Whistleblowers are heroes who should be rewarded for bravery

Whistleblowers serve private and public interests when they raise concerns about wrongdoing (editorial and news June 12). However, rather than encouraging whistleblowers, many employers victimise the purveyors of bad news.

We need to change attitudes so that whistleblowers are recognised as heroes rather than villains.

I am a professor of employment law at Middlesex University in London. We recently hosted a whistleblowing conference, where Amanda Pollard was presented with an award in recognition of her outstanding achievement in disclosing information in the public interest.

Ms Pollard was incredibly brave in speaking out in difficult circumstances to expose negligent inspection methods within the Care Quality Commission (CQC), particularly in relation to the poor level of patient care at the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust.

Ms Pollard had tried to alert CQC management to her concerns and warned that the organisation would not be able to spot another scandal in patient care such as in Mid Staffs. Her concerns were well founded, but no one wanted to listen. So she spoke out.

She later gave evidence to the Francis inquiry into the problems at Mid Staffs between 2005 and 2009, with details of how NHS regulation had changed for the worse when the CQC introduced a new methodology for inspections.

Instead of shooting the messenger, I join other delegates at the conference in applauding those who speak out.

David Lewis, by email

REPORTS OF POOR CARE ARE STILL DISMISSED OR HANDLED CLUMSILY

I would like to thank editor Graham Scott for his frank comments in the last ‘Nurses will only speak out if someone listens’ (editorial June 12). According to Public Concern at Work, most whistleblowers experience a wall of silence when they speak out about poor care, even when concerns are repeated.

I was questioned as part of a hospital investigation many years ago and it would appear that nothing has changed in terms of the heavy-handed or dismissive way reports of poor care are handled.

After being interviewed, I was not even asked to make a statement. Although I had done nothing wrong they made me feel guilty. This is a common reaction apparently, but I did not know this at the time.

I have great empathy with members of the nursing profession who are coming under fire. For both whistleblowers or the nurses being investigated, it would be useful to have nurses at hand to be able to sit alongside them in case hearings and be there for them throughout the ordeal.

My experience of an inquiry is not something I would ever have wanted to repeat in my career.

Name and address withheld

LONG-STANDING CONCERNS OVER THE FORMER HEAD OF THE CQC

The officials alleged to have been involved in the cover-up of care failures that led to the death of babies at Furness General Hospital in Cumbria have been identified.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has named its former chief executive Cynthia Bower as being present at a meeting where the suppression of a critical report was discussed. Ms Bower has denied being involved in a cover-up.

Ms Bower failed to spot the poor care at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust when she was in charge at the West Midlands Strategic Health Authority (SHA). The high death rates at Stafford Hospital were dismissed by