



**National  
Guardian**

Freedom to Speak Up

## Press release

23 June 2022

### Report highlights concerns for the wellbeing of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians

[A report published by the National Guardian's Office today](#) (23<sup>rd</sup> June) highlights the experience of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians amid the continued pressure of the pandemic on the healthcare sector.

This report is our second publication looking at the results of the 2021 Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Survey. It looks in more detail at the responses from guardians about their wellbeing and the support available to them, whether that's from their leaders, their guardian peers, or the National Guardian's Office.

Just over half of Freedom to Speak, Up Guardians who responded to the survey said that their role can negatively affect their emotional well-being. Yet when they are able to effect positive change, the role can be the most fulfilling.

A key message from the results highlights again the importance of adequate ring-fenced time for carrying out the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role. A greater proportion of respondents without ring-fenced time felt that the role reduced their emotional and psychological well-being. They also said that they spent all their time in the guardian role on case management – the reactive elements of the role (20% compared with 5% of those with ring-fenced time).

This compares with the greater proportion of respondents with ring-fenced time (34.6%), who said they split their time equally between supporting colleagues through case management and supporting their organisation - the proactive element of their role (compared to 21.7% of respondents with no ring-fenced time).

Respondents with ring-fenced time were more likely to attend guardian network meetings and access National Guardian's Office communications and development opportunities. Network meetings are valuable opportunities to share good practice and psychological and emotional support with their guardian peers.

Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark, National Guardian for the NHS, said:

*"Freedom to Speak Up Guardians provide a valuable additional route for workers to speak up about anything which gets in the way of them doing their job.*

*"Lack of ring-fenced time has an impact, not just on the day-to-day fulfilment of this role, but also on Freedom to Speak Up Guardians' ability to access support.*

*The National Guardian's Office has repeatedly called for Freedom to Speak Up Guardians to have sufficient ring-fenced time to carry out their role.*

*I ask that leaders discuss the findings of this report with their Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and assess with them the amount of ring-fenced time needed to carry out the role and meet the needs of workers in their organisation. This means not only the proactive and reactive elements of the role, but also that their guardian has sufficient time to access wellbeing resources, including their guardian networks.”*

For more information or interviews contact: [comms@nationalguardianoffice.org.uk](mailto:comms@nationalguardianoffice.org.uk)

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## Notes for editors:

### About the report

**Supporting the Wellbeing of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians:  
Further analysis of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Survey 2021  
Published : 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022**

**Available from: [nationalguardian.org.uk/](https://nationalguardian.org.uk/)**

This is the second report regarding the results of our most recent survey of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians.

This annual survey aims to gain insight into the implementation of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role and how this could be improved. The responses from the survey help the National Guardian’s Office assess developments and to identify and prioritise changes that we may need to make to support the Freedom to Speak Up network.

This is the fifth survey of its kind. You can read reports from previous annual surveys [here](#).

The survey was conducted online by Picker, an independent external research charity, on behalf of the National Guardian’s Office. Picker analysed the survey findings and shared anonymised results with the NGO in a format in which no individual, or their responses, can be identified.

737 Freedom to Speak Up Guardians were invited to participate in the survey, which was open from 13 September to 31 October 2021. In total, there were 333 responses - a response rate of 45.2%.

Please see [here](#) for the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Survey 2021 Question List.

In March 2022, we published our [first report](#) looking at the results of the 2021 Freedom to Speak Up Guardian survey.

## About the National Guardian's Office

The National Guardian's Office works to make speaking up become business as usual to effect cultural change in the NHS.

The office leads, trains and supports a network of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians in England and provides learning and challenge on speaking up matters to the healthcare system as a whole.

The role of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians and the National Guardian were established in 2016 following the events at Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust and recommendations from Sir Robert Francis' Freedom to Speak Up Inquiry.

There are now over 800 Freedom to Speak Up guardians in NHS primary and secondary care and independent sector organisations, national bodies and elsewhere that ensure workers can speak up about any issues impacting on their ability to do their job.

**Freedom to Speak Up Guardians** support workers to speak up when they feel that they are unable to do so by other ways. They ensure that people who speak up are thanked, that the issues they raise are responded to, and make sure that the person speaking up receives feedback on the actions taken. Guardians also work proactively to support their organisation to tackle barriers to speaking up.

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are appointed by the organisation that they support and abide by the guidance issued by the National Guardian's Office. They follow the ['universal job description'](#) issued by the NGO.

[www.nationalguardian.org.uk](http://www.nationalguardian.org.uk)

## About the National Guardian for the NHS



Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark was appointed as National Guardian in December 2021.

She is a registered nurse with more than 30 years' experience in the NHS, higher education, voluntary and private sectors. Prior to her role as National Guardian, she was a non-executive director at NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group where she was also Freedom to Speak Up Guardian.

She is the Independent Chair for the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board. She also worked with the NHS England New Care Models Programme for three years as a Clinical Associate and has been working as a consultant and coach with and in the NHS since March 2015. Her specialist clinical area is end of life care in which she was awarded her PhD.