

F-2016-00051- HFEA's handling of whistleblowing concerns

8th March 2016

Summary of request

The Authority was asked for information regarding the HFEA's handling of whistleblowing incidents.

HFEA response

The HFEA's responses to your questions are listed below in blue:

General information concerning your handling of whistleblowing concerns:

(1) Your policies and/or internal guidelines and/or procedures for the handling of 'whistleblowing' (workers raising concerns about wrongdoing or malpractice) disclosures for the purposes of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

[The HFEA's policy/guidance on whistleblowing for clinic staff is attached.](#)

Please identify whether you record information regarding whistleblowing concerns. If you do so please provide:

[I can confirm that the HFEA does record information regarding whistleblowing concerns.](#)

(2) Details of the number of workers raising concerns about wrongdoing or malpractice in their workplace who have contacted you in relation to your duties as a regulator between the years 2005-2016.

[I can confirm that the HFEA has received 24 reported whistleblowing concerns during the period 2005 – 2016.](#)

Please include the following details:

i. Whether each individual contacted you on an anonymous, confidential, or self-identified basis,

[I can confirm that the individuals have contacted the HFEA on an anonymous, confidential and self-identifying basis.](#)

ii. A brief summary of the types of concerns raised

[I can confirm that the types of concerns that were raised included those relating to unsuitable practices within clinics and staff shortages.](#)

iii. If information was passed on to another regulator or enforcement body. If so please indicate the identity of the regulatory body and specify whether the concern was monitored by you following referral.

I can confirm that there have been 7 incidences where the HFEA has passed on information regarding a concern to another regulator or enforcement body. The HFEA does not record whether a concern passed onto another regulator or enforcement body is monitored.

iv. In respect of the above, please identify (if appropriate) whether any subsequent action was taken.

I can confirm that subsequent action was taken in a majority of cases when concerns were reported to the HFEA.

Information regarding the handling of whistleblowing concerns from vulnerable migrant workers:

I can confirm that the HFEA does not hold information regarding the handling of whistleblowing concerns from vulnerable migrant worker as it is not relevant within the sector that the Authority regulates.

In relation to question 2(i) above, the HFEA are unable to provide exact numbers for each category because there is a significant possibility that this information, when combined with other information to which you may reasonably be expected to have access, could lead to the identification of a person to whom the HFEA owes a duty of confidentiality. To disclose this information in these circumstances may therefore result in a breach of the confidentiality provisions of section 33A of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 (as amended), and the information is therefore exempt from disclosure under section 44 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

