PRESS RELEASE

NHS Litigation Authority pledges to support the Sign up to Safety campaign to support the NHS to reduce harm and improve patient safety

The NHS Litigation Authority is supporting Sign up to Safety, a new campaign launched by the Secretary of State for Health that aims to listen to patients and staff, learn from when things go wrong and act to make care safer. It is an aspiring objective to save 6,000 lives, halve avoidable harm and halve the costs of harm in the NHS over the next three years.

All health organisations are being asked to develop safety improvement plans that describe what they will do to reduce harm and save lives by working to reduce the causes of harm and take a preventative approach.

The NHS Litigation Authority (NHS LA), which indemnifies NHS organisations and providers of NHS care against negligence claims, will review NHS LA members’ plans where they aim to reduce claims and if the plans are robust, the NHS LA will make a payment to support implementation of the safety improvement plan. For example, organisations whose plans show they are investing their efforts in solutions to reduce the number of brain damaged babies through, for example, improving monitoring and Cardiotocograph (CTG) interpretation, training, supervision and investment in equipment and technology, will be looked on favourably by the NHS LA.

Chief Executive of the NHS Litigation Authority Catherine Dixon said:

“The NHS LA welcomes the Sign up to Safety campaign as it will encourage the health sector to reduce harm to patients and support safer care.

“The NHS LA will award payments to NHS LA members whose safety improvement plans are robust and focus on reducing claims. The NHS LA will also provide encouragement to members to review their claims to support learning and identify areas of higher value and volumes of claims where lessons can be learned.

“In addition, the NHS LA’s pricing methodology rewards its scheme members by ensuring that those organisations with fewer less costly claims pay less for their indemnity cover, hence incentivising the NHS to reduce harm and improve patient and staff safety.

“The NHS spends more than £1 billion on claims each year. We would rather see this money spent on patient care. Therefore, we will particularly welcome organisations whose robust plans
demonstrate that they are reducing harm and therefore claims in areas where we see the most costly claims. These areas include maternity, A&E and surgery.”

The NHS LA encourages organisations to closely examine claims with a view to learning from the things that go wrong and stopping claims from happening in the future.

Maternity claims represent the highest value and third highest number of clinical negligence claims reported to the NHS LA. The organisation’s ‘Saying sorry’ leaflet encourages trusts to apologise to patients. Saying sorry is not an admission of legal liability; it is the right thing to do. The NHS LA is also supporting health providers to learn from claims via the use of an ‘extranet’ web portal that helps them understand their claims profile, compare with national data and learn from best practice.

NHS Litigation Authority Director of Safety, Learning and People Dr Suzette Woodward has been appointed Campaign Director for Sign up to Safety, she said:

“Don Berwick wrote in his report on patient safety in the NHS, ‘The most important single change in the NHS ....would be for it to become a system devoted to continual learning and improvement of patient care, top to bottom and end to end’.

“Sign up to Safety builds on the work to date in patient safety in the NHS and aims to implement the recommendations of the Berwick report by supporting the NHS to create a safety culture which is open, fair and just. The key underpinning factor is a caring culture that ensures that staff and patients feel valued, respected engaged and supported.

“The campaign will be an ambitious approach to helping the NHS be even better for patients, carers, and staff across all care settings and all communities instilling pride and joy in everything we do.”

Dr Suzette Woodward will be working with a small team to motivate and mobilise the entire health system to pledge their part in Sign up to Safety.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. The Department of Health and NHS England have a new safety website which, for the first time anywhere in the world, will allow the public to see how their hospital is performing on key safety measures. This unprecedented level of transparency around patient safety is part of the Government’s commitment to drive up care standards across the NHS and includes data about whether Trusts have an open and transparent culture, a key indicator of a hospital’s approach to patient care. Visit www.SignuptoSafety.nhs.uk for more information.

2. The value of maternity claims can be very high as the amount paid is for on-going care, accommodation and specialist equipment needs. The NHS funds these settlements by way of a lump sum, followed by annual payments for life. This ensures that the child has financial security and that compensation which would otherwise be paid upfront is available for patient care. Visit ‘Learning from Maternity Claims’ and NHSLA.com for more information.
3. Find out more about Don Berwick’s patient safety report [here](#).

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5. The NHS Litigation Authority (NHS LA) is a Special Health Authority and is an arms-length body of the Department of Health, established in 1995.

6. The NHS LA is a not-for-profit part of the NHS which provides: indemnity cover for clinical and non-clinical liabilities, learning from claims, legal and professional services, dispute resolution between commissioners and contractors, help for healthcare providers in the performance management of clinicians through advice, training and other support.

7. The NHS LA provides legal and professional advice to the NHS and to the Department of Health on a range of issues including human rights, equal pay and age discrimination.

8. The NHS LA includes the Family Health Services Appeal Unit (FHSAU) and the National Clinical Assessment Service (NCAS).

9. The NHS LA helps resolve disputes arising from dentists, GPs, pharmacists and opticians about decisions made by commissioners of healthcare which affect their contracts with the NHS via the Family Health Services Appeal Unit (FHSAU).

10. The NHS LA helps resolve concerns about the professional practice of doctors, dentists and pharmacists in the UK via the National Clinical Assessment Service (NCAS).

For further information please contact [communications@nhsla.com](mailto:communications@nhsla.com) or call NHS LA External Communications Manager Erica McAlpine on 020 7811 2689.