to power – is never easy nor without risk, or necessarily effective, yet it is simultaneously a responsibility of both individuals and communities" (Linstead, 2007, The Comedy of Ethics in Humour, work and Organization)

High profile raising concerns/truth telling

- Michael Woodford- President of Olympus – large scale fraud at the highest levels
- Eileen Chubb - Care home worker – Compassion in Care
- Paul Champion - Leicester City Council
- Kim Holt – Doctor who raised concerns about Haringey clinics, part of Great Ormond Street – Baby Peter
- Amanda Pollard - CQC
- Terry Bryan - Nurse Winterbourne View
- Lisa Martin – Administrator Orchid View nursing home – 5 deaths from neglect
- Gary Walker - CEO Lincoln Trust
- Steve Bolsin - Consultant anaesthetist Bristol Royal Infirmary
- Edwin Jesudason - Consultant paediatric surgeon, Alder Hay Children's Hospital

Tip of the iceberg

> "There is the whole iceberg thing isn't there? There are people who don't even say anything. They see what happens. People who try to say something and then they get bullied and they think, ok, I'm not going to say anything else. And then there are people like me who go further, and a lot end up gagged. Very, very, few who actually take to next level." (Research participant)

Cartoons identifying behaviours in the NHS (these behaviours also applied to other work situations)

Various cartoons from different publications (Private Eye, Health Service Journal, Daily Mail and The Consultant) were analysed and discussed. Several were on the theme of the three monkeys – Hear no, see no, speak no. David shared a cartoon from Private Eye of a CEO showing a new person around. The CEO introduces the hooded person holding a scythe (the grim reaper) as a member of the Whistleblowing Support Team.

Quotes from literature and doctorate research data

Focus group of nurses and trade union representatives

"They're deaf"

Staff are "…facing brick walls"

"It's very 'Hear no, see no, speak no'...So they hear nothing, they see nothing and they say nothing. They don't tell us what is going on and don't listen to what we are saying and they choose to ignore it if you do it in e-mail. So they cannot see it"

"The amount of people who don't get that e-mail" [said with irony]

"If I stick my fingers in my ears and hum loudly, then it's not happening" (Risk Manager)

"They don't want to know what they know" (Managerial Secretary)

Resistance to knowing

"A fundamental aspect of perversion is the process of turning a blind eye" (Ballatt and Campling, 2011, Intelligent kindness: Reforming the culture of healthcare, p.140).

Active resistance to 'knowing' and acknowledgement "...is at the core of the 'pull towards perversion'" (p.141).

"Corruption builds on an underlying social fabric of perversity" (Long, 2008, The perverse organisation and its deadly sins, p.3)

Part 2 (David)

What to do, what not to do and how to protect yourself when raising concerns

People shared their experiences in different work situations. Discussions took place around how to raise concerns safely. It was considered that raising a concern can be a very risky action. If there is a poor response from a line manager this indicates a poor culture within the organisation. In this situation there is a need at the next stage of going higher in an organisation for the person to register it as a protected public interest disclosure. The importance of having documentary evidence at all stages was stressed.

Suspension is not viewed as a neutral act and can be very destructive to the individual.

Publications:

David Drew

Drew, D. (2014). *Little stories of life and death @NHSwhistleblowr.* Kibworth Beauchamp: Matador.

Drew, D. (2013, June 11). *Nursing Times*. Retrieved June 23 , 2014, from Nursing Times: http://www.nursingtimes.net/david-drew-politicians-and-nhs-leaders-are-in-denial-about-bullying/5059585.article

Rachael Pope

Pope, R., & Burnes, B. (2013). A model of organisational dysfunction in the NHS. Journal of Health Organization and Management, 27 (6), 676-697.

Pope, R. (2015). The NHS: Sticking fingers in its ears, humming loudly. DOI 10.1007/s10551-015-2861-4, Journal of Business Ethics