

OpenLearn animation

Witness to harm - The usability of websites when raising a concern

Speaker 1, Speaker 2, Speaker 3, Speaker 4:

SPEAKER 1: The usability of health and social care regulators websites is one of the first hurdles people face when raising a concern. For this reason, a team of researchers led by The Open University conducted research into people's experiences navigating the sites to raise a concern about a professional. So let's get a sense of people's experiences, firstly, with finding information on the websites.

SPEAKER 2: First of all, with the main tab, it uses the term Fitness to Practise, which is just difficult to understand. It would be better to use the word concern or complaint. On the plus side, I did find the jargon busters and glossaries useful. The site should always include them.

SPEAKER 3: It would be good to have a navigation panel on the side showing where we're up to and what's available. The pages should be short and simple and in a logical order.

SPEAKER 4: It's best when the links open in a new tab. Otherwise, I get worried I'm going to lose the original page. In general, there shouldn't be too many links as all the information and places to go can be really overwhelming.

SPEAKER 1: OK, let's take a closer look at the reporting process. First of all, what are people's experiences of finding the form?

SPEAKER 2: If you're going to have a concerns landing page, you should have a link to the form right there. So we don't have to click through several pages of screening questions to get to it.

SPEAKER 4: Screening questions can be useful to make sure our concerns are raised with the right organisation. But they can be obstructive if we already know we're in the right place.

SPEAKER 3: There should be multiple ways to raise a concern, email, downloadable document, telephone and online, and there should be the option to raise a concern anonymously. Only a few sites allow this.

SPEAKER 2: We should be able to see a list of what information we will need to have to hand before starting the form and to get a sense of how long it might take.

SPEAKER 4: It would also be helpful to have simple information about what will happen once a concern is raised, so we know what to expect.

SPEAKER 1: Finally, what were people's experiences using the form itself?

SPEAKER 2: Mandatory fields on the reporting forms are actually quite obstructive. We might not have information like the registrant's name or the registration number to hand.

SPEAKER 3: It's helpful to have prompts saying what type of information we should put in each box and to be able to upload documents to avoid having to retell unpleasant stories and also to provide evidence like medical records.

SPEAKER 4: Forms should be short and simple with a progress bar so we know how far through we are. It's better not to have word limits on our answers, so we can provide as much detail as we need to. It would be good if we could save our progress too, so we can take breaks.