



**National Guardian Office  
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By email

To all leaders of organisations with Freedom to Speak Up guardians

19 December 2023

This year we have had stark reminders of why all efforts to improve the Speak Up culture in health, including the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian route, are so essential for patient safety.

Our [2022 - 2023 Annual Report](#) has been laid before Parliament, highlighting the work of Freedom to Speak Up guardians and the National Guardian's Office and sharing some of our learning.

This year Freedom to Speak Up guardians handled over 25,000 cases. This record number of cases highlights just how trusted guardians are as a valuable additional route to speaking up. The benefits which listening to workers can bring can only be realised if leaders support Freedom to Speak Up and provide sufficient time and resources for their guardians to meet the demand of this unique and far-reaching role.

In her foreword to the report, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy, Maria Caulfield MP, said: "The events surrounding the terrible crimes of Lucy Letby are an important reminder of how vital it is for organisations to have a culture in which workers feel safe to speak up about anything that gets in the way of delivering safe and high-quality care. Managers and senior leaders must be welcoming of speaking up and be ready to listen and act on what they hear."

The deadline for implementing NHS England's Freedom to Speak Up policy provides an opportunity for you to look afresh at your arrangements for assurance that workers in your organisations have supportive routes available to them to speak up, and that, as leaders, we are listening and acting.

Boards in NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts are expected to have updated their local policy to reflect the new template by the end of January 2024. All ICBs and primary care organisations have also been asked to adopt the new national policy by January 2024 and to use the guidance to help establish Freedom to Speak Up arrangements.

If we can get the culture right, benefits will follow, including improving patient safety, innovation for improvement, retaining workers and making the NHS a great place to work.



We would like to invite you to the National Guardian's Office Freedom to Speak Up conference which will take place in Birmingham on Thursday 14th March.

This conference is an opportunity for leaders across the healthcare sector to understand and work to address and remove the barriers to speaking up. You can register to attend on the conference website here: <https://ngo-conference-2024.orcula.co.uk/home>

For the latest updates, news stories and case studies sign up to our newsletter here; [Contact Us - National Guardian's Office](#)

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jayne', written in a cursive style.

Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark  
National Guardian for the NHS