

National Guardian's office – process around complaints about Guardians

Summary

This process replaces any previous policy regarding complaints made about Freedom to Speak Up Guardians that are made to the National Guardian's Office (NGO).

Background

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are appointed and employed by their organisation, though their remit requires them to act in an independent, impartial and objective capacity. Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are trained and supported by the NGO. Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are expected to support their organisation to become a place where speaking up becomes business as usual.

The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role and supporting processes, policy and culture are there to meet the needs of workers. The role should also meet the expectations of the NGO, as set out in the universal job description for the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role, which can be found [here](#).

Overview

The NGO recognises that information about how Freedom to Speak Up is working within organisations can give valuable insight into the speak up culture. However, the NGO, whilst training and supporting a network of Guardians across many healthcare organisations in England, does not employ them directly. The office is not a regulatory or professional body and cannot conduct investigations into an individual Guardian's conduct.

If an individual wishes to raise a complaint about the conduct of a Guardian, they will be referred back to the Guardian's organisation for local investigation.

The office will, with consent of the individual, use any information received to inform the NGO's work. This could include the following:

- Feeding into the NGO's speaking up review programme, which can be found [here](#).
- Data and information around Guardian training compliance and further individual support.

- Speaking up data submitted by Guardians.

The office will always thank individuals for speaking up and inform them of how their speaking up matter has informed the work of the office.

Our office will also endeavour to assist an individual in finding the most appropriate avenues to support them with their speaking up matters. This could include passing the information on, with consent, to the regulators, the Care Quality Commission and NHS England, to include in their own work and inspections.

Confidentiality

The NGO will always maintain confidentiality when speaking to individuals about their speaking up matters. Any escalation via the office will always take place with consent from the individual.

The only time where confidentiality may not be able to be maintained is where a safeguarding matter arises where confidentiality needs to be breached to protect individuals from the risk of harm, or from actual harm. More information about the NGO's privacy and confidentiality policies can be found [here](#).