

SPEAK UP, Stand Strong: Raising Concerns with Confidence



How to use the The SPEAK UP model

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The **SPEAK UP model** is designed to help **HCPC students** learn how to speak up effectively and understand when it's necessary to raise concerns. It promotes clear, constructive action tailored to different situations – all in line with HCPC professional standards.

S

Spot the concern

Notice when something doesn't seem right – including risks to patient safety, poor clinical practice, unprofessional behaviour or breaches in standards. Trust your instincts and stay alert to early warning signs. Small issues, if ignored, can escalate into serious problems. Recognising concerns early is the first step in protecting those we care for.

P

Prepare how and what to say

Think before you speak. Stay calm, focus on what you've seen or heard, and separate facts from feelings. Plan what you want to say or have said on your behalf. Consider the outcome you're aiming for and how best to achieve it. Choose a trusted person or route that feels right for you to raise the concern. Being prepared builds confidence and clarity.

E

Express yourself constructively

Use respectful, non-confrontational language that focuses on safety and standards. Phrases like "I noticed..." or "I'm concerned that..." help frame your concern factually and professionally. Avoid blame – keep your message focused on the issue, not the individual. Always maintain patient and colleague confidentiality when speaking up.

A

Act according to HCPC standards

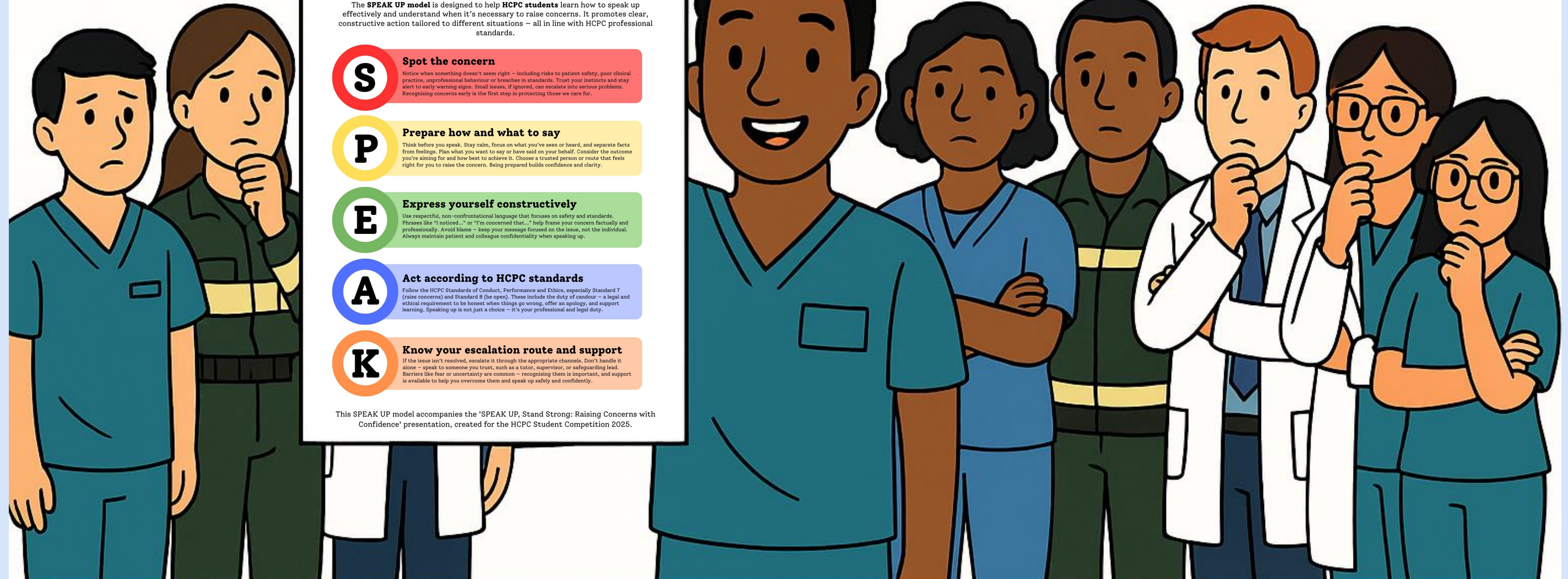
Follow the HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics, especially Standard 7 (raise concerns) and Standard 8 (be open). These include the duty of candour – a legal and ethical requirement to be honest when things go wrong, offer an apology, and support learning. Speaking up is not just a choice – it's your professional and legal duty.

K

Know your escalation route and support







If the issue isn't resolved, escalate it through the appropriate channels. Don't handle it alone – speak to someone you trust, such as a tutor, supervisor, or safeguarding lead. Barriers like fear or uncertainty are common – recognising them is important, and support is available to help you overcome them and speak up safely and confidently.

This SPEAK UP model accompanies the 'SPEAK UP, Stand Strong: Raising Concerns with Confidence' presentation, created for the HCPC Student Competition 2025.



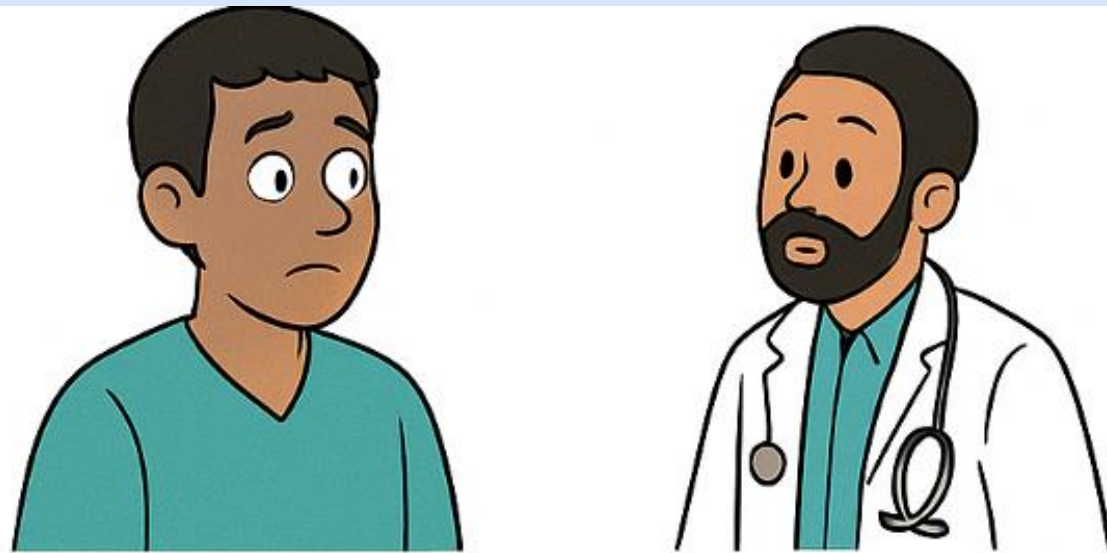
Session Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will:

-  Understand how to spot concerns in practice and explain why raising them is essential for safe and ethical care.
-  Identify ways to prepare what to say and select appropriate methods for expressing concerns professionally.
-  Demonstrate effective communication while maintaining patient and colleague confidentiality.
-  Explain the importance of acting in accordance with HCPC Standards and fulfilling the duty of candour.
-  Recognise common barriers to speaking up and know where to seek support or escalate concerns when needed.
-  Apply the SPEAK UP model confidently to real-life scenarios, demonstrating professionalism, reflection, and alignment with HCPC standards.

Icebreaker Activity: What Would You Do?

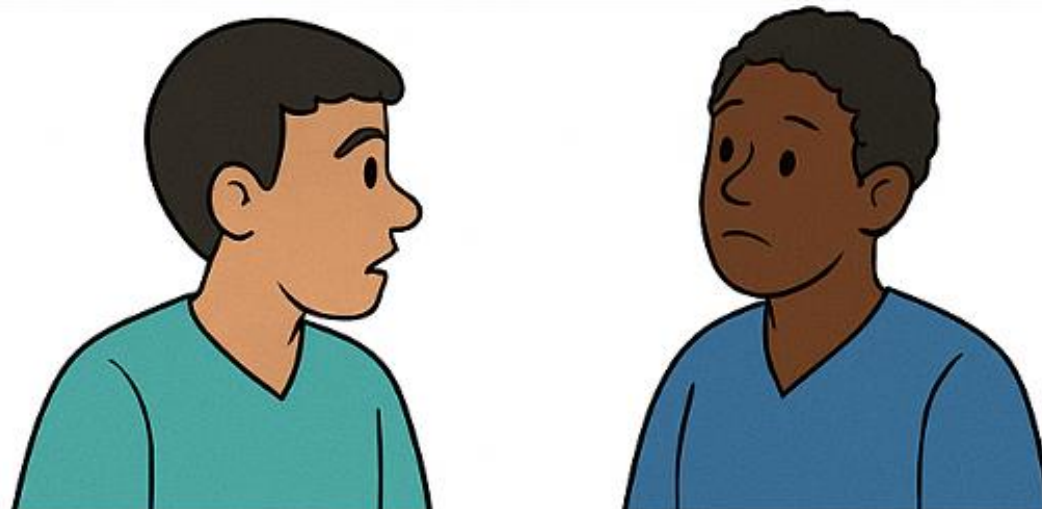
Scenario: You see a colleague skip hand hygiene before assessing a patient.
Do you...?



A) Say nothing



B) Remind them gently



C) Report this to a supervisor immediately



D) Post about it on social media

Let's break down the steps of what we should do before we **SPEAK UP!**



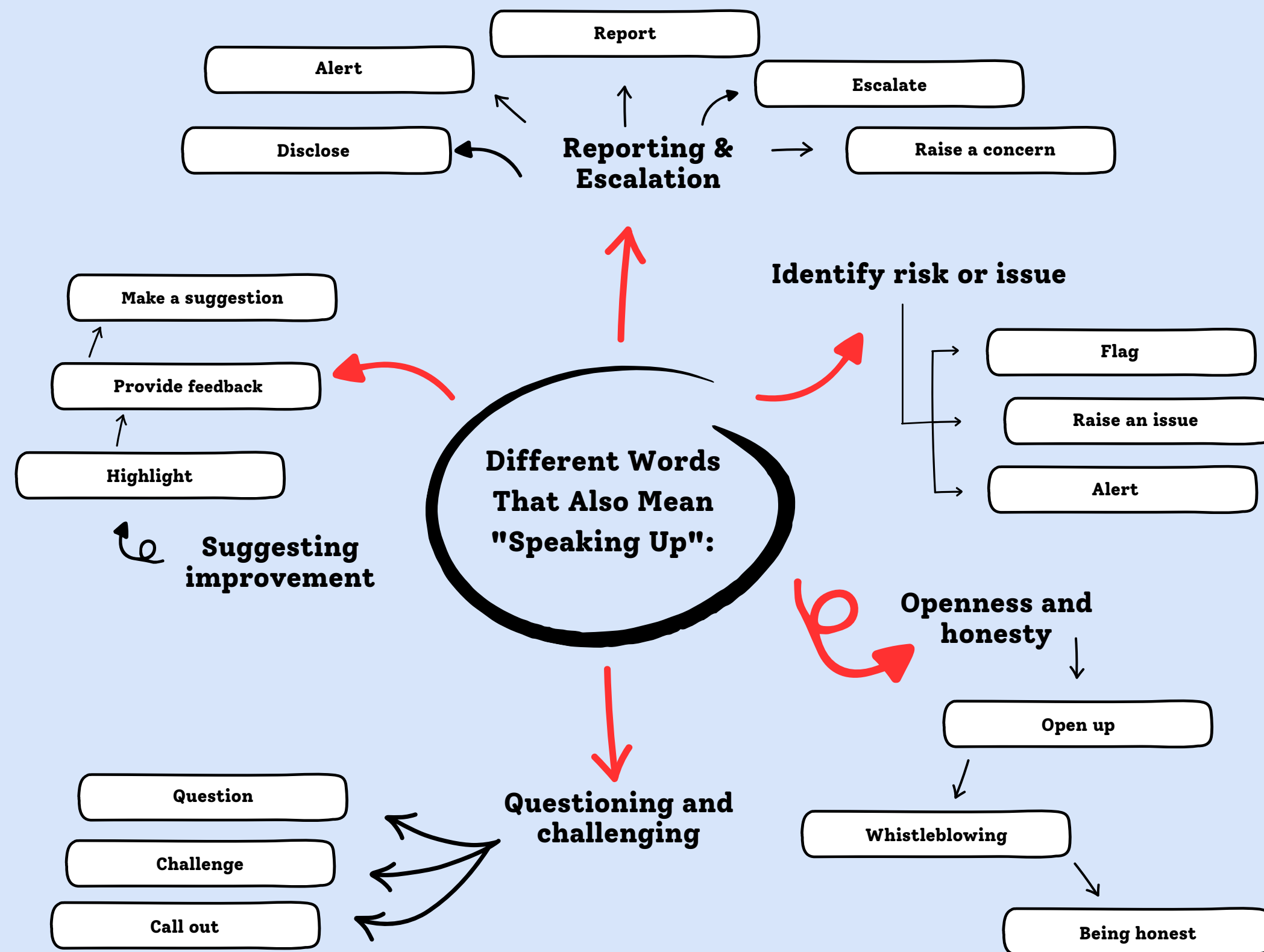
Spot the concern

Speaking up is about raising anything that could affect safety, quality of care, or the working environment. This includes:

✅ **Minor issues** – e.g. a missed hand hygiene opportunity, a one-off, or something that "doesn't feel right".

⚠️ **Concerns that could escalate** – e.g. repeated mistakes, unsafe shortcuts, patterns of poor behaviour, or communication breakdowns.


🚨 **Urgent risks** – e.g. immediate threats to patient safety, safeguarding concerns, serious misconduct, or dangerous decisions.








Spot the concern


Why Does Speaking Up Matter?

 **Protects patient safety** – Raising concerns helps prevent harm, ensuring care remains safe, effective, and ethical (Okuyama et al. 2014).

 **Promotes accountability** – Encourages a culture where individuals and teams take responsibility for actions and outcomes.

 **Upholds professional integrity** – Demonstrates commitment to ethical standards, transparency, and doing the right thing even when it's difficult.

 **Supports colleagues** – Speaking up can highlight discrimination, bullying, or unsafe behaviour, helping to create a respectful and inclusive environment


 Speaking up is a professional duty, not just a choice. Fulfilling the **duty of candour** means being open and honest with patients when something goes wrong. It is both a **legal duty** (Regulation 20, Health and Social Care Act 2008) and a **professional responsibility** (HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics 8), promoting trust, learning, and transparency in healthcare.


In the 2024 NHS Staff Survey, 71.5% of staff felt safe raising concerns – unchanged from 2023 and down from 75% in 2021, showing a worrying plateau (National Guardian's Office, 2025).





Prepare how and what to say


Before speaking up, take a moment to prepare yourself:


 **Plan out what you want to say – or what you'd like someone to say on your behalf.**

 Reflect on what you've seen, heard, or felt – and try to separate facts from feelings.

 Think about the outcome you're hoping for – what change, or action would help?

 You don't need proof, just a genuine concern or uncertainty.

 Decide how you'll speak up – openly, confidentially or anonymously. Anonymous reporting is an option, although it may limit and make it harder to give you updates or follow up on the concern.

 **Plan how to express your concern** – you can speak up in the way that feels most comfortable, safe, and appropriate. Here are different ways to raise a concern:



E

Express yourself constructively

Common Pitfalls When Expressing Concerns

COMMON PITFALLS WHEN EXPRESSING CONCERNS

USING AGGRESSIVE OR OR EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE



FOCUSING ON BLAME RATHER THAN SOLUTIONS



BEING VAGUE OR UNSPECIFIC



IGNORING CONFIDENTIALITY



✓ Use respectful, calm language:

- "I noticed that..."
- "I'm concerned about..."
- "I just wanted to raise something I observed..."
- "Can I check something I saw earlier?"

✗ Avoid:

- "Why would you do that?"
- "You're wrong."
- "You're being unsafe."
- "What were you thinking?"

E

Express yourself constructively



DOs and DON'Ts for Maintaining Confidentiality When Raising

Concerns

Making up is important – but so is protecting patient and colleague confidentiality. Confidentiality must be respected under **HCPC Standards** and the **Data Protection Act 2018**.

DON'TS	VS	DO'S
<div><div>✗</div>Don't name individuals in public or group settings.</div> <div><div>✗</div>Don't share concerns in WhatsApp chats or social media.</div> <div><div>✗</div>Don't include screenshots or private messages without consent.</div> <div><div>✗</div>Don't share details that could indirectly identify someone.</div> <div><div>✗</div>Don't disclose information unless you're sure it's safe and appropriate.</div> <div><div>✗</div>Don't include opinions, assumptions, or blame.</div>		<div><div>✓</div>Stick to the facts – share only what's necessary to explain the concern.</div> <div><div>✓</div>Use private and secure methods, such as:<div><div>• In person, in a private setting</div><div>• A phone call in a private room</div><div>• Email- using a secure university or workplace account</div><div>• Official reporting tools (e.g. incident forms)</div></div></div> <div><div>✓</div>Protect identities – avoid using names unless absolutely appropriate.</div> <div><div>✓</div>Raise concerns through trusted people within your university or workplace, rather than friends or family outside these settings.</div>



When raising a concern confidentially, your identity should only be shared if there is a legal requirement. Wherever possible, this should not happen without your consent – and if disclosure is necessary, it should be discussed with you beforehand.



Act according to HCPC standards

HCPC Standards Relating to Speaking Up & Raising Concerns

HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics:

- **1.7** Raise concerns if colleagues are discriminating or providing substandard care.
- **7.1** Report any concerns about the safety or well-being of service users promptly and appropriately.
- **7.2** Support and encourage others to report concerns; do not prevent anyone from raising concerns.
- **7.4** Prioritise the safety and well-being of service users over professional or other loyalties.
- **7.5** Raise concerns if you witness bullying, harassment, or intimidation.
- **7.6** Follow up reported concerns and escalate if necessary.
- **7.7** Act on concerns raised to you, investigating or escalating them appropriately.

🛡️ **Standards 8.1 & 8.2 link directly to the Duty of Candour** – the legal requirement to be open and honest when things go wrong, inform others, explain, and apologise (Health and Care Professions Council, 2024).



Know your escalation route and support

Identifying and overcoming barriers to speaking up

Recognising a barrier to speaking up is a concern in itself – it signals that the environment may not feel psychologically safe or supportive.

🛡️ If something is stopping you from speaking up, that’s something to speak up about too.

BARRIER	WHY IT IS AN ISSUE	SOLUTION AND WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN
Fear of negative consequences	This fear can silence important safety concerns and delay action.	▶ You may worry about backlash or being treated differently. But speaking up is a protected professional act. When you raise a concern, you should be thanked, supported, and given feedback.
Worrying it’s “not your place”	This belief allows unsafe or unprofessional behaviour to go unchallenged.	▶ Remember – students are registered under HCPC expectations and are expected to raise concerns. Your concern should be taken seriously and valued as part of safe practice.
Not wanting to cause trouble	Staying silent could allow risks to continue or worsen.	▶ Reframe speaking up as a positive action – you’re helping improve care, not causing trouble. Concerns should prompt learning and improvement – not blame.
Doubting if it is serious enough	Small things can lead to big risks – and inaction can lead to regret.	▶ If you're unsure, it's still okay to speak up. It's better to raise a potential issue than risk harm. Your concern should be reviewed and escalated appropriately.
Speaking to someone more senior	Power dynamics can prevent accountability and lead to a culture of silence.	▶ Raise it through safe options – such as practice educators, tutors, or safeguarding leads. You should be listened to with respect and supported throughout the process.
Assuming someone else will act	Everyone may assume the same – and no one acts.	▶ If you’ve noticed the concern, don’t rely on others to raise it; you are in the best position to speak up! Your concern should lead to timely action and contribute to safer care.



Know your escalation route and support

Contact and support systems

You are **never** alone when raising a concern!

It's completely normal to feel unsure, worried, or need support when raising a concern – especially if the issue hasn't been resolved.

For guidance and support, you can turn to:

1. 🧑🏫 **Practice Educators or University Personal Tutor** – Your first point of contact during placements for advice and escalation.
2. 🛡️ **Safeguarding Leads or Teams** – For concerns involving abuse, harm, or vulnerable individuals.
3. 📖 **HCPC Guidance** – Official standards and resources on raising concerns and the duty of candour.
4. 🤝 **Union Representatives or University Support Services** – For confidential support, advocacy, or if you feel unsafe speaking up alone.

How to use the The SPEAK UP model

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The SPEAK UP Model

It's not always easy to raise a concern.
The SPEAK UP model can be used to help.

This is the SPEAK UP mnemonic! →

S – Spot the concern

P – Prepare how and what to say

E – Express yourself constructively

A – Act according to HCPC standards

K – Know your escalation route and support

Please refer to your **SPEAK UP Handout** now!

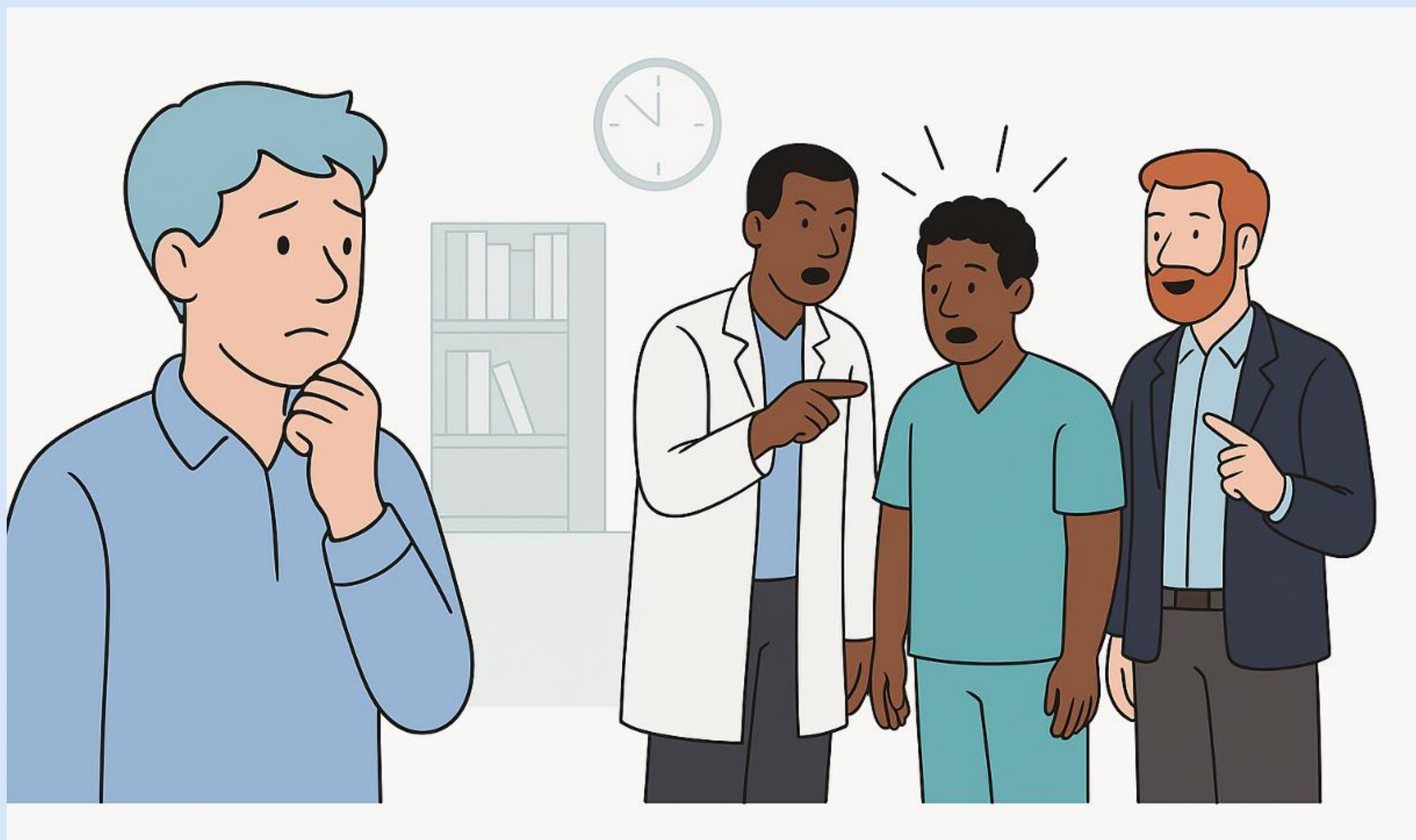
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The SPEAK UP Model in Action!

Scenario: You witness verbal bullying between colleagues.



Your task:


In small groups or by yourself, write out the individual steps of the **SPEAK UP** model to guide how you would respond in this situation.

Focus on staying calm, professional, and aligned with HCPC standards – including how to protect confidentiality and raise the concern appropriately.

SPEAK UP in Practice: HCPC Recap Knowledge Quiz

Kahoot!



 Time to Test Your Knowledge!

Now that we have covered all the content and introduced you to the **SPEAK UP** model, let's test your understanding!

Scan or click on the QR code to play our short quiz on Kahoot

Key Resources on Raising Concerns

Scan or click on the following QR codes:

1. HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics
2. Duty of Candour Guide
3. “Getting It Right When Things Go Wrong” Webinar on YouTube
4. HCPC Student Hub
5. Freedom to Speak Up – Core Training for all Workers – eLearning for Healthcare (NHS England)



**And of course...
don't forget to use
the SPEAK UP model!**



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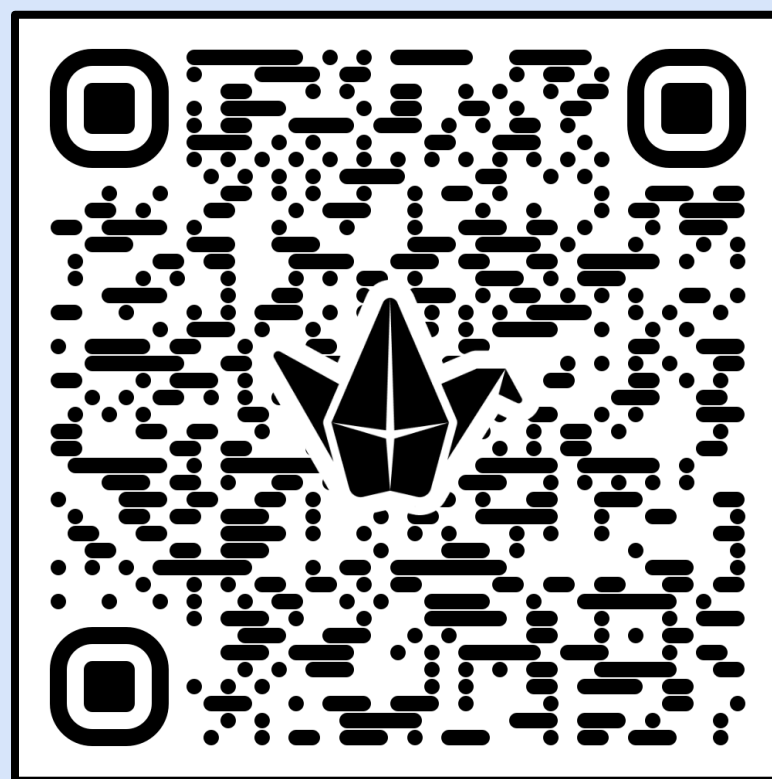
Reflect & SPEAK UP – Padlet Activity

Everyone faces barriers to raising concerns – but recognising them is the first step to overcoming them.

Scan or click on the QR code to access this session's **Padlet Discussion Board**.

💬 Choose one or more prompts or share your own reflection.

🔒 You can post anonymously or include your name – whichever feels comfortable.



You are the safety net!

Your voice protects patients.
Your actions shape the profession

Your task: Practice the
SPEAK UP model this week
in a low-stakes situation



SPEAK UP



**Thank you for taking part in the
SPEAK UP, Stand Strong:
Raising Concerns With Confidence
Learning Session!**

We have provided you with a **Situational Judgement
Quiz Handout** to do in your free time!

References

Health and Care Professions Council. (2024a). #myHCPCstandards: Getting it right when things go wrong (duty of candour and raising concerns) [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFd80wEpvco>

Health and Care Professions Council. (2024b), The duty of candour. from <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/meeting-our-standards/raising-concerns-openness-and-honesty/the-duty-of-candour/>

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National Guardian's Office. (2024). Listening to the silence: Freedom to Speak Up in the NHS Staff Survey 2023 <https://nationalguardian.org.uk/2025/03/20/speaking-up-in-healthcare-has-progress-plateaued-and-what-must-be-done/>

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NHS England. (2025). Freedom to Speak Up – eLearning for healthcare. <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/freedom-to-speak-up/>

Okuyama, A., Wagner, C., & Bijnen, B. (2014). Speaking up for patient safety by hospital-based health care professionals: a literature review. BMC Health Services Research, 14(1), 61. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-14-61>

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The SPEAK UP model featured in this session is an original, student-developed resource designed to align with HCPC standards and support effective professional communication. This is not an official HCPC resource; it was designed by the session author specifically for the 2025 HCPC Student Competition.