

Introduction

We were delighted to welcome our panel of speakers:

Bron Biddle, Programme Lead – Association of Ambulance Chief Executives and Founder of Ambulance Voices

Jacqui Atkinson, Head of Employment Healthcare – Browne Jacobson

Helen Rideout, Partner – Browne Jacobson

Carl May-Smith, Partner (Barrister) – Browne Jacobson

The session was chaired by Helen Badger – Browne Jacobson

Helen is a Partner in the Healthcare Employment team, advising clients in public and independent health and care.

She explained that with harrowing stories of workplace abuse and harassment continuing to rise, the panel would discuss:

- The journey towards a change in culture
- Responding to complaints of sexual harassment
- Managing overlapping police investigations
- Civil claims and vicarious liability

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Chair Helen Badger, Partner – Browne Jacobson

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Introduction

Bron talked about her work with the Association of Ambulance Chief

Since NHS England published the [Sexual Safety Charter](#) in September 2023, we have seen an increase of issues being raised.



We discussed a number of issues including:

How to help those who might be first port of call – how do we enable the rest of the actions to flow through the other roles?

Those people impacted by the continuum of behaviours relating to sexual safety are often quite shocked and will go over and over what has happened in their head. Speaking to someone completely objective is helpful. We should not neglect the emotional impact on individuals. There are many free resources available including:

[Understanding Resistance \(aacesite.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](https://aacesite.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com)

[Reducing misogyny and improving sexual safety in the ambulance service - TASC's official podcast | Podcast on Spotify](#)

Bron provided a helpful list of **5 steps for managers if a concern of a sexual nature is raised**

1. Start from a place of believing, ensure colleague reporting is safe and identify if there may be a risk to others.
2. If an immediate risk is identified, notify the Safeguarding Team who will advise further.
3. Where possible, ask for a written statement of events to ensure you have an accurate description of their account.
4. Speak to your People Services Advisor for support with an initial assessment (fact finding and providing an opportunity to the alleged perpetrator to respond).
5. Offer wellbeing support to the colleague speaking up and to the alleged perpetrator.

Wellbeing support is also available to you, recognising how difficult these situations can be.

Bron also urged people to read the [Reports – The Angiolini Inquiry](#) which contains important learning in the context of how Wayne Couzens was able to do what he did and the red flags that were missed by his employers.

Mitigating risks if an organisation wants to investigate but it breaches confidentiality

For example, where an employee reports sexual misconduct but says they do not want any action. This is always a difficult situation because you have information that you can't 'unknow' and you need to protect your employees. Skilled and sensitive conversations, where you explain what the process will look like.

How we can help

We can help you navigate these complex issues in a number of ways:

- Awareness training aimed at helping workers to identify inappropriate behaviour, respond in the moment and escalate as appropriate
- Training for boards and senior managers on their responsibilities as leaders to influence the culture of the organisation
- Support when concerns are raised, including investigations, development of terms of reference, managing engagement with regulators, the police and other outside agencies
- Advising on the impact of the Fit and Proper Persons Regulations when issues impact on board members, including board member references
- Advice on the duty of candour
- Advice on managing overlapping police enquiries and requests for disclosure
- Responding to critical incidents
- Understanding the CQC's expectations and preparing for scrutiny
- Challenging CQC inspection report and enforcement action
- Advice on early notification of a claim and requests for disclosure under the Civil Procedure Rules or GDPR (Subject Access Request)
- Advice on how to navigate investigations and the response to a civil claim with a criminal or CQC prosecution pending
- Supporting a joined up approach to the various strands of a criminal, safeguarding, regulatory and claims investigation and your responses
- Supporting witnesses provide evidence in response to a claim
- Liaising with your PR teams or providing you with external PR support to help with press interest and reputational concerns

Resources

Here is a round up of the resources in this note

National Guardians Office report reviewing England's speak up culture in ambulance trusts ([click here to read](#)).

[Reducing Misogyny and Improving Sexual Safety in the Ambulance Service - aace.org.uk](#)

[Understanding Resistance \(aacesite.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](#)

[Written evidence from the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives for the Women & Equalities Committee with input from The Ambulance Staff Charity](#)

[Reducing misogyny and improving sexual safety in the ambulance service - TASC's official podcast | Podcast on Spotify](#)

[Reports – The Angiolini Inquiry](#)

NHS England [Sexual Safety Charter](#)

[National Guardians' office best practice guidelines](#)

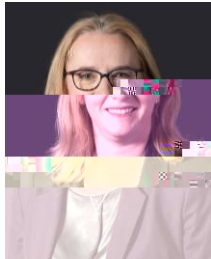
More information on the impact of the FPPR regulations (click [here](#))

GMC Guidance [Good medical practice - professional standards](#) updated in January 2024

[Creating respectful fair and compassionate workplaces - GMC \(gmc-uk.org\)](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/criminal-injuries-compensation-a-guide>

<https://www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-criminal-injury>



Lorna Hardman

Partner

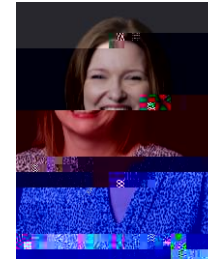
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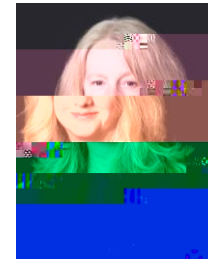
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