

Two years on, and the investigation into the incident, which, was the subject of my disclosure, is ongoing. For that reason alone it would be imprudent of my to divulge any details of either the incident itself or the events which have occurred over this period.

As a major incident with extensive implications which warranted extreme responses, (both against myself and others), and cover-up, no single article can do it justice. It would be fair to say I endured a calculated and deliberate destructive process aimed at burying both myself, and the disclosure, and from what I understand this is a common experience amongst whistleblowers. I count myself among that rare and fortunate few for whom survival of this process was never going to be an issue, and while that has prolonged the pain, it has also advanced my learning and understanding.

From my own experiences of events I am forced to question the wisdom of the introduction to the NMC code of a clause requiring nurses report risk. In my experience the majority of nurses want to report risk, but nurses are also human beings and we all balance the risk to ourselves against our actions. While our hearts tell us one thing, our heads another, and with nurses losing careers, incomes, homes, relationships and some even having committed suicide all because of reporting risk, and now, being within the NMC code, that requirement, that personal risk, is almost a job description.

Personally, my own opinion is that we should encourage nurses to come forward, addressing the individuals fears through a better understanding of the risks of whistle blowing and improved protection from the potential consequences, realise that every messenger counts because every message counts. It isn't that difficult, it simply requires a commitment from both legislative and regulatory bodies to listen to whistleblowers experiences, understand them, and more importantly acknowledge them as a reality, that horrendous stories aren't tales of fancy but reflect a common shared experience. Change comes through understanding, and understanding starts with listening.

Once an incident is of such magnitude that it requires a cover-up then the whistleblower is doomed. Whatever the organisation, when the sole aim is to bury the incident, then both the message and messenger have to go the same way, and the lengths organisations will go to in order to achieve this are staggering in the ferocity of their destructive intent. Unfortunately this process can only cease when the whistleblower is destroyed because as with the old saying "oh what tangled webs we

weave....etc.”, while the initial cover up is in respect of the incident itself, the danger of the cover-up being revealed needs covering up, and so the web of deception becomes bigger and bigger, increasingly more extensive in who it involves, and with far more at stake than was originally the case. It isn't simply the case of the whistle blower bringing a disclosure, but the danger of a whole web of deception being revealed, and it this understanding of the process, the escalation of risk and acknowledgement of the risk to the individual, which is so sadly lacking.

The past two years have been a learning curve, I can't admit to having welcomed the experience, but nonetheless have learned from it and if there is one thought I would leave you with it's simply that as a whistle blower you are about to face a storm, the magnitude of which will match the significance of your disclosure. This is a storm you will face alone, all the words of organisations and regulatory bodies promising a safe haven, will fly past as though leaves, for which it has no more than contempt such is it's ferocity. This storm has only one purpose, your total and complete destruction, and for the vast majority it will succeed. For the tiny minority who manage to weather it, none will escape unscathed. There is but one certainty, that if you weather the storm till it blows out, till there is no more left it can throw at you, battered and bruised, if you can pick yourself up, stand tall and still have the will to carry on, then, and only then might you reach your final goal.