National Guardian
Freedom to Speak Up

enquiries@nationalguardianoffice.org.uk

17th August 2023

Dear Senior leader,

This year, Freedom to Speak Up guardians have handled over 25,000 cases – a record number which highlights how valued guardians are as a route to speaking up.

We have also published our survey of Freedom to Speak Up guardians. It is heartening to read that 84% of guardians who responded said that their organisation is working to tackle the barriers to speaking up. However, there is a sharp decline in their perceptions overall that the speaking up culture is improving.

I am writing to you because I am concerned that 44% of guardians who responded stated that the role had reduced their health and wellbeing.

Just over half (54%) said they had enough time to carry out their Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role. In addition to supporting workers who speak up, guardians also need time for the proactive part of their role, identifying and tackling barriers to speaking up. Yet 48% spent the majority of their time responding to workers, a reflection on the increased number of cases being raised to guardians.

This report highlights the impact which insufficient protected time has, both on the execution of the role, the Freedom to Speak Up culture and the wellbeing of the guardian.

Please discuss these findings with your Freedom to Speak Up guardian(s). I urge you to take steps to satisfy yourself that they are well supported, both in terms of their wellbeing and with time and resources.

You may find the guide for leaders and the reflection and planning tool which we developed with NHS England of help.

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians do a valuable, important and difficult job, and this report highlights the complexity of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role.

To give the National Guardian's Office assurance that all guardians are trained to the same level of knowledge and understanding of what is expected of them, in 2021/22 all Freedom to Speak Up guardians were asked to complete the newly devised Foundation elearning modules. This served as Refresher Training for that year.

Annual Refresher training is now mandatory and I am pleased to say that your Freedom to Speak Up Guardian has completed their 2023 Annual Refresher training already this year.

I appreciate your taking the time to read this report, and reflect on - and improve - your speaking up arrangements. You can download your copy here and we welcome any feedback you may have.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark
National Guardian for the NHS