Many of the questions that arose during the launch of the Whistleblowers’ Support Scheme pilot related to the themes we have tackled below but if you have more queries or comments, please send them to NHSI.wbss@nhs.net

Q. What have we learnt from the NHS England scheme?

The NHS England pilot scheme for primary care launched earlier this year is currently being evaluated by the Liverpool John Moores University. Our pilot scheme will be evaluated by the same team to ensure we build on the results of the NHS England evaluation. However, it is still important that we receive continuous feedback from all parties concerned including the applicants on the pilot scheme, the wider whistleblowing community, the providers of support and employers.

There are some areas where we have already used learning from the NHS England scheme to develop ours:

- **Panel member training**: training sessions for prospective panel members help to ensure consistency and a better understanding of the role and responsibility of the panel members. We have already delivered training sessions at venues across England and will continue this as appropriate.

- **Communication with applicants**: we have included clear timeframes throughout the application process to ensure applicants are informed of the progress of their application as quickly as possible. We will also keep in regular contact with all the whistleblowers on the pilot support scheme to get their feedback on progress.

- **Mentoring and network groups for applicants**: We will facilitate network group meetings of the applicants on the scheme where they wish to do so to give them the chance to share their experiences and consider offering each other mentoring.

- **Providing support**: We understand one support package will not fit all. Working Transitions is an independent company that will provide full assessment and individually tailored support to each applicant on the scheme. We will monitor this closely and encourage feedback from whistleblowers on the scheme to ensure this happens.
Q. I understand this is a pilot – when does the full scheme start?

The scheme is currently in a pilot phase which will last approximately six months (October to April). We have a pilot phase to ensure that any future scheme is fit for purpose.

Q. Why did the Employment Support Scheme become the Whistleblowers’ Support Scheme?

The design group agreed that the name ‘Employment Support Scheme’ was raising questions about whether it implied a guarantee of employment. The scheme has been developed to support whistleblowers to address issues and potentially prepare them to return to work. However, a return to work may not be always prove to be the right or desirable goal for all those on the scheme. With this in mind the design group agreed to change the name to ‘Whistleblowers’ Support Scheme’.

Q. As you will reimburse NHS employees for staff time, will you pay whistleblowers for sitting on panels?

Although we currently reimburse expenses, this is under consideration.

Q. How will we ensure employers across the country support the scheme and not just in certain areas such as the north west?

We are working with NHS England to encourage trusts to support the scheme and the applicants. We have organised employer workshops throughout October to discuss what opportunities they could offer, such as training, work shadowing, placements and work experience. Some employers have already contacted us to discuss how they can get involved and once we have completed the workshops we anticipate we will have identified employers across England that can offer a variety of opportunities.

We are also working with organisations such as Health Education England, National Clinical Assessment Service, NHS Providers, NHS Employers, Care Quality Commission and the National Guardian’s Office to see what opportunities for support can be offered across organisations.