



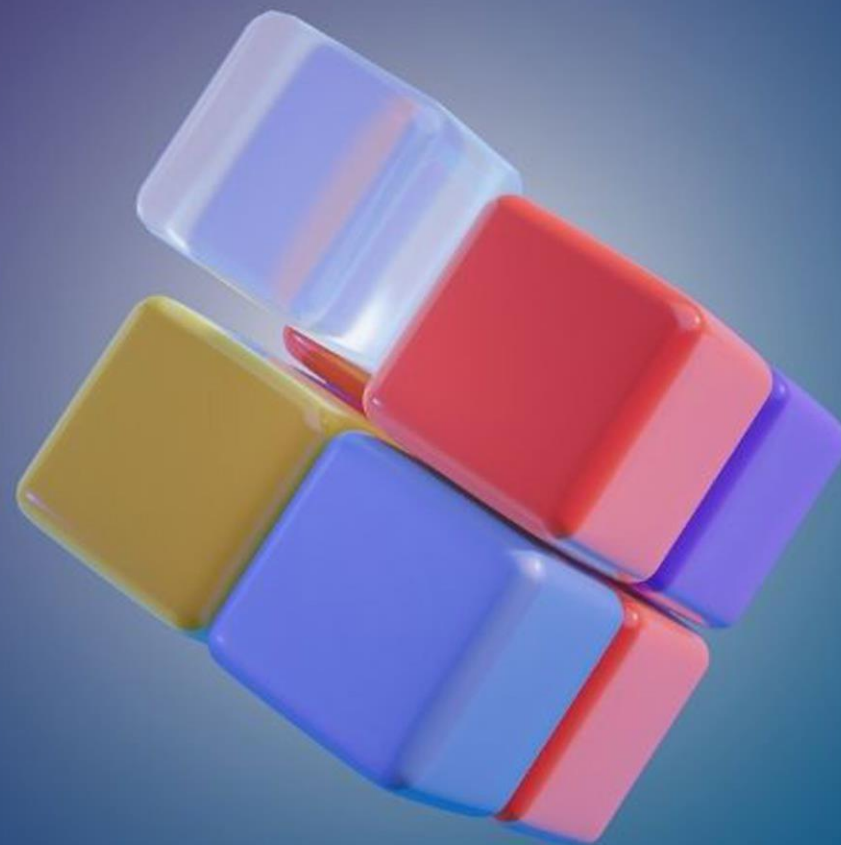
UHR Conference 2025

Online 13 - 15 May

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Compassionate people practices – Avoiding employee harm

Thursday 15 May 2025:
10.45-11.30am





Includes:

- An introduction to avoidable employee harm;
- **The cost and impact of employee investigations;**
- The impact on those who lead them;
- **Relooking at your policy and processes;**
- Making employee investigations a last resort;
- **Ideas for engaging your HR team, executive and board**





100

Conversations

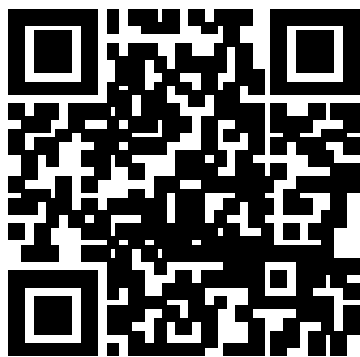
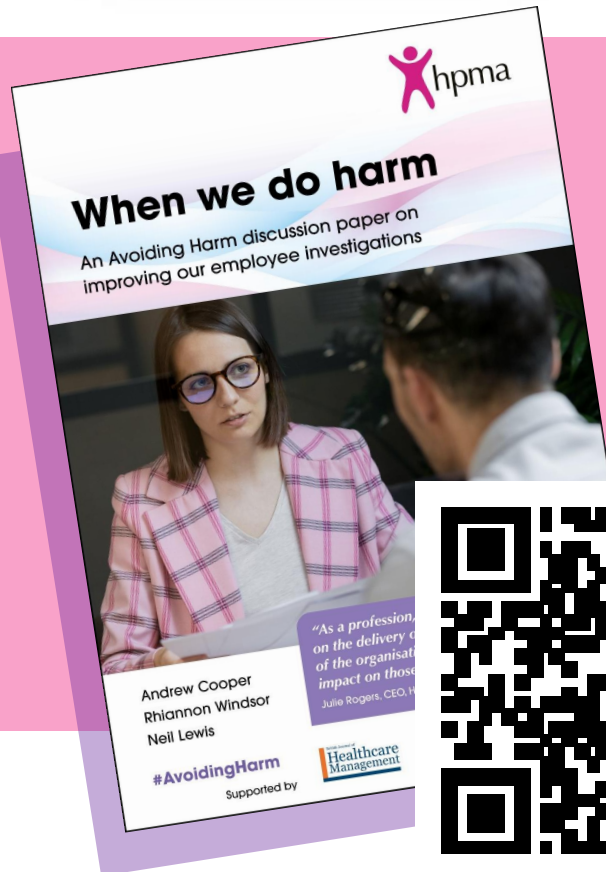
100 Conversations

- **Meet with your HR team** to go through the paper
- **Table an update for your executive team** on the work and use the paper and material to support your presentation
- **Start a conversation**, where you think one needs to take place
- Let us know your 3 main reflections/actions



An opportunity to ...

- **Lead** a national conversation on improving this area of HR practice
- **Acknowledge** the related harm and impact to both individuals and organisations
- **Commit** to making a change for our employees, patients and communities





**Where did it
start for us?**

**Anne's
story**

Link to video available on HPMA website:
www.hpma.org.uk/avoiding-harm



The impact of employee relations investigations

> Employees

Psychological harm

Reputational harm

Wider staff involved

> Organisational

Cultural harm

Psychological safety

Trust and confidence

> Economic

Financial costs

Reputation

Recruitment and retention

> Patient care

Delivery of services

Patient harm

Failure to learn



Photo: model

On Slido / Question 1

You receive a letter from your organisation tomorrow, informing you that you are the subject of a disciplinary investigation. How confident are you that it would be run well?

(1 being poor; 5 being good)

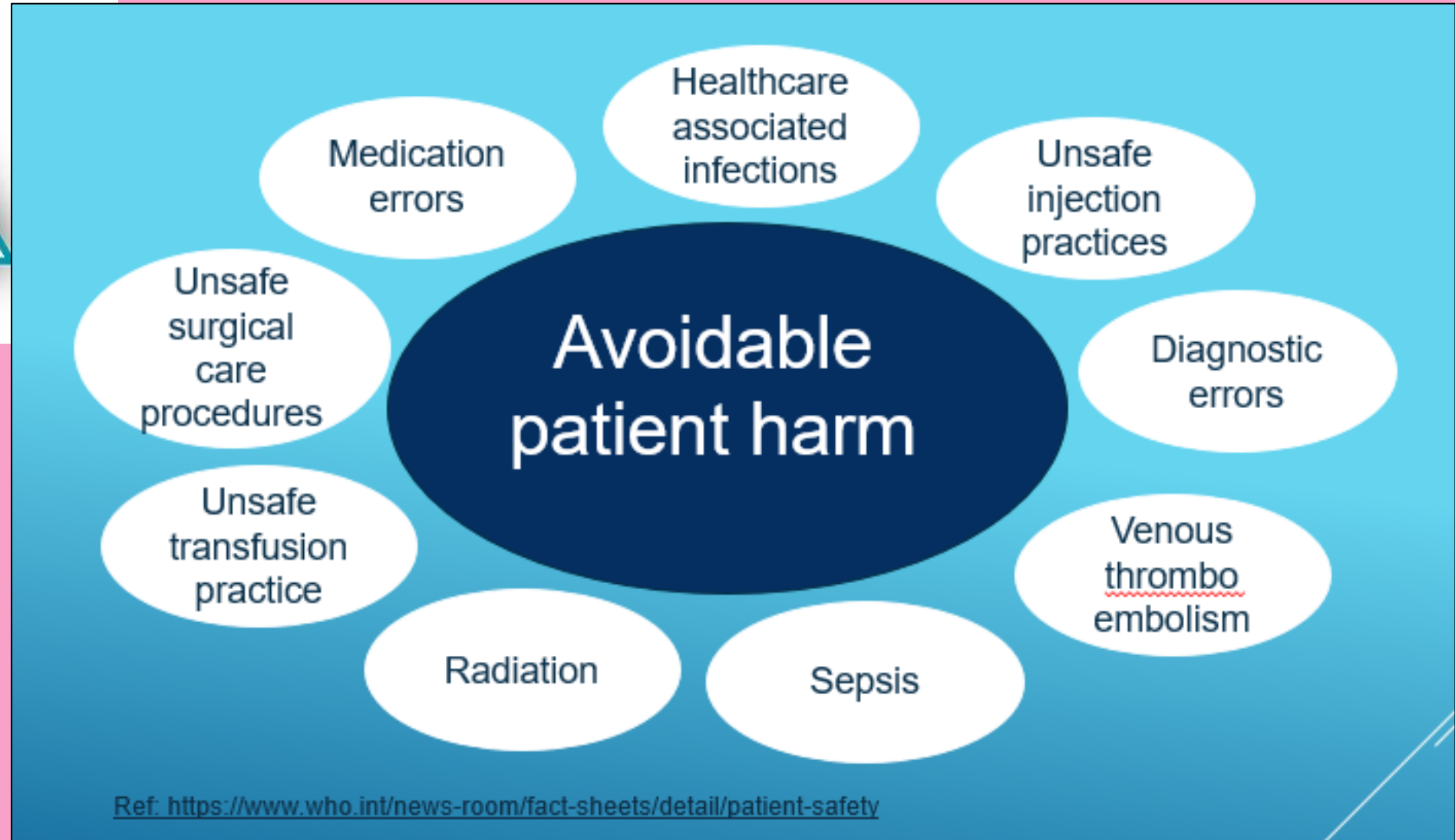
On Slido / Question 2

When your organisation runs a disciplinary processes, where do you think is it's main focus:

- Following the process
- The health and well-being of individuals
- Both equally



Introducing avoidable employee harm





Introducing avoidable employee harm





Avoidable Employee Harm

What is it and how can you avoid it?

Link to video available on HPMA website: www.hpma.org.uk/avoiding-harm

On Slido / Question 3

What are your initial reactions to the concept of ‘avoidable employee harm’?

- I could see myself using it with colleagues
- It doesn't work for me
- I need to think about it more



**An overuse of
the disciplinary
process**



Why do we do, what we do?

Old dated-practices

A fear of getting it wrong

“This is how things are
done around here.”

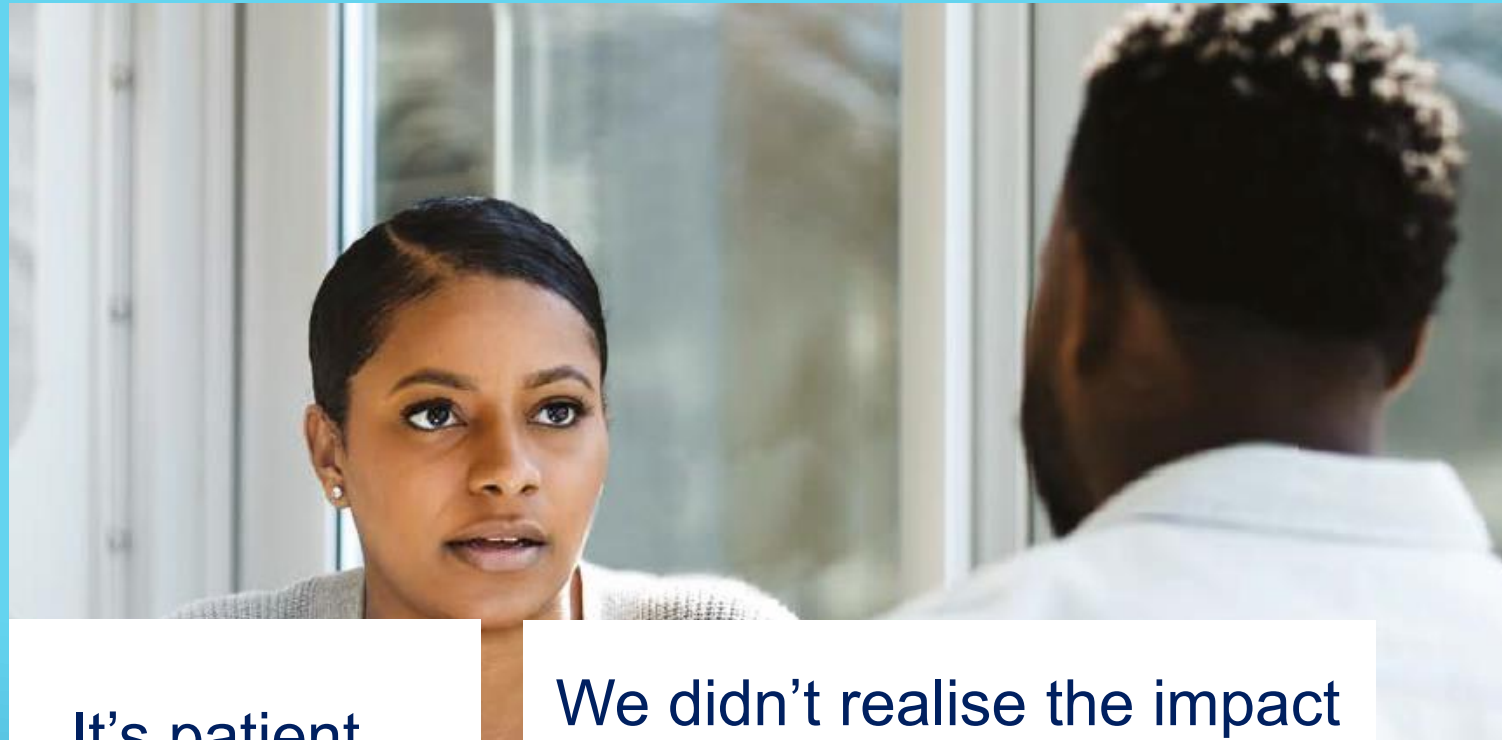
No time to think differently

It's patient
safety. We
must pursue
a formal
process
every time.

We didn't realise the impact

Policy and processes don't
consider the harm

A focus on punishment,
instead of learning



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NHS
WALES

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Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

The last resort: Making the change

**Making investigations
... the last resort**

Data and story

**Avoidable employee
harm**

**Compassionate
leadership**



**Conduct thorough
initial assessments**

Consider mitigations

**Profile alternative
options**

**Celebrate change-
makers**



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Improving our employee Investigations



**A 71%
reduction**
in investigation
cases post-
intervention



**Estimated
3,308 sickness
days averted
annually**



**Estimated
annual savings
of £738,133**
(Based on direct
savings and costs
averted)

Cooper, Teoh, Madine et al, 2024: 'The last resort: Reducing avoidable employee harm by improving the application of the disciplinary policy and process' – Frontiers in Psychology

**For the period:
June 2022 to June 2023**



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WALES**

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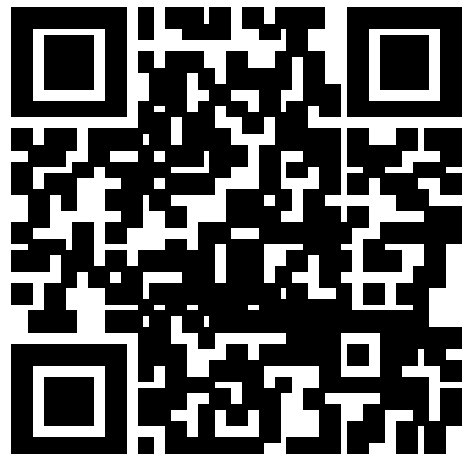
Employee investigations

- make them the last resort

Employee relations investigations can cause real harm to those being investigated – as well as those involved in the process.

They can harm an organisation's culture and reputation and divert time and resources from meeting the needs of our patients and communities.

If you're considering whether an investigation is the right step: please think twice! Does the situation require a formal approach – or can it be addressed in another way?



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Resources to support



When we do harm

An Avoiding Harm discussion paper on improving our employee investigations



Andrew Cooper
Rhianon Windsor
Neil Lewis

#AvoidingHarm

Supported by





Anne's story

100
Conversations



Avoidable Employee Harm

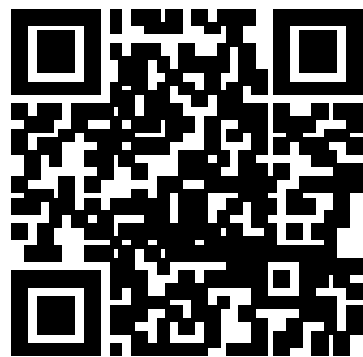
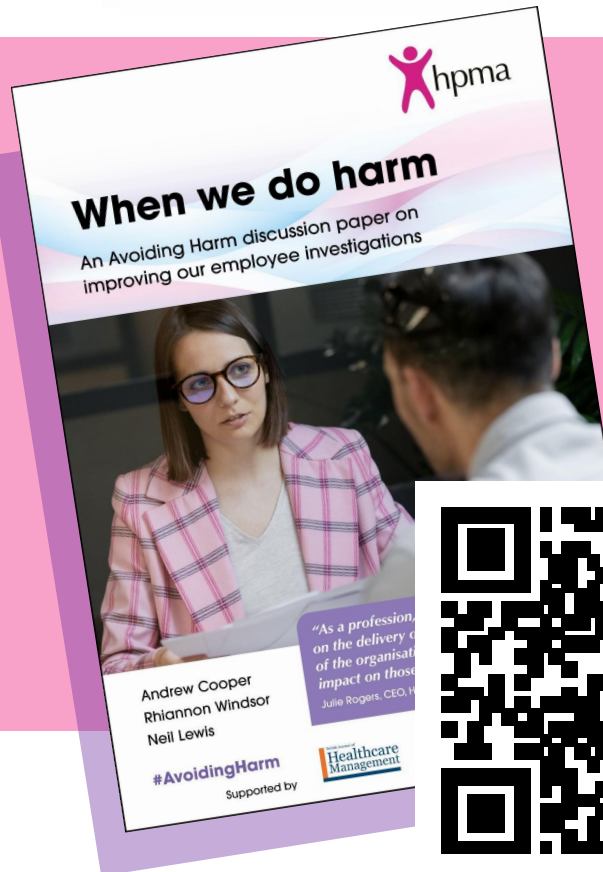
What is it and how can you avoid it?





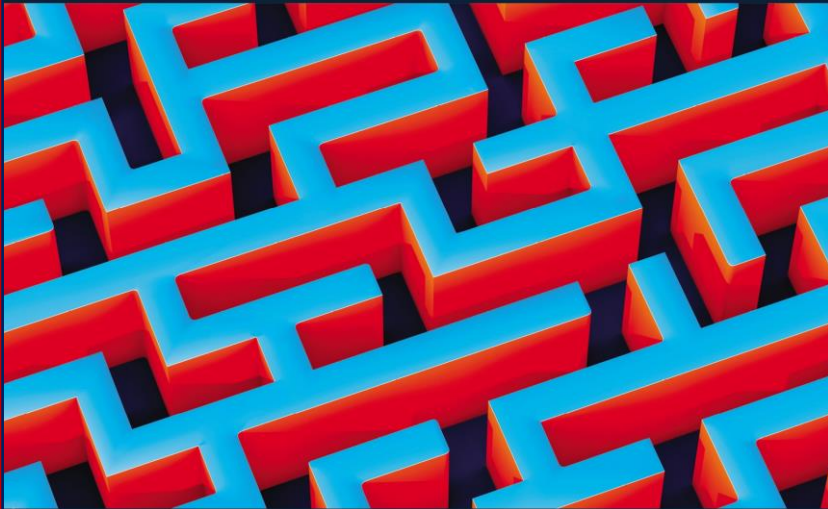
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Under Investigation

Transforming Disciplinary
Practice in the Workplace



Edited by Andrew Cooper
and Adrian Neal

“A neglected topic brought to life with evidence and stories across disciplines and sectors. The questions asked provide food for thought for anyone working or studying in this area. For HR practitioners and for line managers, this book is a must.”

Published autumn 2025

**Use the QR code
to pre-order your
copy today**



On Slido / Question 4

Has this session encouraged you to have an 'Avoiding Harm' conversation with your team and colleagues?

- Yes
- No
- I need some more information



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