

From: Minh Alexander <minhalexander@aol.com>
Subject: Outcome of BMA Task and Finish Group On Raising Concerns
Date: 23 May 2016 at 11:45:21 BST
To: MHope@bma.org.uk
Cc: chair@bma.org.uk

To Mark Hope Senior Policy Advisor BMA 23 May 2016

Dear Mr Hope,

Re Outcome of BMA Task & Finish Group on Raising Concerns

I appreciate that the BMA must have been very busy with the dispute over the junior doctors' contract, but please may I have a response to my questions of 3 months ago, below, on the BMA's work on supporting members who need to raise concerns at their workplace.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Minh Alexander

From: Minh Alexander <minhalexander@aol.com>
Subject: Outcome of BMA Task and Finish Group On Raising Concerns
Date: 25 February 2016 at 18:38:45 GMT
To: MHope@bma.org.uk
Cc: Mark Porter <chair@bma.org.uk>

Dear Mr Hope,

Outcome of BMA Task and Finish Group On Raising Concerns

Thank you very much for your email, copied below.

1) I asked Dr Porter about the absence of assurance data about member services for whistleblowers in the Task and Finish group report. You advise that the group was given information about the level of support that the BMA has been provided to whistleblower members, but you think you did not circulate documents that fit my description. I am a little unclear about this. It would perhaps be simplest if all documents about member services that were reviewed by the Task and Finish group could be shared. I would be very grateful if they could be provided.

2) I asked Dr Porter when the early intervention pilot mentioned in the Task and Finish group report had commenced. I cannot find this detail in your response. I would be grateful if the start date could be pin pointed. If the pilot has not started, I would be grateful to know if the BMA is in a position yet to say when it will start. Thank you for the offer of a copy of the evaluation report. I would very much appreciate a copy of this and as per my request to Dr Porter, I wonder if I could have a copy of the pilot proposal and information about whether whistleblowers were involved in its production.

3) Thank you for clarifying that there has been no external review of member services provided to whistleblowers and no plan to do so.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Minh Alexander

cc Dr Mark Porter BMA Chair

From: Mark Hope <MHope@bma.org.uk>
Subject: RE: BMA handling of whistleblowing
Date: 25 February 2016 at 12:25:20 GMT
To: Minh Alexander <minhalexander@aol.com>

Dear Dr Alexander,

Dr Porter has passed this correspondence on to me. I was responsible for providing support for the task and finish group on raising concerns about patient safety.

1) The task and finish group did hear from our member services about our current advice and support for members who come to us through them. I do not appear, however, to have circulated any documents to the group that fit your description. With regard to your suggestion about an independent audit my recollection is that it was considered in a conversation at the time but that we were by then heading towards approval of a pilot of a new approach that would be evaluated in due course.

2) The report which Dr Porter has sent to you was approved by the BMA Council on 14 May 2015 and I understand that no further proposals went to Council meetings after that. I also understand that the end date for the pilot in the North West is not yet fixed. The evaluation will be reflected in a report to the Council and we would be happy to share that report with you in due course.

3) I would stress that the BMA remains committed to supporting members who raise concerns about patient safety both before and after they suffer any detriment.

Best wishes,

Mark

Mark Hope

Senior Policy Advisor (regulation, education and training)

Professionalism and Guidance

Policy Directorate

British Medical Association

T: 020 7383 6251 | E: mhope@bma.org.uk

From: Minh Alexander [<mailto:minhalexander@aol.com>]

Sent: 05 February 2016 18:01

To: Mark Porter <chair@bma.org.uk>

Cc: Mark Hope <MHope@bma.org.uk>

Subject: BMA handling of whistleblowing

To Dr Mark Porter, BMA Council Chair, 5 February 2016

Dear Dr Porter,

BMA handling of whistleblowing

Thank you for progressing my request for a copy of the report of the BMA Task & Finish group on whistleblowing.

1) The report is brief as to the group's findings. If there were any supporting documents that contained details of any member services that were evaluated and any related outcomes, I would be grateful for copies of the supporting data and analyses carried out by the group.

Mr Hope previously indicated that the Task and Finish group would consider my proposal of external audit of BMA's handling of whistleblowing matters, but there is no mention in the report that audit was discussed. Could I possibly have some clarification of whether the proposal for independent audit was considered but rejected.

2) There is consensus that it is better to avoid escalation of whistleblowing matters to the point that members suffer detriment, and it is welcome that BMA is piloting more

focussed support at an early stage of the whistleblowing journey. I would be grateful for a copy of the formal pilot proposal, to know when the six month pilot is scheduled to conclude and for details of how the pilot will be evaluated. I ask as I wonder to what extent individuals with lived experience of whistleblowing have been involved in shaping BMA strategy and the pilot. If there has not been such input into the process, the evaluation of the pilot may miss important issues.

3) As I am sure the BMA knows, even senior staff who are experienced in raising concerns may find themselves in stormy seas, despite BMA support whilst raising concerns.

The Task and Finish group's report seems to imply that things will go better if members are supported to raise concerns tactfully. Whilst this is true in theory, there are many examples of persecution even where doctors have behaved perfectly reasonably in raising concerns. Lack of tact is not the central problem. There are many more serious issues of NHS culture and politics with which the BMA could engage.

Although I agree with efforts to de-escalate situations where possible, I think it is nevertheless important to members who find themselves unjustly suspended, disciplined or sacked as a result of whistleblowing, that BMA support is sound in those circumstances. There does not appear to be any clear assurance of this in the Task and Finish Group's report. I would be interested in your views on this and on how these matters can be taken forward. This is in the context that members who have trodden this path have previously raised concerns about the support received from BMA, and two high profile cases which highlight such concerns are currently in the ET and the EAT respectively.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Minh Alexander

Cc Mark Hope BMA Senior Policy Executive

From: Mark Porter <chair@bma.org.uk>
Subject: RE: BMA handling of whistleblowing
Date: 4 February 2016 at 19:59:12 GMT
To: Minh Alexander <minhalexander@aol.com>

Dear Dr Alexander,

Thank you for your interest in our work in this area. I'm afraid I don't use Twitter and so I did not receive any earlier tweets.

I am happy to attach the report to which you refer from our task and finish group on

raising concerns about patient safety. As you can see the group focused particularly on how the BMA could improve its support for members at the point at which they initially raise their concerns, i.e. before the matter has escalated and they suffer any detriment. In the light of its discussions a new service providing this support is being piloted in the North West region for six months.

The pilot is aimed at supporting members who are not sure how to, or are afraid to, raise concerns or just need advice and support. It involves supporting members throughout the process including providing advice on correspondence and accompanying the member to meetings. It also involves providing talks to interested groups of doctors around the region.

The group considered that it might be better to evaluate the provision of member services in respect of raising concerns during employment when the pilot had been established.

Yours sincerely,

Mark

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Dr Mark Porter

BMA Council chair | consultant anaesthetist | GMC 3319761

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Member assistance 0300 123 123 3 | Media office 020 7383 6448

From: Minh Alexander <minhalexander@aol.com>

Sent: 21 January 2016 19:58

To: Mark Porter

Subject: BMA handling of whistleblowing

To Dr Mark Porter, BMA Council Chair, 21 January 2016

Dear Dr Porter,

BMA handling of whistleblowing

I write to follow up twitter correspondence 17 December, 8 January and 18 January in which I asked, as a member, if the BMA has shared the outcome of its task and finish

group on whistleblowing, commenced in 2014.

My question has not yet been answered. I wonder if you could help to progress this matter. Ideally, it would be very helpful if I could have a copy of the task & finish group's report from its review.

As you may recall, I suggested in 2014 that there should be an independent audit of BMA's member services in whistleblowing cases. You may also recall that Mr Mark Hope, BMA Senior Policy Executive advised in March 2015 that the task and finish group would consider this proposal. Obviously, I am keen to hear what the outcome was.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Minh Alexander

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