

Preventing and responding to sexual misconduct in health and social care settings

From September 2024 to December 2025, the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA) held a series of webinars on understanding and tackling sexual misconduct within health and social care settings.

The webinars featured expert-led presentations and discussions on different aspects of sexual misconduct to encourage learning and help identify what more can be done to prevent and address the issue.

We have summarised some of the key insights from the webinars, arranged as insights for the four groups shown on the right.

We offer these insights for stakeholders to support their work in guiding individuals and teams, and on influencing and improving organisational cultures for sexual safety for all – both for patients and the workforce. They are offered in conjunction with the presentations from our webinar series and accompanying resources (which can be found on our website) to support collaborative work on this issue.



▶ Individual registrants/professionals



▶ Teams



▶ Employers



▶ Regulators, Accredited Registers and other national stakeholders

▶ [Click here to view the presentations from our webinar series and accompanying resources on our website](#)



Taking personal responsibility



Having self-awareness, insight and objectivity



Being open-minded and enquiring



Committing to learn and understand



Responding professionally



Listening to patients/service-users



Being prepared to act



Being engaged and constructive



Being prepared to take formal action

- ▶ Taking **personal responsibility** for addressing factors which may impact negatively on their ability to deliver safe care, individually and as a member of a team, before things have gone wrong; for example matters that are impacting on the individual's health and wellbeing.
- ▶ Having **self-awareness, insight and objectivity** to recognise when their own behaviour is moving away from accepted standards, and **proactivity** in acting to remedy it.
- ▶ Being **open-minded** to the possibility that colleagues may be involved in abusive behaviour, and **enquiring** about emerging signs, including weak signals that something is not right.
- ▶ **Committing to learn** about how abuse is perpetrated in order to better understand where it might be occurring or emerging – so being able to identify grooming and other techniques that are antecedents to abuse.
- ▶ **Committing to understand** how their own communication style can improve, to support a culture where everyone feels safe from sexual harassment.
- ▶ **Responding professionally** when their own behaviour, attitudes or conduct are called into question.
- ▶ **Listening** to patients/service-users when they may be trying to communicate something about an experience while under the care of another professional, and may be unsure about whether what happened was appropriate.
- ▶ Being **prepared to act** when a colleague's behaviour gives cause for concern – for example, where they have reason to believe that a patient/service-user or someone close to them is at risk.
- ▶ Being **engaged and constructive** in participating in initiatives to improve workplace culture and team-based initiatives. For example, participating in discussion of the risks of abuse occurring within the specific setting of care, within the nature of care being delivered, or within the ways in which care is delivered.
- ▶ **Being prepared to take formal action** when this is necessary, even in challenging or difficult circumstances.



Taking shared responsibility

▶ Taking **shared responsibility** for the sexual safety of patients/service-users and each other.

▶ Being **proactive** in discussing and acting on what regulatory and local standards and guidance mean in the specific context of the team's work, and reaching a shared and collective understanding.

▶ **Fostering a shared, constructive attitude** towards professional standards and regulation.

▶ **Thinking together** about the ways that misconduct might be perpetrated within the context of their work, and how it might effectively be prevented, or addressed when it arises.

▶ **Taking action** promptly when a team member's conduct, health or other factors are impacting negatively on the safety of patients/service-users or of the team.

▶ **Responding professionally**, when the work of the team is being challenged, investigated or subjected to scrutiny.

▶ **Being prepared to take formal action** to address and report problems when this is necessary.



Being proactive in discussing and acting on what regulatory and local standards and guidance mean



Fostering a shared, constructive attitude



Thinking together about the ways that misconduct might be perpetrated within the context of the work



Taking action promptly



Responding professionally



Being prepared to take formal action



Being proactive in discussing and acting on what regulatory and local standards and guidance mean in the specific context of the team's work



Creating a culture of sexual safety



Committing to understand how this issue might have a disproportionate impact on different groups



Going beyond a tick box approach



Working with other bodies



Making the right thing easy to do



Working to understand



Promoting understanding



Making reporting processes clear, efficient, and trusted



Supporting victims to recover and reintegrate

- ▶ **Creating a culture of sexual safety for patients/service-users and the workforce** in which perpetration of sexual misconduct cannot thrive – whatever the originating circumstances.
- ▶ **Committing to understand how this issue might be having a disproportionate impact on different groups**, and where there are specific vulnerabilities, and acting accordingly to mitigate risk.
- ▶ **Going beyond a tick box approach** to prevention to one which seeks to continually reflect, engage and improve.
- ▶ **Working with other bodies** to respond to patients/service-users who report abuse, support them throughout the processes that follow, and to access the other sources of help they need.
- ▶ **Making the right thing easy to do** for everyone who works within an organisation.
- ▶ **Working to understand** the local factors that might dissuade people from taking necessary action including reporting – and addressing them.
- ▶ **Promoting understanding** that sexual misconduct within the workforce is a patient safety issue.
- ▶ **Making reporting processes clear, efficient, and trusted** – with everyone able to see that action is taken where action is needed, in a fair and proportionate way.
- ▶ **Supporting victims to recover and reintegrate**, helping them to rebuild their confidence and trust.



Creating a culture of sexual safety for patients/service-users and the workforce in which perpetration of sexual misconduct cannot thrive



Promoting and communicating standards and guidance



Keeping up to date, learning and reflecting



Working with employers to make the purposes of regulatory action clear



Working with employers and other national stakeholders to simplify and streamline the processes for dealing with misconduct



Promoting insight and learning



Committing to learning about the impacts of sexual misconduct



Working with each other to make guidance on sexual misconduct consistent and coherent

- ▶ **Promoting and communicating standards and guidance** which make it clear to professionals that sexual misconduct will not be tolerated.
- ▶ **Keeping up to date, learning and reflecting** on the latest understanding about this form of misconduct, how it is perpetrated, and its effect on victims.
- ▶ **Working with employers** to make the purposes of regulatory action clear, and to communicate the thresholds for referral effectively.
- ▶ **Working with employers and other national stakeholders** to simplify and streamline the processes for dealing with misconduct – and so that each stage supports and enables the others to work effectively and efficiently, creating systems that are transparent, accountable and trusted.
- ▶ **Promoting insight and learning** across the system, from their own role within it – for example, to support professionals to be more aware of ‘weak signals’ that a colleague might be a risk to patients/service-users.
- ▶ **Committing to learning about the impacts of sexual misconduct**, and how this should determine regulatory decision-making – for example, understanding the impact of trauma on a witness’ ability to give evidence.
- ▶ **Working with each other** to make their guidance on sexual misconduct as consistent and coherent as possible – to support a shared workforce culture of responsibility, prevention and early action.



Promoting and communicating standards and guidance which make it clear to professionals that sexual misconduct will not be tolerated