

The GMC issued the following letter and guidance yesterday:

"Dear colleague

Today, we have published two new pieces of guidance which we hope will contribute to a culture change within the health service - where raising and acting on concerns becomes part of every day practise in the UK.

The first, [*Raising and acting on concerns about patient safety*](#) makes clear that doctors have a duty to act when they believe patient safety is at risk, or when a patient's care or dignity is being compromised. The guidance explains when doctors need to raise concerns and advises on the help and support available to them, including how to tackle any barriers that they may face.

We are clear that being a good doctor involves more than simply being a good clinician. It means being committed to improving the quality of services and being willing to speak up when things are not right – that is not always easy but it is at the heart of medical professionalism.

Doctors also have responsibility for the safety and well being of patients when performing non-clinical duties. New guidance [*Leadership and management for all doctors*](#) is also being issued today aimed at helping doctors understand their responsibilities in relation to employment issues; teaching and training; as well as planning, using and managing resources.

Guidance on its own is necessary but not sufficient – it needs to become part of the culture of the profession and the organisations in which doctors work. Doctors who raise concerns must feel that they will be listened to and supported.

The new GMC Liaison Service, which builds on our ambition to be more proactive with a stronger local presence, will use the guidance and work with Medical Directors, doctors and patients groups to help foster openness and a willingness to speak out throughout the health service. We want doctors to feel supported in promoting good practice, taking a leading role in acting quickly if they have concerns about patient care.

We are sending copies of the guidance, which comes into effect on 12 March 2012, to all doctors on the medical register."