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## Independent safety investigation

Macrae and Vincent<sup>1</sup> make a compelling case for a stand-alone organisation to investigate failures in the NHS, similar to the air, rail and marine accident investigation branches, which report to the Secretary of State for Transport. Airways, railways and shipping are activities; they are not run by the Secretary of State for Transport. However, the NHS is an organisation; it is run by the Secretary of State for Health. One of the lessons from the failures at the Stafford Hospital is that there can be threats to the safety of NHS patients in circumstances in which the Secretary of State for Health is not sufficiently independent of the NHS.

The stand-alone organisation proposed would be more likely to be effective if it addressed failures of

the activity 'healthcare', and reported to the Home Secretary, by virtue of that office-holder's overall responsibility for public protection.

### Declarations

**Competing interests:** None declared

### Reference

1. Macrae C and Vincent C. Learning from failure: the need for independent safety investigation in healthcare. *J R Soc Med* 2014; 107: 439–443.

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