

OpenLearn animation

Witness to harm - Why people do and do not raise concerns

Speaker 1, Speaker 2, Speaker 3, Speaker 4, Speaker 5, Speaker 6:

SPEAKER 1: From social workers to nurses to child protection officers, health and social care workers play a vital role in care, protection, and advocacy for a wide range of communities.

SPEAKER 2: But in these positions, there will be occasions when professionals fail to meet the standards expected of them.

SPEAKER 1: In such cases, members of the public may raise concerns about them, which will lead to a fitness to practice investigation and hearing.

SPEAKER 2: The Open University lead a team with four other universities who conducted in-depth research to understand the experiences of people who raised these concerns.

SPEAKER 1: One of the key areas they investigated was the reasons people do and don't express concerns to regulators.

SPEAKER 2: So let's get a sense of what they discovered. First of all, why do people raise concerns?

SPEAKER 3: I wanted to make sure no one would go through the same distress and trauma as I did from my treatment. I wanted the public to know so, hopefully, it will never happen again.

SPEAKER 4: I wanted to face the person who did this to me. It's not like I wanted revenge or to ruin their career. I wanted them to reflect, to really think about what they'd done.

SPEAKER 2: So, to recap, some of the key reasons people raised concerns included raising awareness of issues to prevent them happening again—

SPEAKER 1: --and to make the person involved reflect on what they had done and why it was wrong.

SPEAKER 2: So, why don't people raise concerns? What's stopping them from even beginning the witness to harm process?

SPEAKER 5: I didn't know where to go. I did look, but it was just really hard. I don't think enough people know about the General Dental Council or any of the other regulators. They're just not visible. They need to advertise more.

SPEAKER 6: I felt trapped. I was too embarrassed to even mention it. It was something so shocking and difficult to prove that it felt easier to keep quiet. I'd also heard that complaining about a GP could make it difficult to find another one. That was a real worry.

SPEAKER 2: So, to recap, one of the key reasons people didn't raise concerns was the process was just too difficult. It was hard to find where to report a problem. And even if you did, the process was arduous, with many pages to read and zero assistance.

SPEAKER 1: People also felt they couldn't speak up because the issues were difficult to prove. They found that the misconduct itself had an isolating effect.

SPEAKER 2: Some people also feared the negative consequences involved in raising a concern-- difficulty finding a new dentist, for instance.

[DRAMATIC MUSIC]