

Your Questions Answered

Thank you for your questions from [the webinar](#) about the updated [Recording and Reporting Data guidance](#). We have grouped them into themes and will take these points and suggestions into account for future updates.

Please remember that while we ask for the recording and reporting of high-level information to the office, this does not limit your ability to adopt more granular categories as suitable locally.

Theme: Case handling

Can a line manager speak up on behalf of someone?

Ideally the line manager should be able to address the concern themselves. Is there a barrier to the line manager being able to respond to the concern themselves?

Training issue, conflict of interest.

If the worker does not feel able to address the concern, they should signpost the worker to other available routes as stated in the FTSU Policy, including the Guardian to make contact themselves.

If a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian signposts an individual to another area and the concern is being addressed without Freedom to Speak Up escalation do we close concern or keep open and follow up for outcome?

The Guardian would only close the concern once the worker has been given the outcome. The Guardian would follow up with the worker to find out outcome and understand if there is any wider learning for the organisation.

What timeline would you advise for chasing divisional leads?

This should be agreed at the initial escalation with the lead and ensure it is communicated to the worker.

Theme: Case recording

I'm never sure what level of detail is needed, how confidential it is etc.

You should discuss the storage of your information with your organisations Information Governance lead to ensure it is confidential and to understand who also has access to it so that this can be communicated to workers.

Theme: Guardian support

Conversations need to be had about what support guardians need to help collect this info and analyse data i.e admin support to ensure speaking up culture is fully analysed

It is important to remember that you will work in partnership with others in your organisation to triangulate data to understand themes and trends, eg Patient Safety lead, OD lead, HR.

If admin support is provided guardians must ensure that data and information from cases remains confidential at all times. Admin support must be fully aware of the boundaries of their role and should not manage shared email boxes where cases are reported to.

Feels to me that this is eating more into the time we have allocated for the role. Increasingly the role is becoming very paperwork orientated and leaves less time to go on the front foot and get out to speak to colleagues and support teams. We need help from the NGO in this regard

An important role of the Guardian is to identify barriers to speaking up and ensure your organisation addresses these barriers. You should discuss with your leaders if you feel you do not have the time and resource to do this effectively.

Theme: Storage

Is there not NHS wide guidance on storage of records?

Each organisation will have their own standards and guidelines around data retention and storage. You may wish to contact your local KIM (Knowledge and Information Management) champion for further advice.

Theme: Data reporting

The recording of detriment - is that fear of or actual? and over what time period do we record it, if a case is closed and its a year down the line?

- What to record: With regards to the specific detriment question in the guidance, this applies to situations where detriment is indicated (for example, when a person speaks up about experiencing detriment). It is not about the fear, anticipation, or risk of detriment.
- If there is a fear of detriment, the issue should be explored, and the worker should be supported accordingly.
- We use the term 'indicated' rather than 'actual' when talking about detriment in this context because we want to avoid the suggestion that detriment must be 'proven' (for example, by the findings of an investigation or an employment tribunal). If, for example, a worker is alleging detriment, that should be

counted as a case where detriment is indicated in accordance with the guidance.

- When to record it: It should be recorded at the time the case is reported to you. For instance, in the scenario described where the case is closed and a year has passed, it should be treated as a new case and recorded accordingly.

Are you able to explain why protected characteristics are of no interest to the NGO? Is this not an important part of looking at themes, disadvantages, discrimination and equality aspects. Would this not be of great value for us all nationally to have a better understanding of this?

- This is an area of interest for the NGO. Through the guardian survey and bespoke research, we have shed light on the impact of protected characteristics on the speaking-up dynamic.
- The updated guidance on recording cases and reporting data (2024/25) outlines the value of collecting information on protected characteristics and encourages it.
- Guardians typically share a small, high-level amount of information about the cases they handle with the NGO. We request this to aid our understanding of role implementation, which is a more specific purpose than local data recording. Considering this purpose and other considerations, we are not currently mandating the reporting of this data to the NGO. This will remain under review.

Can we have quite a bit of advance notice of bigger changes please re 25/26, local databases might need a couple of months lead in for changes if reliant on IT teams for example

We appreciate the knock-on impact of any changes and the time needed to familiarise with the guidance and update systems. Please be assured we will factor this into our timeline.

We will be in touch in due course regarding the next steps for the next iteration of the guidance.

Has the NGO considered breaking down the case types even further, for example, harassment has several categories - sexual harassment?

We will be reviewing categories at the next review stage and will be taking this into consideration.

When we submit narrative e.g. key learning points on the portal, what happens with that information?

We review, code, and structure the narrative feedback shared.

In our annual data report and other communications, we showcase this feedback, including the impact of guardians, common issues arising from their experiences, and lessons learned. Additionally, the narrative feedback informs our business planning, such as deciding to approach specific matters as part of our work.

We welcome any thoughts from guardians on how else we could utilise this information.

Removal of reconciliation period - Will there be a crisis option, for eg- a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian who is on sick leave and misses deadline?

When we first started collecting data, we used a reconciliation process to allow guardians to add or update data for a previous quarter. Consequently, this meant that the data shared each quarter was "provisional" until the reconciliation window closed.

Since then, the data collection process has improved significantly, and so we have decided to discontinue the reconciliation process in 2024/25. This change will simplify the process and reduce uncertainty around the data, allowing for more effective data use, including communicating the crucial work of guardians.

This change does not affect the reconciliation period for the current financial year (2023/24), which will go ahead as scheduled in April 2024.

In the future, we will extend the collection window for each quarter by a week to provide guardians with extra time to submit data.

If you cannot submit within the given window, please get in touch with us as soon as possible. As a small team, we cannot guarantee that we can make exceptions, but we will try our best to accommodate on a case-by-case basis.