

# Learning Session Plan: Speaking Up and Raising Concerns

- **Delivery Format:** Session can be delivered in-person (classroom/meeting room with projector or screen) or virtually (via Teams or Zoom). Interactive throughout - encourage discussion, questions, and short reflective activities.
- **Facilitator Requirements:** Delivered by a qualified healthcare professional or experienced educator/facilitator familiar with HCPC standards and raising concerns. The facilitator should be comfortable guiding discussions and handling sensitive topics.
- **Equipment Needed:**
  - In-person: Projector/screen, laptop with PowerPoint, speakers, microphone, flipchart or whiteboard for group input.
  - Virtual: Stable internet connection, laptop with webcam and microphone, access to Teams/Zoom, ability to share screen and slides.
- **Duration:** 30 minutes.
- **Audience:** HCPC registrants and students in healthcare settings.
- **Group Size:**
  - Recommended 8–20 participants for in-person sessions to encourage interaction.
  - For virtual sessions, up to 25–30 participants are manageable; larger groups may require breakout rooms or additional facilitators.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Explain why speaking up is essential for patient safety, professional accountability, and trust.
2. Identify HCPC standards, guiding and raising concerns.
3. Apply constructive and effective approaches when raising concerns.
4. Adapt approaches depending on the situation, considering urgency, sensitivity, and context.

## Session Outline

1. Title Slide and welcome (1 min)
  - **Slide:** *“Speak Up! Raising Concerns in Healthcare”*
  - **Script:** Welcome everyone, to today’s session on speaking up and raising concerns in healthcare. We’ll explore why it’s a core professional duty for all HCPC registrants. You play a critical role in ensuring patient safety and maintaining high standards of care. Today, we’ll explore why speaking up is essential, how to do it effectively, and how to

adapt your approach to different situations. By the end, you'll feel more confident in addressing concerns constructively. Let's dive in!

## 2. Learning Objectives (1 min)

- **Slide:** *Learning Objectives (4 points)*
- **Script:** Today, we have four key objectives. First, you'll understand why speaking up is essential for keeping patients safe and improving care outcomes. Second, we'll look at how HCPC standards guide our responsibilities so you know what is expected of you as a registrant and how to act in line with professional requirements. Third, we'll explore practical, constructive ways to raise concerns that are professional, clear, and effective. And finally, you'll learn how to adapt your approach depending on the situation, whether it's an urgent risk, a less severe issue, or involves a senior colleague or a sensitive matter.

## 3. Icebreaker/Reflection (5 mins)

- **Slide:** *Share your experience*
- **Script:** To get us warmed up, let's do a quick icebreaker. Have you ever seen or heard about someone speaking up in a healthcare setting, maybe during a placement or in a story? What happened? After a minute, we'll share a few takeaways as a group. This will help us start thinking about why speaking up matters.

## 4. Examples of Situations to Speak Up About (3 mins)

- **Slide:** *Examples of speaking up*
- **Script:** Thank you for sharing your experiences just now. To give you a clearer idea of what speaking up can look like in practice, here are some examples. It can range from unsafe practices — like equipment being used incorrectly or missed checks — to colleague behaviour such as bullying or harassment. You might notice errors or near misses in patient care, or identify systemic concerns like staffing issues or unsafe policies. And of course, professional misconduct or breaches of standards are also situations where raising concerns is necessary. The point is, speaking up isn't always about big, dramatic events — it's about noticing when something isn't right and taking appropriate action to protect patients, colleagues, and the service as a whole.

## Section 1 - Importance of Speaking Up

### 5. Why Speaking Up Matters (2 mins)

- **Slide:** *Why Speaking Up Matters*
- **Script:** This slide gives a quick overview of why speaking up matters. It helps protect patient safety and prevent harm, supports learning and continuous improvement so we don't repeat past failings, and ensures we meet our HCPC regulatory duties. Speaking up also supports professionalism and accountability, and helps foster a culture of openness and trust within healthcare teams. In the next couple of slides, we'll explore each of these points in more detail, with guidance for how to act effectively.

### 6. The statistics (30 min)

- **Slide:** *153,008*
- **Script:** Let's start with this number: 153,008. In 2020, the UK Office for National Statistics reported that 153,008 deaths were considered avoidable. These are premature deaths in people under 75 that could have been prevented through public health measures or effectively treated with timely healthcare interventions. This number is a stark reminder of why speaking up matters — small concerns, if raised and addressed early, can prevent harm and save lives.

### 7. Protects Patient Safety (2 mins)

- **Slide:** *Protecting Patient Safety and Preventing Harm*
- **Script:** One of the strongest reasons to raise concerns is patient safety. In 2020, nearly a quarter of deaths in the UK were classified as treatable — meaning they could have been avoided with the right interventions. That tells us there is still room to improve. It's important to remember that harm is rarely caused by a single 'bad apple.' Most often, it comes from small failings across complex systems — communication gaps, missed checks, or processes that aren't working as they should. As healthcare becomes more complex, there are more points where things can go wrong. That's why prevention requires everyone's input. Each of us plays a role in spotting risks and speaking up before harm occurs.

### 8. Learning and Continuous Improvement (2 mins)

- **Slide:** *Learning and Continuous Improvement*
- **Script:** Speaking up also supports continuous learning. Raising and listening to concerns early prevents small issues from growing into bigger ones. When we

highlight what isn't working, we create opportunities to learn and adapt for the future. Leaders and managers rely on this feedback — without it, they are working in the dark. Often, it is the people closest to patients who see risks first. And when something does go wrong, apologising and being open is always the right thing to do. It shows accountability, builds trust, and starts the process of learning and repair.

## 9. Supports Accountability and Professionalism (2 mins)

- **Slide:** *Trust, Accountability, and Professionalism*
- **Script:** Trust is at the heart of healthcare. Patients trust us to act in their best interests, colleagues trust us to work safely together, and organisations trust us to raise issues when we see them.  
Being open and honest strengthens those relationships. It also reinforces our professionalism and accountability — showing that we are committed to delivering the best possible care, even when things don't go as planned.  
Ultimately, speaking up protects the core reason many of us entered healthcare in the first place: to provide safe, effective, and dignified care to those who need it most.

## 10. Learning from History (2 mins)

- **Slide:** *Learning from History*
- **Script:** We can also see the importance of speaking up by looking back at past failings. The Mid-Staffordshire Inquiry revealed how concerns were ignored or dismissed, leading to unnecessary deaths and suffering. The lesson is clear: silence allows harm to grow, while openness prevents it.  
Today, some even compare current challenges in the NHS to what happened in Mid-Staffs, reminding us that we must not repeat history. Raising concerns early is not about blame — it is about kindness. It helps colleagues who may be struggling, it protects patients, and it strengthens the organisation as a whole.

# Section 2 - HCPC Standards

## 11. Introducing HCPC Standards (1 min)

- **Slide:** *HCPC Standards*
- **Script:** Now that we've explored why speaking up is so important — protecting patients, supporting colleagues, fostering trust, and learning from history — it's time to look at the formal professional framework that underpins this duty. The HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics clearly set out what

registrants must do when they see something that could compromise safety, dignity, or care.

## 12. The Standards (1 min)

- **Slide:** *The Standards Behind Speaking Up*
- **Script:** The HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics are clear: raising concerns, being open, and acting on issues that could affect safety, dignity, or care is not optional. These standards guide what you must do, how you must act, and what behaviours are expected of you in practice. We'll focus on Standard 7, which covers raising concerns, and Standard 8, which covers the duty of candour.

## 13. The HCPC Standards (3 min)

- **Slide:** *HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics*
- **Script:** Standard 7 focuses on raising concerns about safety. It requires you to act promptly and appropriately whenever a service user's safety or well-being is at risk. You also have a duty to support and encourage colleagues to speak up — and you must never prevent them from doing so. Importantly, the safety of patients always comes first, even above professional or personal loyalties. Finally, Standard 7 makes it clear that you must report colleagues' bullying, harassment, or intimidation through the proper procedures. This ensures that unsafe behaviours are addressed and that the environment remains safe for patients and staff alike.

Standard 8 is the Duty of Candour. This standard comes into play when something has gone wrong. It requires you to be open, honest, and transparent. You must inform your employer, explain what has happened to service users or their carers, describe the likely impact, and take steps to correct any mistakes. An apology is an important part of this process. It acknowledges that care could have been better and helps rebuild trust. Crucially, apologising is not an admission of liability, and it does not affect your professional indemnity insurance.

It's not just qualified professionals who are expected to raise concerns—students have the same responsibility. As part of their professional conduct, students are expected to speak up if they see something that could put patients at risk, or if something has gone wrong in their own practice.

## 14. Why HCPC Standards Matter

- **Slide:** *Why Standards Matter*

- **Script:** These standards are not just rules — they protect patients, colleagues, and you as a professional. Following the standards ensures accountability, integrity, and trust in healthcare. They are also a safeguard against fitness-to-practise concerns, because they clearly define the behaviours expected of all registrants. In short, knowing the standards gives you both a framework and the confidence to act when you see something that could compromise safety or care.

15. Quiz question 1 (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz question 1 - Patient Safety*

16. Quiz question 1 - Answer (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz question 1: The Correct Answer*
- **Answer:** 22.8%

17. Quiz question 2 (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz question 2 - Raising Concerns Early*

18. Quiz question 2 - Answer (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz question 2: The Correct Answer*
- **Answer:** To prevent small problems from becoming bigger and harder to manage.

19. Quiz question 3 (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz question 3 - Raising Concerns Early*

20. Quiz question 3 - Answer (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz question 3: The Correct Answer*
- **Answer:** Report it through the proper procedures.

21. Summary for sections 1 and 2 (2 mins)

- **Slide:** *Key Messages So Far*
- **Script:** Let's pause here and bring together the key messages we've covered so far.

First, patient safety has to come before everything else. We've seen that a significant proportion of deaths are avoidable, and preventing harm depends on openness and shared responsibility — not just blaming individuals.

Second, raising concerns early is vital. Small issues can grow into serious problems if they're left unaddressed, and leaders can only act if they receive accurate feedback from staff on the ground.

Third, this isn't optional — it's a professional duty. The HCPC Standards are very clear that we must act on concerns, prioritise safety over loyalties, and be open and honest when things go wrong.

And finally, trust and accountability. Being open isn't just about compliance; it's about building stronger teams, supporting patients, and staying true to the values that brought us into healthcare in the first place.

## Section 3: Constructive and Effective Approaches

### 22. Constructive and Effective Approaches (1 min)

- **Slide:** *Constructive and Effective Approaches*
- **Script:** Now that we've explored the HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics clearly set out what registrants must do when they see something that could compromise safety, dignity, or care. Now, let's look at how we can approach problems with effective and constructive approaches.

### 23. Effective Communication (1 min)

- **Slide:** *Communicating Effectively*
- **Script:** This is about how we actually approach those conversations. Speaking up isn't just about what you say, but how you say it. Taking a moment to reflect, choosing the right time, and using respectful, open language can mean the difference between defensiveness and real dialogue. And when someone raises a concern, our instinct might be to defend ourselves or explain quickly. But one of the most important skills we can use is active listening. That means giving the other person your full attention, withholding judgment, and genuinely trying to understand their perspective. By listening carefully, you not only gain insight into the concern itself, but you also show respect and openness, which helps build trust and makes it more likely people will continue speaking up in the future.

## 24. The Correct Channels (1 min)

- **Slide:** *Using the Right Channels*
- **Script:** Not every concern needs to go straight to the top. Often, the quickest and most effective way to resolve something is locally, with the individual involved or a manager. But if concerns aren't addressed, we need to know how to escalate them safely. The NHS has Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, and regulators like the HCPC or CQC exist as external routes. Whatever path you take, documenting and following up is essential.

## 25. Psychological Barriers (2 mins)

- **Slide:** *Overcoming Psychological Barriers*
- **Script:** It's important to acknowledge that speaking up isn't easy. Many people hesitate out of fear of confrontation, negative reactions, or even career consequences. Hierarchies in healthcare can make it especially intimidating, and if the culture is one to blame, people are less likely to feel safe raising issues. That's why organisations must shift towards a learning culture — one that focuses on improvement rather than punishment. And equally important, you should remember to look after yourself. Raising concerns can be stressful, so seeking support — whether through organisational resources, peer support, or clear guidance on processes — is a vital part of this journey.

## 26. Developing Effective Approaches (2 mins)

- **Slide:** *Developing Effective Approaches*
- **Script:** Here are four steps to develop effective approaches to raise concerns. Raising concerns effectively requires preparation and strategy. First, be clear and factual—describe what you've observed without jumping to conclusions. For example, instead of saying, 'This nurse is careless,' say, 'I noticed the patient's chart wasn't updated.' Next, choose the right channel: a quick word with a colleague might resolve a minor issue, but serious concerns may require a formal report or even whistleblowing to an external body. Always aim to be constructive—suggest solutions rather than pointing fingers. And don't forget active listening. When you raise a concern, listen to the response to ensure mutual understanding. These steps help ensure your concern is taken seriously and acted upon.



## Section 4: Speaking Up in Different Situations

### 27. Speaking Up in Different Situations (1 min)

- **Slide:** *Speaking Up in Different Situations*
- **Script:** We've seen why speaking up matters — protecting patients, supporting colleagues, building trust, and learning from past failings. Now, let's connect this to the professional framework that guides us. The HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics make it clear: registrants have a duty to act when something could compromise safety, dignity, or care. They also emphasise how we communicate those concerns effectively. With that foundation in mind, let's turn to how our approach may differ depending on the situation.

### 28. Different Situations (1 min)

- **Slide:** *Types of Situations You Might Encounter*
- **Script:** Before we look at how to respond, let's consider the different types of situations you might encounter as an HCPC registrant. Urgent risks are immediate threats to patient safety, requiring rapid action. Non-urgent or early concerns are smaller issues that could escalate if not addressed. Situations involve senior staff or complex interpersonal matters. Finally, sensitive or complex issues relate to wider service management or repeated unsafe practices. Understanding the type of situation helps you decide the best way to act.

### 29. Adaptation (2 min)

- **Slide:** *Adapting to Different Situations*
- **Script:** Not every situation calls for the same approach. If you see an immediate risk to a patient, like a wrong dosage being administered, you need to act fast—politely but firmly raise it with the person involved or escalate to a supervisor. For non-urgent issues, like a recurring documentation error, start with an informal chat during a team meeting. If the concern involves a senior colleague, it can feel intimidating, but follow your workplace's escalation policy, and don't hesitate to involve HR or a regulator if the issue persists. For sensitive matters, including systemic problems, mistakes under the duty of candour, genetic/confidentiality dilemmas, whistleblowing, or student-specific concerns, one must follow the correct procedures while always prioritising safety and support.  
Adapting your approach ensures your message is effective and appropriate for the context.

30. Key Principles (1 min)

- **Slide:** *Key Principles Across All Situations*
- **Script:** Regardless of the type of concern, some principles remain consistent. Always prioritise safety and act early, escalating concerns if they're not resolved. Communicate clearly and compassionately, seek support when needed, and work within a culture of learning — focusing on improvement rather than assigning blame.

31. Quiz question 4 (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz Question 4: Constructive and Effective Approaches*

32. Quiz question 4 - Answer (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz question 4: The Correct Answer*
- **Answer:** Preparing what to say, using clear observations, asking open questions, and listening actively.

33. Quiz question 5 (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz Question 5: Urgent vs Non-Urgent Situations*

34. Quiz question 5 - Answer (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz question 5: The Correct Answer*
- **Answer:** Take immediate action to make the situation safe and then raise the concern.

35. Quiz question 6 (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz Question 6: Sensitive or Complex Situations*

36. Quiz question 6 - Answer (10 secs)

- **Slide:** *Quiz question 6: The Correct Answer*
- **Answer:** Raise the concern via proper organisational channels, such as a manager or Freedom to Speak Up Guardian.

37. Summary of the Learning Session (2 mins)

- **Slide:** *Key Takeaways: Speaking Up & Raising Concerns*

- **Script:** To close, let's bring it all together. Speaking up matters because it protects patients, prevents harm, and maintains trust. The HCPC standards remind us that raising concerns is not optional — it's a professional duty. How we speak up is just as important: with compassion, clarity, and in a timely way, remembering that raising concerns is ultimately a kindness. Different situations call for different approaches, but safety must always come first. At the heart of it all, speaking up is a core part of professionalism, accountability, and delivering safe, high-quality care.

### 38. Thank you and Reflection (1 min)

- **Slide:** *Thank you! Any questions or thoughts to share?*
- **Script:** Thank you all for your active participation and dedication to becoming healthcare professionals who prioritise patient safety. You've shown great insight today, and I'm confident you'll carry these skills into your careers. Before we wrap up, let's take a moment for any questions or reflections. What's one thing you'll take away about speaking up? Your actions will shape a culture of openness and improve patient care.