

Verita Newsletter Issue 28 – Summer 2016



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Ed's Welcome

We are delighted to have been awarded contracts by the General Medical Council (GMC) and Ireland's Health Service Executive this summer. For the next three years we will provide independent review of the GMC's complaints function, delivering a similar service to the one we already provide to the British Council and the Lottery Forum. Verita is now an authorised supplier of a range of investigations, inquires and reviews to the Health Service Executive, the body responsible for providing public health and social care services in Ireland.

We have recently concluded a number of high-profile investigations and reviews. These include a [review](#) of unexpected deaths between April 2012 and December 2015 at Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, an [investigation](#) into the management response to allegations about staff behaviours related to the death of a baby at Bristol Children's Hospital and a [review](#) of The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust's handling of concerns raised by and related to whistleblower Mrs Haynes-Kirkbright.

All of these published reports are available to read on our dynamic new [website](#). The website launched this summer and, in conjunction with our [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) activities, demonstrates our growing digital presence.

Last but not least we have seen some important changes to our team. We have said farewell to former senior consultants Kathryn Hyde-Bales, who joins another well-regarded organisation, and Gemma Caprio. Consultant Jess Heinemann has moved to Bristol and director Amber Sargent has taken maternity leave. We wish them all well.

With best wishes

Ed Marsden

Managing partner

Cross-sector training

Verita's first cross-sector CPD accredited systematic incident investigation training course took place in May 2016. In attendance were representatives from the legal sector and business to government providers such as Mitie and The GEO Group. 1200 participants from the health sector have already undertaken the course this year.

The one-day event involved course facilitators, director [Chris Brougham](#) and associate [Stephanie Bown](#), demonstrating how systematic investigations can be applied to discover why serious incidents occur and identify solutions that prevent them from reoccurring. The course covered the importance of setting clear terms of reference, establishing a comprehensive chronology and utilising investigative tools and models, such as root cause analysis, to analyse data. Participants worked in groups and used an interactive case study to investigate a serious incident and develop recommendations to mitigate or manage future risks.

Chris Brougham says: "Our course provides a framework for organisations to undertake investigations thereby providing peace of mind that robust, consistent and coherent processes are in place to capture evidence based learning. Our goal is to equip participants with the tools and techniques they need to confidently investigate a wide range of incidents". Participants said that the course overwhelmingly "exceeded expectations".

Verita awarded three year contract by the GMC

The General Medical Council (GMC) has awarded Verita a three year contract to provide independent review of its customer complaints handling. Under the agreement, Verita will take a sample of complaints across all divisions of the GMC and assess how well they were dealt with by the internal team, pointing out what was done well, showing what was not done quite so well and making suggestions as to how things could and should develop.

The GMC is a public body that maintains the official register of medical practitioners in the UK. It helps to protect patients and improve medical education and practice in the UK by setting standards for students and doctors.

Verita partner [Peter Killwick](#) comments: “we are pleased to deliver our independent complaints review service to another prestigious client and demonstrate again our real expertise in the field. The GMC takes its complaints seriously, as shown by their ISO accreditation for the function, so we are delighted to be trusted with helping further improvement.”

Verita already provides an independent complaints review service to the British Council and the Lottery Forum (a body made up of many organisations funded by the National Lottery, including the Big Lottery Fund, the Arts Council England and Sport England).

Unexpected death review at large mental health trust

Verita recently delivered a [report](#) to Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust following our review of the trust's systems and processes for managing unexpected deaths. The review identified several areas where the trust needed to make improvements including family engagement, quality assuring investigations and learning from them.

Verita looked at the national data on unexpected deaths and concluded that it does not support like-for-like comparisons between mental health trusts in England. We recommended that the trust escalates this issue to national bodies in order to improve the quality of data in this area.

The Verita team interviewed trust staff as well as local families, MPs, coroners and representatives from NHS England, CCGs, councils and housing associations. The team undertook a review of a large sample of serious incident reports from the April 2012 – December 2015 period to examine the consistency of the trust's internal process of investigation and if lessons were being learnt.

[Ed Marsden](#), managing partner, says: "we have methodically reviewed the available evidence and sought the views of staff at the trust and external stakeholders. Our findings showed there is room for improvement in the systems and processes around unexpected deaths at NSFT. We have developed 13 recommendations detailing what the trust needs to do to make these improvements. During our review we were struck by the enthusiasm and drive among the staff we interviewed and we think they are well positioned to do the work needed to make things better for those who use their services and their families."

The final [report](#) was published by the trust board in May and has been submitted to the CQC for its [review](#) of how NHS trusts investigate and learn from deaths.

Verita and the University of Oxford collaborate on workshop

Verita teamed up with the University of Oxford to hold a knowledge exchange workshop on 27 June 2016 at the university's centre for criminology.

The event was a forum for delegates to discuss the skills, behaviours and aptitudes needed by immigration removal centre staff. Following their investigation into Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre earlier this year, senior associate [Kate Lampard](#) and managing partner [Ed Marsden](#) presented their findings and recommendations at the event.

The university's assistant director of its centre for criminology, Professor Mary Bosworth, opened the proceedings by emphasising the importance of good relationships within immigration removal centres; both between staff members as well as between staff and detainees.

Kate and Ed talked about the challenges faced by, and the professional requirements of detention custody officers (DCOs). DCOs are the front line staff interacting with detainees and are responsible for maintaining security and good practice. Ed comments: "the event provided Kate and I with a great opportunity to work with the University of Oxford to discuss important issues emerging from our Yarl's Wood report".

Another Verita senior associate, [Stephen Shaw](#), spoke at the event. Stephen commented on 'decency in detention', presenting findings and observations from his [review](#) for the Home Office into the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons

Delegates included senior representatives, with management or operations backgrounds from organisations such as G4S, Serco, Mitie and GEO Group.

Wolverhampton whistle-blower

NHS Improvement has published the [report](#) that follows Verita's review of Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust's handling of concerns raised by one of its employees, Sandra Haynes-Kirkbright, as well as other whistle-blowers. The independent review was triggered by allegations made in *The Daily Mail* and a subsequent intervention from the secretary of state for health.

The concerns relate to the accuracy of the trust's clinical coding and the way in which it dealt with queries about claims for payment from its commissioners. The review was led by Verita senior associate, [Lucy Scott-Moncrieff](#), with the support of Derek Mechen, Verita partner. [David Scott](#) provided expert HR advice drawing on his board level experience in both the public and private sectors.

The final report comments on governance at senior levels. It includes a forensic analysis of events and commentary on the rigour of the trust's own investigations.

Lucy says: "Verita's investigations and reviews are identifying cultural issues as root causes of organisational failure more and more frequently. Verita is equipped to assist with concerns raised by whistle-blowers which appear to be increasing in volume, following the publication Sir Robert Francis' 'Freedom to Speak Up' review."

Verita to work with Irish Health Service Executive

The Health Service Executive has awarded a framework agreement to Verita. After an open competition Verita is now an authorised supplier across three areas of work: inquiries, investigations and reviews in relation to safety incidents, reviews of complaints services and reviews of governance, quality, safety and risk.

The Health Service Executive is the body responsible for the provision of health and personal social services to the population of Ireland. It launched in 2005 and is Ireland's largest employer with approximately 70,000 direct employees.

This is a hugely exciting opportunity for Verita to take what we have learned in the UK into another healthcare system and to expand our own experience base and geographical footprint. [Peter Killwick](#), the Verita partner managing the contract said, "it is really pleasing that our expertise and experience is strong enough to give the Health Service Executive confidence in what we can do for the Irish healthcare system. Our initial conversations with Health Service Executive staff have been excellent. We look forward to having a long and mutually beneficial relationship."

Managing conflicts of interest; a topical risk for CCGs

Partner [Peter Killwick](#) and senior associate [Lucy Scott-Moncrieff](#) hosted the second of Verita's 2016 breakfast seminars, in mid-July at the [Foundling Museum](#). The event focused on managing conflicts of interest; a topical risk for CCGs.

In a wide ranging debate the seminar identified that the conflicts of interest faced by CCGs can be reduced by tackling six key areas including cultivating a culture of transparency and challenge.

Peter and Lucy opened the discussion by sharing observations from Verita investigations and inviting delegates to contribute their own experiences. Delegates included senior local and national NHS commissioners.

[Ed Marsden](#), managing partner commented: "Given that the structure and responsibilities of CCGs are still bedding down, and the reliance on interim staff affecting corporate memory, it is clear that properly managing conflicts of interests for GPs remains a significant challenge".

Since CCG's were established in 2013, issues relating to conflicts of interest between GPs have continually emerged. In light of this NHS England published [revised statutory guidance](#) on managing conflicts of interest for clinical commissioning groups in June 2016.