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NHS Tayside whistleblowers' champion quits claiming 'serious' concerns ignored

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NHS Tayside bosses have been accused of 'not taking seriously' issues raised by whistleblowers

A WHISTLEBLOWERS' champion at scandal-hit [NHS](#) Tayside has quit, claiming that serious issues are being ignored.

Munwar Hussain confirmed that he is stepping down from his role as a watchdog and has written to First Minister [Nicola Sturgeon](#) and Health Secretary Jeane Freeman to voice his concerns.

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Mr Hussain was appointed in April in the wake of revelations in the Herald that NHS Tayside had used millions of pounds from its endowment fund - a charity pot - to fund the roll-out of new IT systems and devices.

In his role, Mr Hussain was expected to ensure that staff were taken seriously if they raised the alarm over issues such as patient safety, bullying or misuse of funds.

He was also chair of the staff governance committee and a member of the audit and remuneration committees.

However, Mr Hussain - who is currently on leave with stress - said he would not resume his posts when he returns to work, and has notified the health board's chairman of his decision.

He said: "Certain matters were escalated to me that were serious and cause for concern.

"I, in turn, highlighted these issues to the chairman and others. I feel that I have not been given the appropriate assurances that these important matters are being dealt with.

"I have put the range of my concerns in writing to the cabinet secretary and the First Minister. I am still waiting on a reply."

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Mr Hussain declined to go into detail about the issues involved, adding: "I feel it's serious but they are not taking it seriously."

In a statement, NHS Tayside said: "We can confirm that Mr Hussain raised concerns relating to one particular case and this is currently under investigation."

Two of Mr Hussain's colleagues on the audit committee - Stephen Hay and Doug Cross - have also resigned.

Earlier this year it emerged that the health board has temporarily suspended its own rules in 2014 in order to raid £3.6 million from its charity pot to retrospectively cover the cost of routine projects after running out of money.

The bulk of the cash was spent on IT and e-health projects.

The endowment fund is only supposed to be spent on items that benefit patients and staff but which not be paid for out of the core budget, such as redecorating a day room or special medical devices.

A subsequent investigation this year by auditors, Grant Thornton, found that the 2014 transaction was "not subject to fully open and transparent governance processes" and suggested that internal auditors had come under pressure at the time to water down warnings over the potential legal repercussions of the move.

Read more: NHS Tayside suspended its own rules to use charity cash for IT systems

NHS Tayside has also come under fire this year when it emerged that it had "misrepresented" its accounts since 2012 by using Government funds earmarked for e-health initiatives to balance the books.

A spokeswoman for the Scottish Government said: "Ministers are aware of these resignations and would like to thank those members for their contribution to NHS Tayside.

"Any issues raised around whistleblowing will be fully explored in accordance with existing NHS whistleblowing policy."