

News from the National Guardian



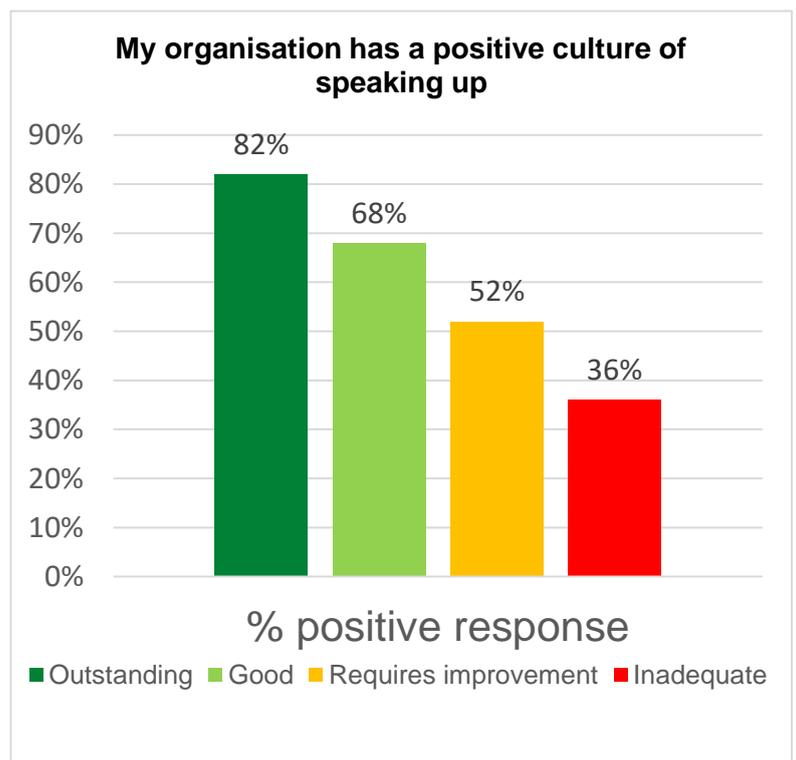
More workers are speaking up in the NHS and I am really grateful for the hard work that Freedom to Speak Up Guardians and those supporting them are doing to make this happen.

Speaking up is all about listening, learning and sharing. That's why it was with great pleasure that we announced the winners of the HSJ Award for Freedom to Speak Up Organisation of the Year in November 2019. This award recognises organisations who have demonstrated excellence in their speaking up arrangements and capture the learning of exceptional work to share with others. You can read more about the work of RDaSH, this year's winners, within this newsletter.

October's Speak Up Month saw Freedom to Speak Up Guardians finding innovative ways to raise awareness and encourage workers to speak up to them – and as a result, unreconciled data received from guardians shows a spike in cases for that quarter. In all, 4,120 cases of speaking up were reported, which is the highest number of cases in a single quarter since Freedom to Speak Up was launched.

During Speak Up Month, we also published the Freedom to Speak Up Index a metric indicating the staff view of the speak up culture. It is encouraging that 180 of 230 trusts had an improvement in their index score over the past three years with a six percentage point improvement nationally.

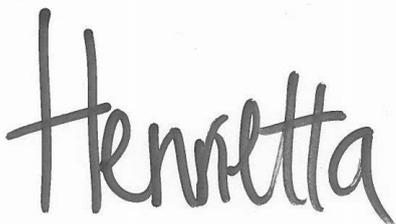
Yet it is disappointing to note that guardians still do not all have ring fenced time, as shown in our annual survey of the Freedom to Speak Up guardians, despite our continued call that guardians need time set aside to do their job.



In my view, organisations that do not provide guardians with ring-fenced time to do their valuable, important and difficult job should not receive more than 'requires improvement' for the well-led element of their CQC rating. Professor Ted Baker, CQC's Chief Inspector of Hospitals, has said: "No service can be effective without listening to and acting on the concerns raised by its staff. Providing all staff with the confidence and means to speak up is an essential part of providing high quality care and the network of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians play an invaluable role. It's crucial that they are given protected time to support their colleagues and we will be looking more closely at how hospital trusts are ensuring this when we inspect in the future."

Those who speak up are to be celebrated, they are an invaluable part of any organisation. Valued and engaged staff provide excellent care to their patients. When workers speak up we need to focus on the matter being raised, not the person raising it.

I look forward to sharing with you our Annual Report, which will be laid before Parliament shortly. This brings together the progress being made in health in fostering an environment where speaking up is business as usual. I welcome the excellent work that has been done by so many and call on leaders to continue the momentum in this vital work.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henrietta". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'H'.

HSJ Awards Freedom to Speak Up Organisation of the Year

The 2019 winners of the HSJ Award Freedom to Speak Up Organisation of the Year, Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust, have approached the adoption of Freedom to Speak Up in a holistic way, focussing on inclusivity and developing both their own organisational culture and that of other organisations in their area.

“We had an ambition to develop our local culture in parallel with the development of joint-work with our regional partners,” said Dr Jude Graham, Deputy Director for Organisational Learning and Freedom to Speak Up Guardian of the trust. “This, we believe, supports patient safety and staff wellbeing in a ‘place-based’ and integrated way.”

Making a conscious decision to work beyond the organisational boundaries has enabled others to develop more positive speak up cultures, which is beneficial for patients accessing the whole health system in their area.

The trust has worked with neighbouring providers who may have ‘requires improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ CQC ratings and have different challenges. By connecting with other trust leads about Freedom to Speak Up, RDaSH has been able to share processes and spread good practice.

[You can read the full case study on our website](#)



We surveyed guardians to ask for their opinion on the awards and as a result of their positive feedback, we have decided to sponsor it again in 2020. Award entries open on 9 March and the deadline is 15 May.

More information can be found at <https://awards.hsj.co.uk/>

Case study

Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Matt Asbrey, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian & Staff Engagement Lead

Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust were highly commended in this year's HSJ Freedom to Speak Up Organisation of the Year Award.

Evidence shows that where workers feel care and safety are priorities for their organisation, patient outcomes are enhanced. Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's engagement approach, Let's Talk, focuses on the power and value of communicating and engaging with workers so they can feel confident in speaking up and that they will be listened to. It highlights how all workers can make a difference and work together to deliver outstanding care for and with service users, with the aim of making NHFT a great place to work and receive care.

In order for workers to have the confidence to speak up, they need to feel psychologically safe and supported, particularly if they are from a vulnerable or minority group. The majority of NHFT's 24 Freedom to Speak Up champions are in place to support vulnerable workers groups including people in staff networks (Black, minority and ethnic (BME) colleagues, those with disabilities, working carers and LGBTQ+), junior doctors, apprentices and non-qualified workers.

An example of the change which can result from these champions is that of a BME worker who spoke up to a champion about perception of bullying from managers and pressure on workers in one of the trust's services. When the worker shared with colleagues that they had met with the



champion and the guardian, a further 10 team members spoke up about their experiences.

As a result, a full "speaking up inquiry" was completed and provided the opportunity for other workers to speak up about their experiences. The trust found that resources had stayed the same but referrals had doubled. Problems were hidden because workers were doing the best they could, but the pressure to achieve targets in this service was affecting behaviours between managers and colleagues.

By triangulating information from other data sources including Datix, Serious Incidents and other speak up reports, this has resulted in a complete review of the service pathways including workers, service users and partners including GPs and third sector partners. Referrals, including self-referrals, now call a single number which is staffed by trained third sector administrators who sign-post patients

to the right service or refer to appropriate practitioners, thus relieving some of the pressure on workers and improving team culture.

In the 12 months since having a BME champion, there was a 300 per cent increase in concerns from BME colleagues. The latest Staff Survey results have shown a three per cent increase in BME workers feeling secure in speaking up about unsafe clinical practice; a higher increase than the result for white colleagues.

It is recognised that cultural change is inspired by senior leaders and boards are vital in inspiring collective leadership. NHFT has embedded internal “case reviews” for concerns raised with the guardian. The process is overseen and reported to a trust-level committee to quality-assure the process followed and identify learning to be shared. The most recent review identified improvements NHFT should make for workers interviewed as witnesses in HR processes and a review of appraisal processes for medics.

An example of significant change as a result of Freedom to Speak Up is the structural change in the trust’s Adult and Children’s Directorate to establish increased clinical leadership of services. Several significant concerns highlighted a lack of clinical involvement in clinical decision-making, leaving workers worrying about safety of services. The new model includes a clinical director in all directorate areas, working alongside an assistant director to ensure that operational decisions are made with senior clinical input to ensure the safety of our service users.

Since the Freedom to Speak Up programme was introduced, NHFT has seen a 15 per cent increase in recommendation as a place to work and an 11 per cent increased recommendation as a place to receive care. Increased numbers of workers speaking up to the guardian have been reported for ten consecutive quarters.

High reporting rates of errors and near-misses is strongly linked to improved safety culture and NHFT has worked hard to encourage reporting of errors and near-misses to enable learning to take place. NHFT has seen a 20 per cent increase in Datix reporting over the last three years, with outcomes of no harm/near-miss increasing and moderate/severe harm decreasing. This demonstrates that learning is taking place from near-misses/low harm incidents and workers report feeling those involved in errors are treated fairly, up 12 per cent from 2016.

The National Staff Survey 2018 results show increasing confidence in speaking up, with a seven per cent increase in feeling secure in raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice since 2015 and an 11 per cent increase in workers feeling confident their concern would be addressed.

In 2018, NHFT achieved ‘Outstanding’ CQC status, including ‘Outstanding’ for the ‘Well-led’ domain. The report stated that an “open and transparent culture was fully embedded.”

Read more case studies from the HSJ Awards entrants on the National Guardian’s website
www.nationalguardian.org.uk

Freedom to Speak Up Index

Culture is a term which can be interpreted in different ways. To some it might seem vague and difficult to measure.

Data from [Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Surveys](#) shows that guardians in organisations rated Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission are more positive in their perceptions of the speaking up culture.

To look deeper into this, we have involved the voices of other workers, by creating a single measure using questions from the 2018 NHS Staff Survey. Four questions from the staff survey are used, including whether staff feel secure raising concerns if they see something unsafe.

This [Freedom to Speak Up Index](#), brought together by the National Guardian's Office and NHS England, identifies the views of staff on the speaking up culture in NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts (FTs). It acts as a measure for trust boards to be able to use to learn more about their own Freedom to Speak Up culture, as experienced by their workforce, is an opportunity for improvement.

In addition to a table highlighting where every trust in England stands, the FTSU Index report also highlights the achievements of the trusts that have the best FTSU cultures in the form of case studies. These illustrate how the top performing trusts by sector are encouraging a speak up culture and provide learning for others to follow.

For commissioners and regulators, the FTSU Index provides a new indicator which can be viewed together with other information about



safety, workforce and culture.

Initially published in October, the FTSU Index has now been relaunched with the most up-to-date CQC ratings (as of 3 February 2020). The republished report also contains a link to the data from the past three years so that organisations can see their speaking up journey.

“Trusts with higher index scores have high ratings by CQC in overall and Well-Led.

“Trusts can use the index as an insight into the views of their workforce on their speaking up culture and learn from other’s experience.”

Dr Henrietta Hughes OBE

Speak Up Month



The National Guardian's Office held its second Speak Up Month in October, which saw even more activity than the previous year.

The activities during Speak Up Month seek to raise awareness, not just of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians but of speaking up in general. Freedom to Speak Up Guardians send a message that workers can feel encouraged and safe to speak up – that it is the normal thing to do.

On social media, the hashtag #SpeakUpToMe was used over 7,500 times and showcased some of the innovative and exciting ways that Freedom to Speak Up Guardians were raising awareness within their organisations.

We travelled to nearly 40 events, meeting guardians and hearing about the speaking up culture in their organisations. We've seen first hand how guardians work proactively to address barriers to speaking up, by engaging with different workers, whether that's staffside, complaints teams, safety and incidents, staff networks and others to identify hotspots and make improvements.

And where organisations need to do more to

help their workers speak up, Speak Up Month helps to raise awareness of the benefits to both the workers and the organisation.

Trees were planted, a Speak Up flag was created, pledges made, quizzes, word searches and many many cakes were baked. There has even been a SpeakUpulance – a Speak Up ambulance. [We've collated some examples on this video.](#)

We also received messages of support from Secretary of State, Matt Hancock and our supporters and partners, which you can [view on our YouTube channel.](#)

So, although you may be wondering what all the cakes and Twitter hashtags have to do with speaking up, Speak Up Month helps make guardians even more visible, so that no one can say they don't know who to speak up to. The support from organisations to promote the guardian role also sends the message that leaders want to listen to what their workers have to speak up about.

The activities during Speak Up Month raise awareness, not just of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians but of speaking up in general. Guardians send a message that workers can feel encouraged and safe to speak up – that it is the normal thing to do.

Case study

London Ambulance Service

Katy Crichton, Paramedic and London Ambulance Service

Over the past year, Freedom to Speak Up issues raised by London Ambulance Service staff have increased considerably. We saw the same number in the first six months of this financial year as for the whole of last year.

I believe the growing number of workers now feeling confident to speak up is a positive thing which will drive real change to benefit both our staff and our patients.

What are they speaking up about? Patient safety issues are lower down the list of reported concerns. London Ambulance Service staff are generally not afraid to speak up for their patients. Day in and day out, I see them using our reporting systems like Datix, making safeguarding referrals or flagging incidents with managers to make sure they are protected.

So while patient safety is not an area where workers often feel the need for added protection and confidentiality from someone like me, this is not true for cultural concerns around London Ambulance Service processes or behaviour of colleagues.

As an example of culture change, we have a trust-wide focus to make staff feel comfortable to report cases of verbal and physical abuse from the public. These incidents have long been under reported, as we may not be as good at “sticking up” for ourselves as we are for patients. We hope this is getting better - as an organisation we were really proud of paramedic Lizzie who recently waived her right to anonymity and spoke to the [Evening Standard](#) about her experience of sexual assault from a patient.

But many of us can become so used to things like verbal abuse – be it over the phone or in person – that it can start to feel normal. Like any long-standing cultural issue, people start to feel there is no point in raising it. Internal work with staff to encourage reporting together and a public media campaign - #notapartofthejob – has been challenging this mind-set. We are starting to see attitudes changing as workers see there is an appropriate response from managers and the judicial system.

The high number of LAS workers now speaking up is testament to the importance that the executive team has placed on it. I have regular meetings with the CEO, COO, Director of People and Culture as well as the executive and non-executive leads for FTSU. I was able to recruit a part-time FTSU co-ordinator, paramedic Erica Greene, to support me when the workload became unmanageable for me alone. We have more than 30 FTSU advocates to encourage and help workers to speak up in their area. We routinely use internal channels to promote FTSU and the learning that is taking place as a result of issues raised.

Speaking up is a team effort between workers, managers and unions. Without being complacent, we are doing that part of it well. The next phase is to ensure that we are “listening up” as well as we are speaking up. This means really making use of what we are learning through FTSU and supporting our staff to feel that they are looked after by the trust as well as we are looking after our patients.

Khadir Meer, London Ambulance Service Chief Operating Officer

On joining LAS in September, I was immediately thrown in to the Chief Executive's six-monthly biannual roadshows. I very quickly realised that meeting our staff is in no way straightforward given we operate out of 68 ambulance stations and at least another 10 corporate and support facilities across 650 square miles that is London.

Katy and or Erica came to every roadshow, encouraging staff to 'speak up', listening to concerns, and talking about the actions we had taken in response.

The fact that such a number of issues are being raised is a good thing. We are not unique in the challenges we face. Most of our workforce are band six or below. They work tirelessly to deliver high quality patient care within the context of the associated high cost of living and travelling in London and this places demands on shift working staff in a 24-hour service. We can only fix problems we know about and FTSU has proved to be a really good way to help the board understand staff experience in all areas of the organisation.

In 2019, the first report by the National Guardian's Office found that with a 17 per cent increase we were the most improved NHS trust in England which shows our speaking up culture is maturing. But translating the concerns into meaningful action and learning is the difficult part. Change takes time and this can be frustrating for staff.

We must ensure our managers at all levels are given the training, development and time to listen and understand the issues that are brought to them, whether it be by staff themselves, the unions or FTSU. Equally important to me is managers feeling empowered to make decisions and have the resources to take action in discussion with staff.

“Caring for our staff is my foremost priority because if they are not supported I cannot expect them to support and care for our patients effectively.”

Khadir Meer



For me, caring for our staff is my foremost priority because if they are not supported I cannot expect them to support and care for our patients effectively.

The perception of the speaking up culture in health is improving

National Guardian
Freedom to Speak Up

FREEDOM TO SPEAK UP GUARDIAN SURVEY 2019

The National Guardian's Office surveyed the Freedom to Speak Up network and asked guardians and those in a supporting role for their feedback.



Freedom to Speak Up is making a difference

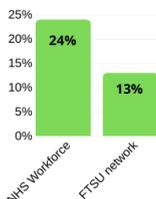
More respondents feel that the role is making a difference – 76% agree (compared with 68% in 2018).



No ring-fenced time

Too many Freedom to Speak Up guardians still have no ring-fenced time to carry out their responsibilities – and this impacts on their confidence to do the job.

We have asked the CQC to place more emphasis on this as they carry out their inspections of the well-led domain.



BAME workers are under-represented

BAME NHS workers are under-represented in the Freedom to Speak Up network.

We are working with the WRES Team to look into this.



Guardians feel least valued by middle managers

69% feel valued by middle managers, compared with 95% feeling valued by the people they support and 87% by workers in their organisation.



Freedom to Speak Up guardians care

59% of guardians said that the role impacts upon their emotional and psychological well-being – both positively and negatively.

An annual survey, conducted by the National Guardian's Office, asked Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, and those in a supporting role, about how speaking up is being implemented in their organisation. The results reveal details about the network's demographics and their perceptions of the impact of their role.

Headlines from the survey include a measure of whether those in speaking up roles think their work is making a difference, with 76 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing – compared to 68 per cent last year. They also reported that awareness of the guardian role is improving.

Other areas the survey has helped highlight include the need to address the fact BAME workers are under-represented in the guardian network. While BAME workers make up 24 per cent of the NHS workforce, just 13 per cent occupy speak up roles.

We have asked the NHS E/I Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) team to help us understand this and whether this aspect of guardian demographics does, in practice, impact on speaking up.

“It's really important we listen to guardians in order to understand the impact Freedom to Speak Up is making. This report will help organisations better understand how to work with their guardians to improve their speaking up cultures.”

Dr Henrietta Hughes OBE

Caring, supportive, collaborative – our vision for the NHS

Dr Chaand Nagpaul, Chair, BMA

Across the UK, doctors are working in an NHS facing some of the most difficult challenges and pressures in its history. So, on becoming the BMA Chair of Council, I launched the [Caring, Supportive, Collaborative project](#) so that we might better understand doctors' lived experiences of working in the NHS, what sort of health service they want to work in and how we as an Association could, together with others, change things for the better.



What makes the BMA unique is that we are the only organisation to represent all doctors from all corners of the profession across the UK – from medical students and junior doctors, GPs, hospital doctors of all grades and specialties to those working in public health and academic medicine.

Caring, Supportive, Collaborative commenced with a [landmark survey](#) which attracted a response from almost 8,000 BMA members. Nearly four in five said that lack of resources is significantly affecting the quality and safety of patient care. Forty-five per cent said they are worried about often making a mistake and, worse still, over half (55 per cent) worry they will be unfairly blamed for errors that are actually due to system failings.

As a result, only 40 per cent of doctors feel content to report errors, and just 40 per cent feel they work in a learning environment in which the reporting of errors contributes to the prevention of future mistakes.

In addition, two-fifths of doctors say that bullying, harassment and undermining behaviour is often or sometimes a problem in their workplace.

This picture is even worse for BAME doctors, who are almost twice as likely as white doctors to say that they would not feel confident in raising concerns. BAME doctors are also more likely to say they would fear being blamed or suffering adverse consequences if they did speak out (57 per cent vs 48 per cent of white doctors), and are more than twice as likely to say that there is a problem with bullying, harassment and undermining in their main place of work.

These statistics sadly depict the antithesis of the key recommendations made by Don Berwick, the international patient safety expert who wrote a seminal report on safety in the NHS in 2013, following the Francis inquiry. Berwick observed that “Fear is toxic to both safety and improvement” in the NHS and was clear that in the majority of cases it is systems, rather than individuals, that are the root cause of errors. He advocated a “culture of learning” to create a safer NHS.

This will no doubt sound familiar to many of you, and forms the very basis of the introduction of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians in all NHS Trusts – to help create a culture of openness within the NHS, where staff are encouraged to speak up, lessons are learnt and care improves as a result.

Our members want to work within such a caring and supportive culture. This means politicians, NHS leaders and managers:

- Demonstrating that they genuinely encourage and value openness and the reporting of concerns as a basis for learning
- Asking what happened and why rather than beginning by who is to blame after an incident
- Enabling and valuing staff who speak up including telling them what will happen next to address their concerns
- Being clear about standards of behaviour, enabling early intervention by managers and empowering bystanders to tackle unprofessional behaviour; and
- Ensuring inclusion and culturally sensitive leadership so that BAME doctors and those from minority groups feel supported and fairly treated as recommended in last year's [Fair to refer report by Roger Kline and Doyin Atewologun](#).

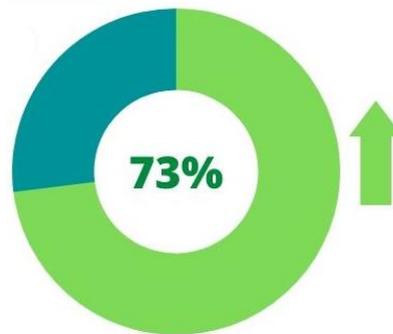
It is encouraging that there are emerging examples of positive change. Mersey Care is an oft-quoted case study – a trust which has, through implementing a just culture approach, reduced its disciplinarys by 75 per cent and its suspensions by 92 per cent whilst also bringing about an overall reduction in harm. NHS Resolution's [Just and Learning Culture Charter](#) sets out a similar ethos and standards the NHS should be aspiring to when dealing with patient safety incidents. And parliament will be considering a Health Service Safety Investigations Bill to establish the legal framework for 'safe spaces' in which NHS staff and patients will be able to share confidential information with investigators – enabling learning from significant adverse events and drawing upon the positive experience of improving safety in the aviation industry.

Fortunately, this work is now seen as a priority across the wider NHS and rightly so. It is crucial that we get the workplace culture right so that patients receive the safe treatment they need and deserve, and all healthcare staff are valued and respected for what they do.

Read more about the BMA's future vision for the NHS

More NHS workers feel confident to speak up

Over the last two years, over 19,000 cases of speaking up by NHS workers in trusts have been handled by Freedom to Speak Up Guardians. These include cases with an element of bullying and harassment and that have impacted on patient safety and quality of care.

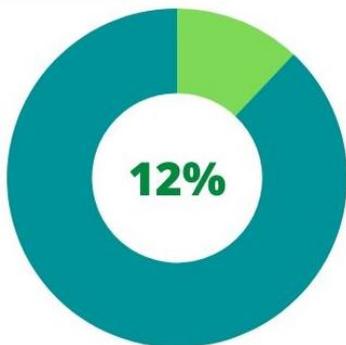


73% increase in cases brought to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians in 2018/19

The latest analysis from the National Guardian's Office of the data submitted by Freedom to Speak Up Guardians reveals that over the last year cases of speaking up to guardians have risen by 73 per cent, compared to 2017/18.

Of the 12,000 cases raised between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, guardians reported that almost a third included an element of patient safety/quality of care, and just over 40 per cent included an element of bullying/harassment.

Another trend that the report draws from the data that guardians in trusts are providing to the National Guardian's Office is that the percentage of anonymous cases is falling, down to 12 per cent in 2018/19 compared to 18 per cent in 2017/18.



Percentage of anonymous cases has gone down

12% in 2018/19 compared to 18% in 2017/18

However, the report also reveals that, while low, the number of workers who indicated they were suffering detriment as a result of speaking up has remained disappointingly static at five per cent.

There was also evidence that speaking up varied significantly from trusts to trust, with the highest number of cases in a single trust reported over the year being 270, while the lowest number was just one.

[Read the report](#)

“The confidence that NHS workers have in the ability of guardians to address the issues they raise is growing and more learning is being brought to organisations to help them improve.

“Our goal at the National Guardian’s Office is to make speaking up business as usual, and while there is a way to go to achieve that, these latest figures are encouraging.

“Measures like the level of anonymity dropping are good indicators to suggest workers feel more confident to speak up, particularly when considered in tandem with the encouraging increase in the overall number of cases.

“However, it is important that each individual trust looks at their data in context and tries to draw learning from it. Organisations where very few workers are speaking up or where levels of reported detriment are higher should look to understand and address the issues that may account for that.

“Fostering an environment where workers are free to speak up, and removing barriers that may prevent them from doing so, is in the best interests of every organisation that wants to deliver the highest quality care possible.

“We must never lose sight of the fact that while Freedom to Speak Up is there for workers, it ultimately all comes back to patients and service users – keeping them safe and treating them well.”

Dr Henrietta Hughes OBE

Regional Integration and Development Events

What does regional integration mean for Freedom to Speak Up?

It is important that workers in all healthcare settings are able to speak up, so that patient care is protected across the system.

NHS England has provided guidance for primary care providers on Freedom to Speak Up and Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are already established in NHS Acute Trusts, with some vanguard organisations in primary care.

The National Guardian's Office is running six Regional Integration and Development Events as part of its strategy to embed Freedom to Speak Up throughout the NHS in England throughout March.

These events are an opportunity to promote an integrated approach to speaking up right across the health sector and enable networking across the Freedom to Speak Up community. They will be an excellent way to share learning, expertise and challenges with colleagues in primary and secondary care in your region.

Please contact enquiries@nationalguardianoffice.org.uk if you would like more information.



If you have any comments or queries about this newsletter, please contact the
National Guardian's Office
enquiries@nationalguardianoffice.org.uk