

# First ever Patient Safety Commissioner appointed

- The independent Commissioner will act as a champion for patients and lead a drive to improve the safety of medicines and medical devices
- Dr Hughes will improve how the healthcare system listens to patients, the government and the NHS to put patients first

The Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay has today appointed Dr Henrietta Hughes OBE as the first ever Patient Safety Commissioner for England.

Adding to and enhancing existing work to improve the safety of medicines and medical devices, the appointment of a Commissioner is in response to the recommendations from Baroness Cumberlege's review into patient safety, published in 2020.

Dr Hughes will be an independent point of contact for patients, giving a voice to their concerns to make sure they are heard. She will help the NHS and government better understand what they can do to put patients first, promote the safety of patients, and the importance of the views of patients and other members of the public.

Bringing with her a wealth of experience in patient care as the National Guardian for the NHS, where she encouraged staff to speak up and supported whistle-blowers, Dr Hughes will be a champion for patients. She will continue to practice as a GP and chair of Childhood First, a charity that promotes and furthers the care, treatment and rehabilitation of children and adolescents.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

It is essential that we put patient safety first and continue to listen to and champion patients' voices.

Dr Henrietta Hughes brings a wealth of experience with her as the first ever Patient Safety Commissioner to improve the safety of medicines and medical devices and her work will help support NHS staff as we work hard to beat the Covid backlogs.

Patient Safety Commissioner Henrietta Hughes said:

I am humbled and honoured to be appointed as the first Patient Safety Commissioner. This vital role, recommended in First Do No Harm, will make a difference to the safety of patients in relation to medicines and medical devices.

Patients' voices need to be at the heart of the design and delivery

of healthcare. I would like to pay tribute to the incredible courage, persistence and compassion of all those who gave evidence to the report, their families and everyone who continues to campaign tirelessly for safer treatments.

I will work collaboratively with patients, the healthcare system and others so that all patients receive the information they need, all patients' voices are heard and the system responds quickly to keep people safe.

The First Do No Harm report, led by Baroness Cumberlege and published in 2020 explored issues relating to the use of Primodos, sodium valproate and pelvic mesh, and was commissioned because women did not feel listened to or their concerns acknowledged.

It highlighted the need to better protect and listen to patients and recommended the creation of an independent Patient Safety Commissioner. In July 2021, the government published its formal response to the recommendations set out in this report including a commitment to appoint a Patient Safety Commissioner with a remit covering medicines and medical devices.

The government continues to take action to improve patient safety. A statutory duty of candour has been implemented that requires Trusts to inform patients if their safety has been compromised, legal protections for whistle-blowers have been put in place, and a NHS Patient Safety Strategy was published in 2019 to create a safety, learning culture across the NHS. The Health and Care Act 2022 also established the Health Services Safety Investigations Body to investigate patient safety incidents in England.

This appointment was made following an open competition, in line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments, and following a pre-appointment scrutiny hearing with the Health and Social Care Committee.