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Good Catch or a Fumble in the Slips?

Investigating the impact of positive safety language on national radiotherapy event reporting

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Introduction

Near miss



Almost failed
Risk focussed
Reactive
What went wrong?

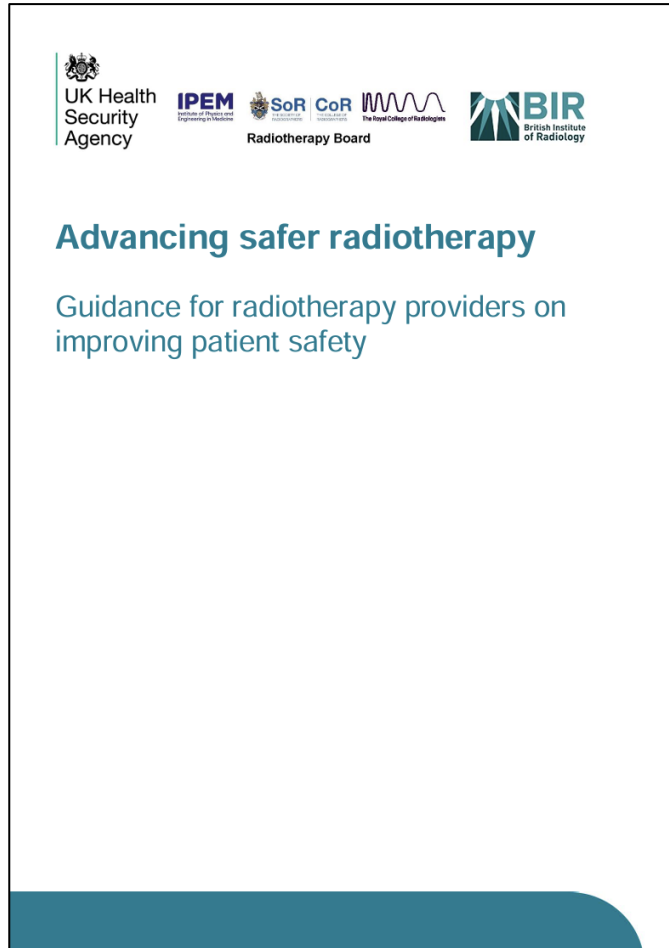
Good catch



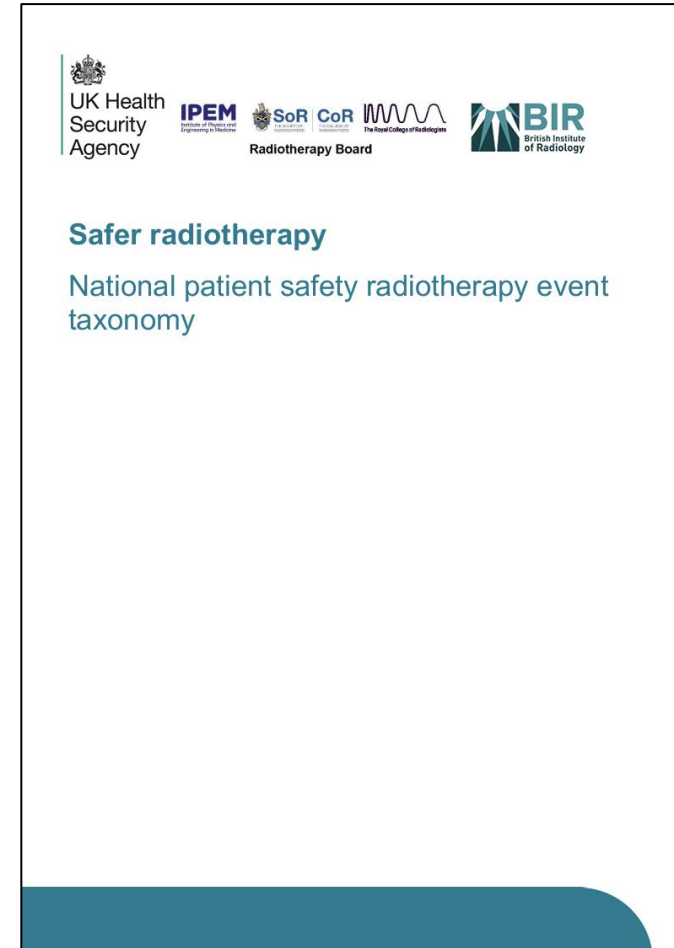
Successfully prevented
Recovery focussed
Learning from success
What went right?

Can two words change reporting behaviour?

Why language matters

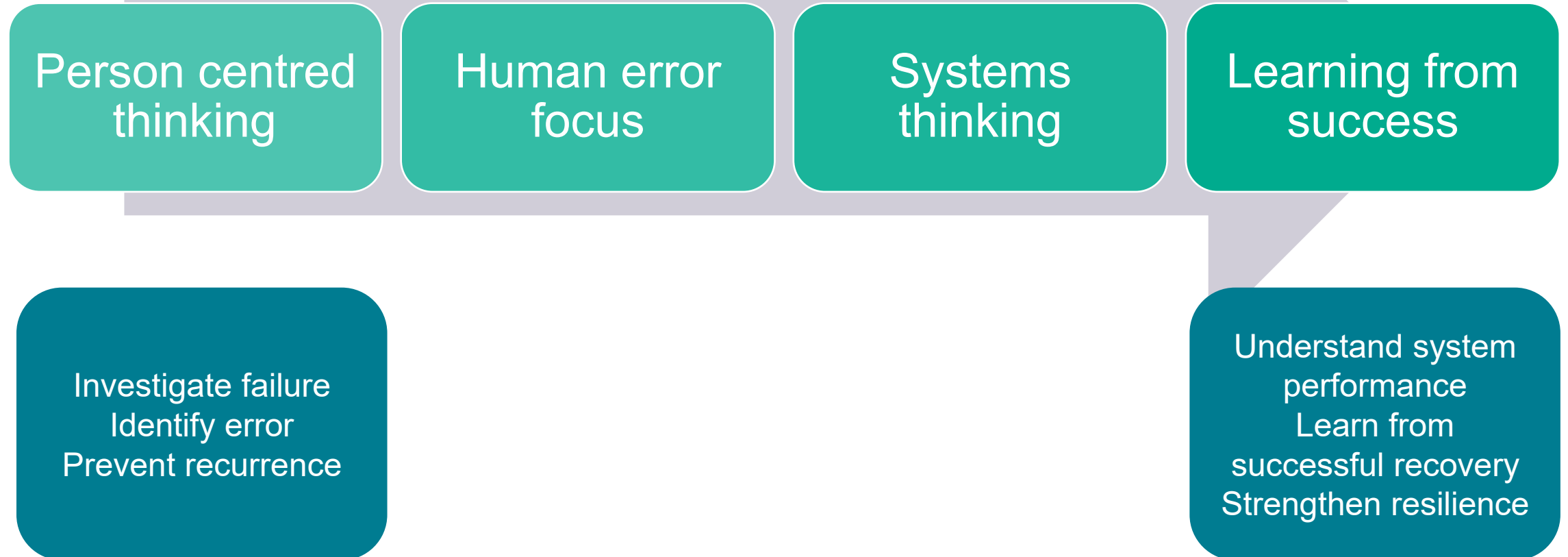


<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/radiotherapy-advancing-safer-radiotherapy>



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safer-radiotherapy-national-patient-safety-radiotherapy-event-taxonomy>

Safety culture evolution



Study aim and methods

- The aim was to investigate the impact of the recent language change by examining trends in Level 4 ("Good Catch") reporting over time.
- A retrospective analysis of radiotherapy event (RTE) data voluntarily reported between January 2021 and July 2026 within the UK Radiotherapy Event Learning System (RELS).
- Dataset included 64,973 classified RTE.

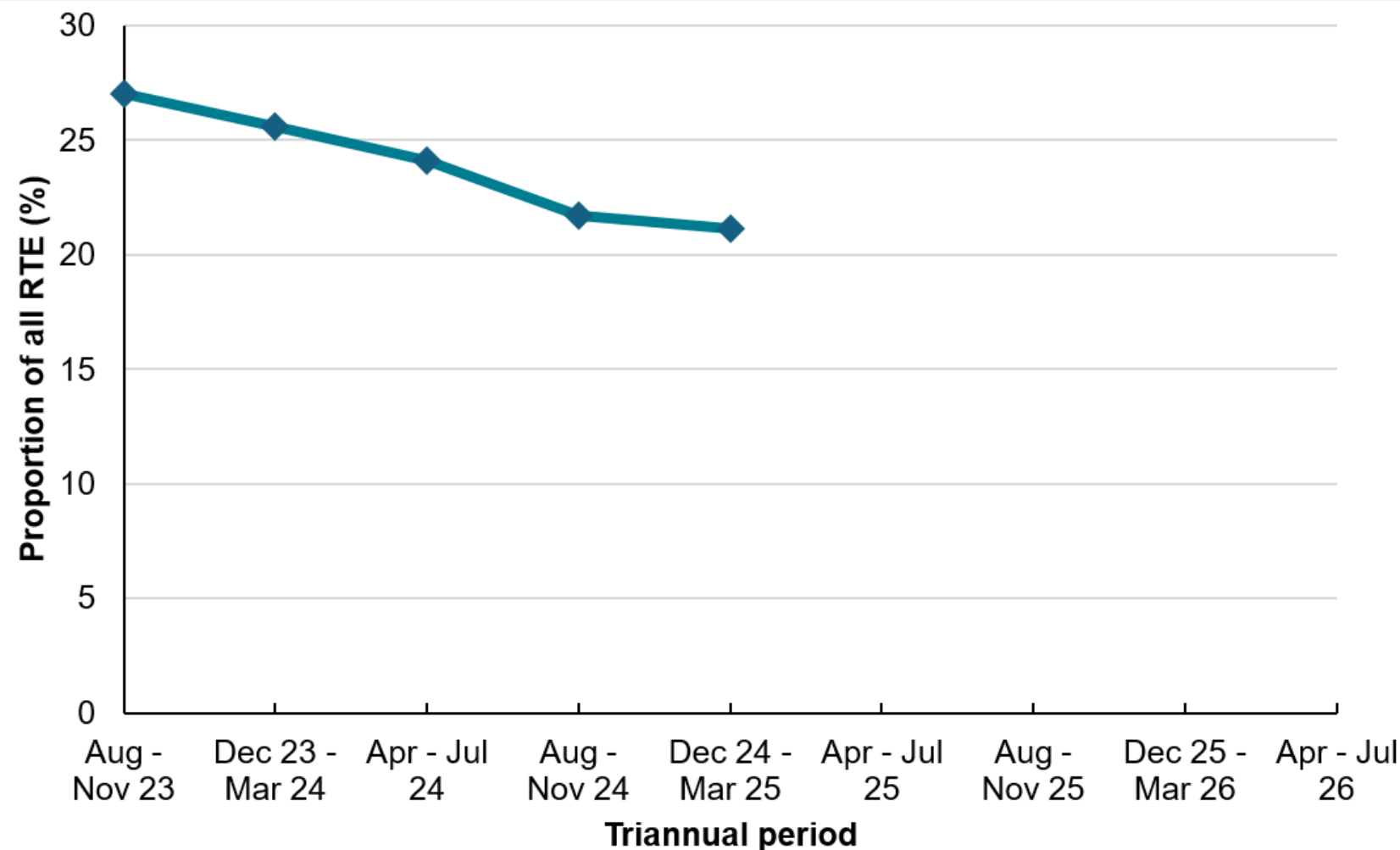
Long term trends

Classification	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Other non-conformance (Level 5)	36.7	34.4	32.3	33.4	30.9
Good catch (Level 4)	26.3	26.1	25.7	23.7	22.9
Non-reportable (minor) radiation or MRI incident (Level 3)	35.2	37.5	39.1	40.0	43.1
Non-reportable (moderate) radiation or MRI incident (Level 2)	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.8
Reportable radiation incident or other notifiable event (Level 1)	1.1	1.2	2.0	2.3	2.3

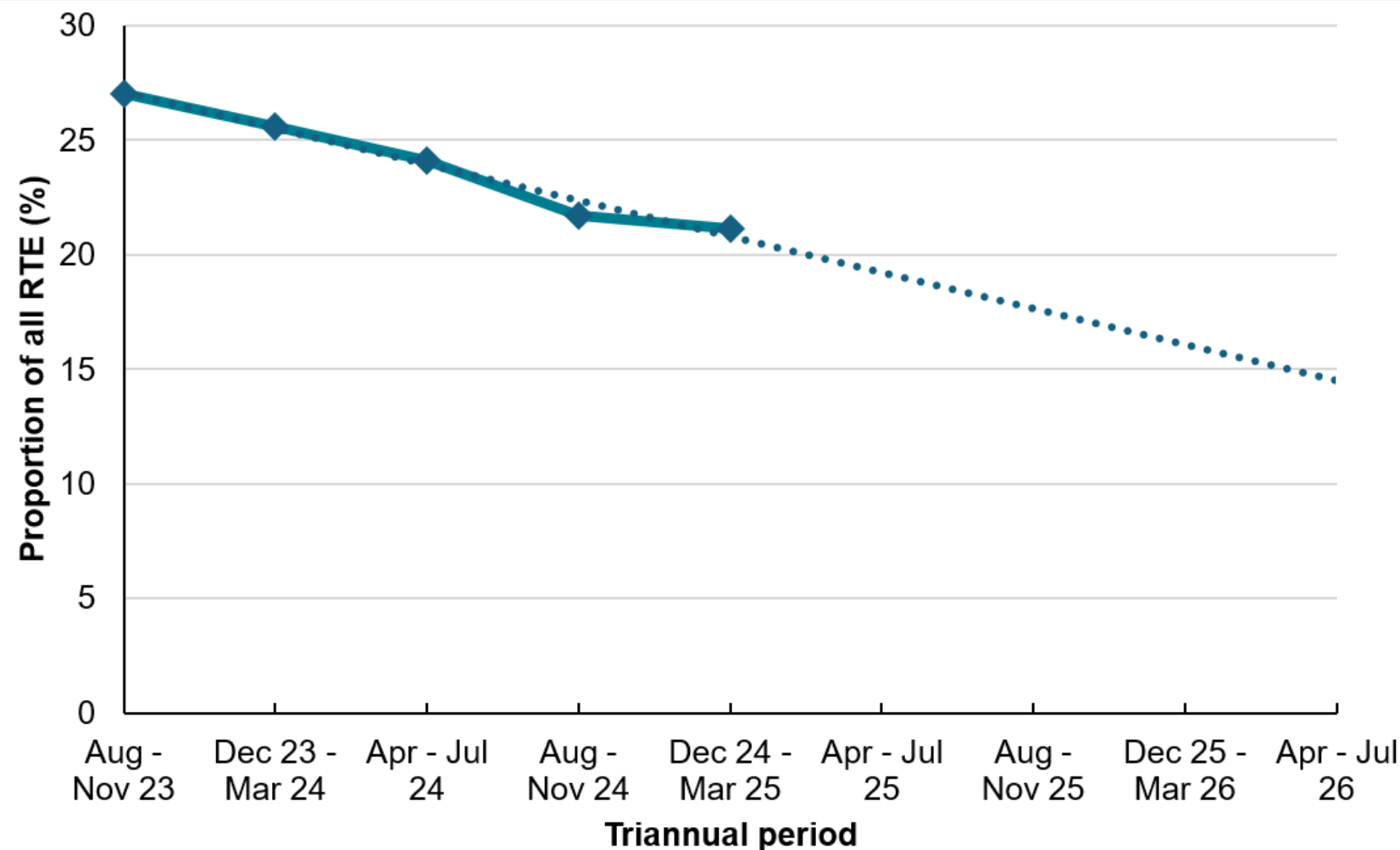
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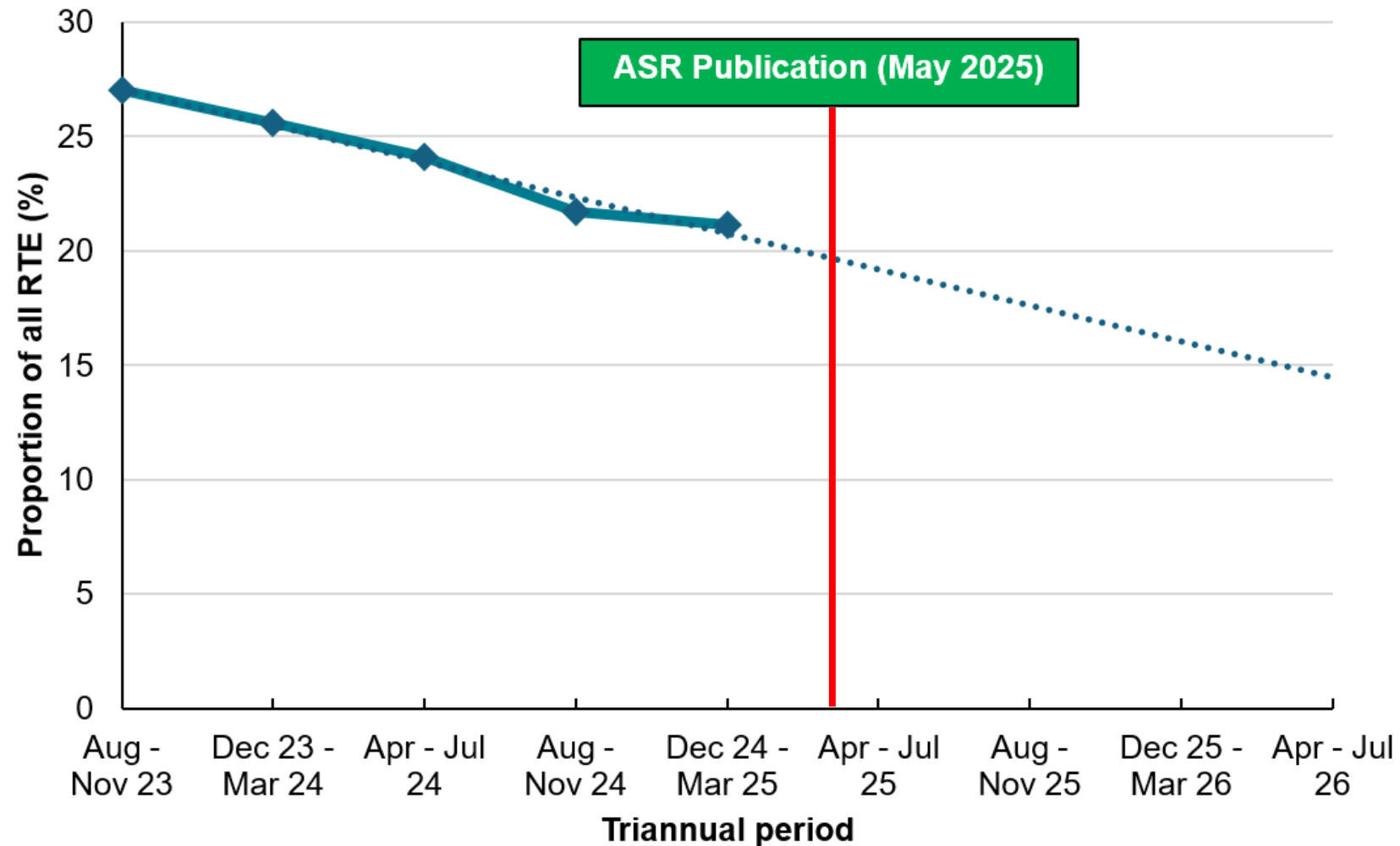
Good catch (Level 4) trends



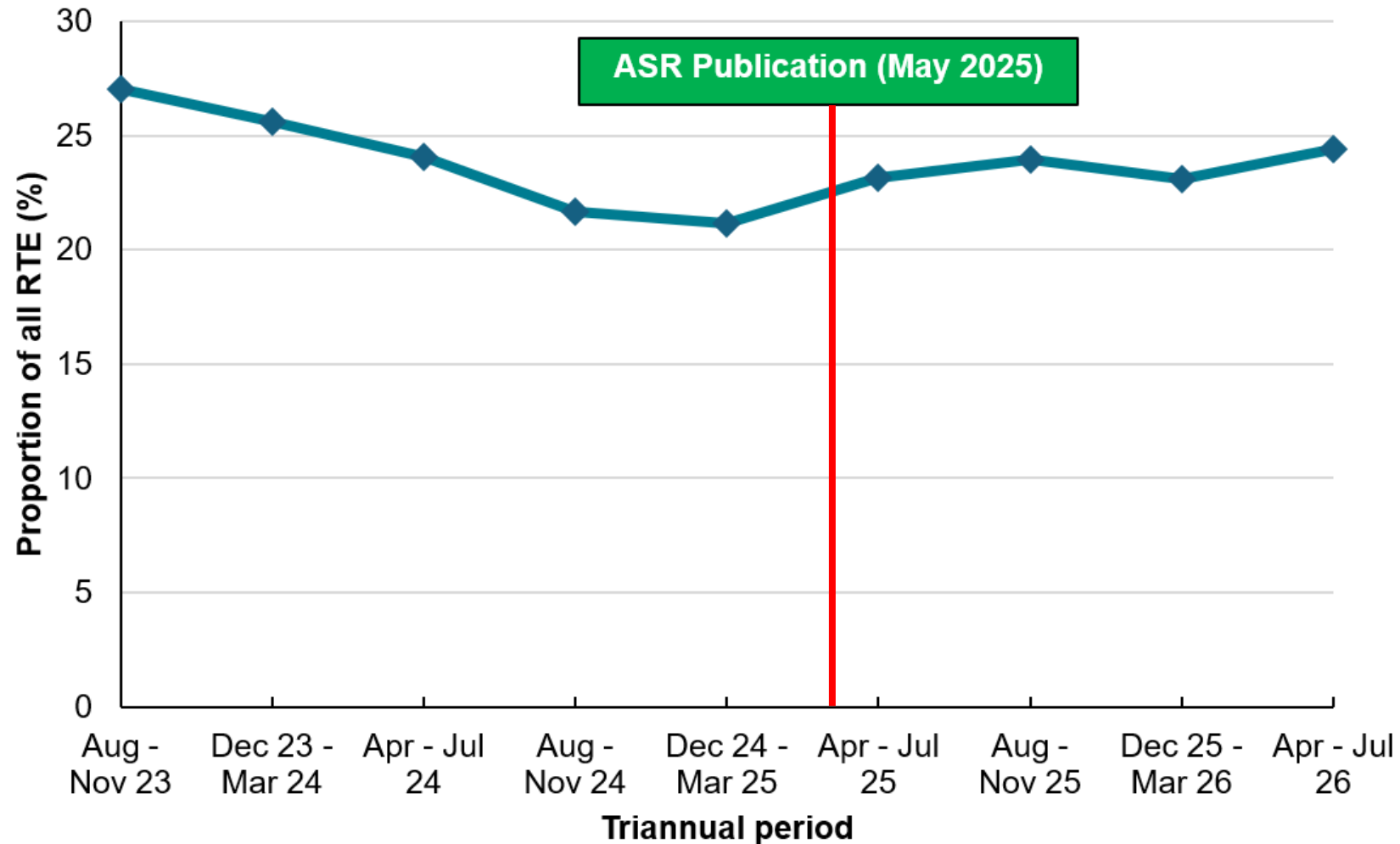
Good catch (Level 4) trends



Good catch (Level 4) trends



Good catch (Level 4) trends



Interpreting the findings

- National dataset
- Nearly 65,000 reported events analysed
- Consistent decline observed preceding publication
- Trend reversal immediately after publication
- Relatively short post-publication follow-up period
- Taxonomy and ASR publication increased awareness
- Other factors may have influenced reporting behaviour
- Association does not prove causation

What might explain this?

Possible mechanisms:

- Positive framing
 - Near miss: focuses on error
 - Good catch: focuses on successful detection
- Professional recognition
 - The terminology implicitly rewards vigilance
- Reduced stigma
 - Staff may feel: “I prevented harm” rather than “I nearly caused harm”
- Increased motivation
 - People like reporting successes more than failures

Conclusions

- Level 4 reporting has shown a gradual decline over 5 years.
- Following publication of ASR and adoption of the Good Catch terminology, the previously declining proportion of Level 4 reports stabilised and subsequently increased.
- Positive language may encourage engagement with safety reporting.

Contacts and links to further information

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