

Agenda item:	7
Date of meeting:	21 May 2025
Report to the:	Group Trust Board
Title of report:	Freedom to Speak Up Annual Reports 2024-25
Report author:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nicholas Bowman, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian ▪ Sarah Feal, Company Secretary and Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
Executive sponsor:	Anita Pisani, Chief People Officer and Deputy Chief Executive
Recommendation:	Discuss

Assurance level:	<p>Substantial ✓</p> <p>Reasonable <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Partial <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Minimal <input type="checkbox"/></p>
Rationale:	The Trust has an approved plan in place, which is monitored for delivery. The 2024 annual NHS staff survey results 'We each have a voice that counts'.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Speaking up is about anything which gets in the way of providing good care or affects an employee's working life. When things go wrong, we need to make sure that lessons are learnt, and things are improved. If we think something might go wrong, it's important that all staff feel able to speak up to stop potential harm.
- 1.2 Even when things are good, but could be even better, staff should feel able to say something and be confident that their suggestion will be used as an opportunity for improvement.
- 1.3 Freedom to Speak Up is about encouraging a positive culture where people feel they can speak up and their voices will be heard, and their suggestions acted upon. Speak Up, Listen Up and Follow Up is a key component of the Group model culture.

2.0 How the report supports tackling Health Inequalities

- 2.1 This is not covered in this report.

3.0 Links to Board Assurance Framework / Trust(s) Risk and Issue Registers

- 3.1 **3654:** There is a risk that the implementation of the group model arrangements could lead to reduced board, executive and management oversight and support for the delivery of current plans leading to poor patient care and performance failures.

4.0 Legal and Regulatory requirements

- 4.1 The following legal and regulatory frameworks are applicable:

- Employment Rights Act 1996.
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.
- NHS People Promise.

5.0 Previous consideration by Committee or Executive

- 5.1 Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Annual Report 2023-24, April 2024.
- 5.2 Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Annual Report 2023-24, 22nd May 2024.

Appendices

Appendix A: Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust

Appendix B: Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust

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End of Year FTSUP Report

April 2024 – March 2025

Freedom to Speak Up (FTSUP) Guardians were introduced following the Francis Report 2015. The aim being 'to ensure that NHS staff in England feel safe to raise concerns, confident that they will be listened to, and the concerns will be acted upon'. To support this the National Guardians Office (NGO) was set up, with the current National Guardian being Dr Jayne-Chidgey-Clark.

In 2024 the National Guardian Office had 32,000 concerns/ cases logged with them.

The Overall Freedom to Speak Up sub-score in the 2024 NHS Staff Survey remains virtually unchanged at 6.45 compared to 6.46 in 2023.

"While this suggests stability, it also highlights a lack of progress and risks a slide backwards into disengagement and silence". Sam Bereket, National Lead for Intelligence and Learning and Cherry Lin, Senior Intelligence Manager, National Guardian's Office

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the number and type of concerns raised by NCH&C staff during the period April 2024 to March 2025. All of these concerns will have come with timely individual and service actions and learning. The report should be used to support triangulation with other forms of Trust data and assist in service wide learning.

It should be noted that this period represents the first full year reporting period since a data collection method change. From April 2024 staff were no longer able to directly alert the Guardians via a confidential Datix link when reporting incidents. Other methods of contact have remained the same, telephone, email, app and in person, all of which have been used in this period.

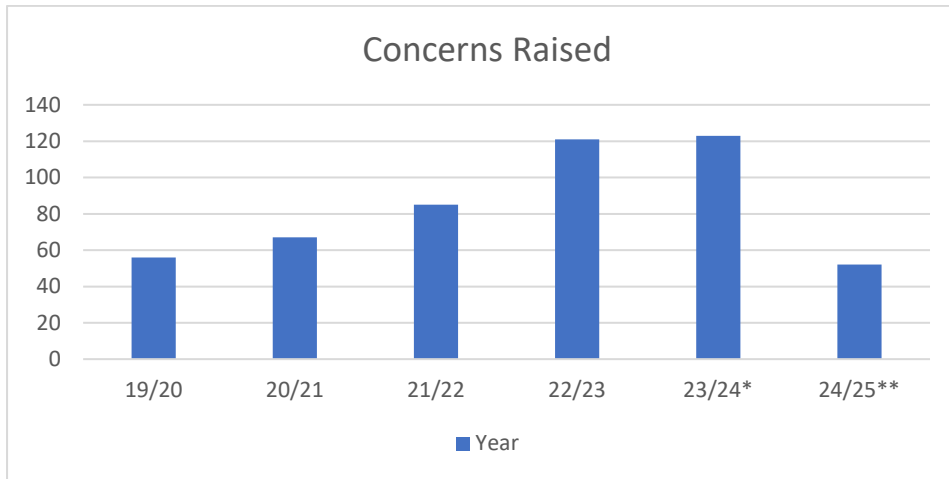
In February 2025 Chioma Goodchild stepped away from the Guardian role to focus on her clinical role. With the reduction in overall concerns and the commencement of the Group model a pragmatic view was taken to review the potential FTSUP needs once the new model has started.

The themes from the National FTSUP Conference were breaking down barriers and incivility in teams. Two topics that continue to be highlighted in the National NHS Staff survey and amongst the concerns the NGO have reported. Locally we continue to support wellbeing and staff engagement initiatives to improve cultures, so all our colleagues feel able to speak up at a local level and not just to the Guardians.

At the beginning of May 2025, the NGO will circulate a national job description template to gain some parity across services. We will review this against the current provision. The Local Strategy and Policy is scheduled for review later this year, this will be completed alongside our CCS colleagues.

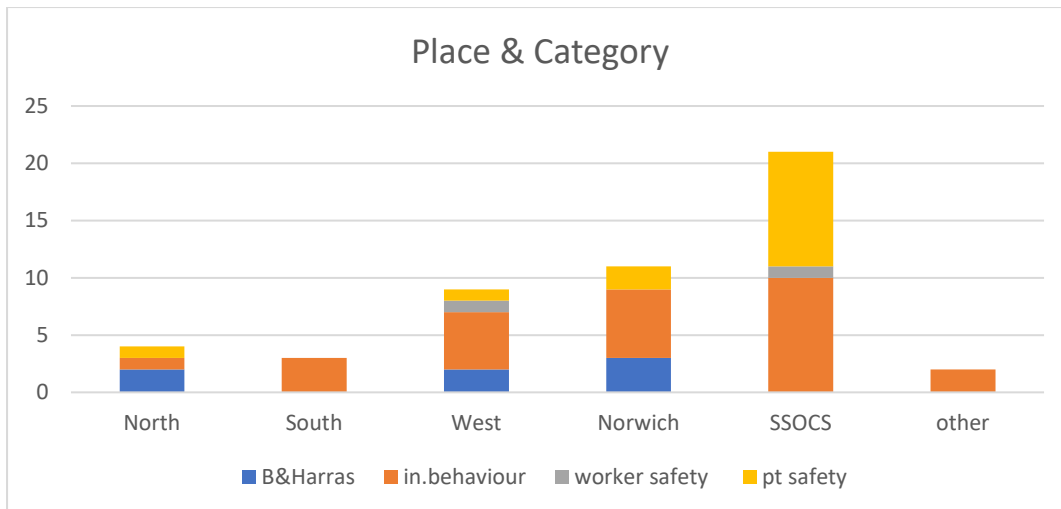
Safe

During the period covered in this report 52 Concerns were raised with the Guardian. This does represent a reduction against last years adjusted number of 67. I have not included previous years adjusted figures.

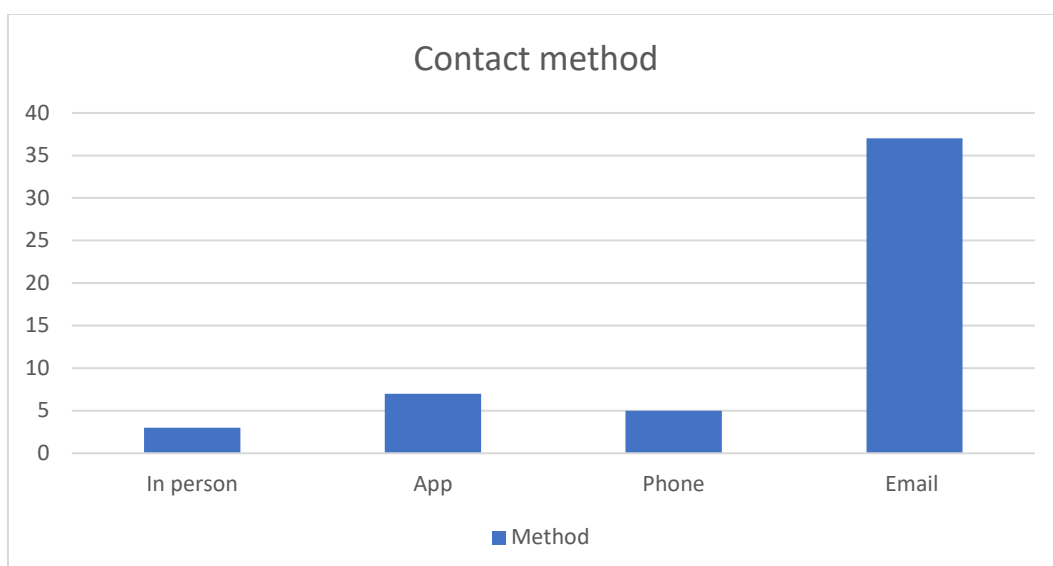


**** 22024/25 Concerns is the first year since Datix contact method removed, there is a value of 52 contacts.**

*** 2023/24 value of 123 contacts , with Datix contacts removed the value would be 67**



The Categories are those that are reported on by the NGO. Inappropriate Attitude or behaviour in the context of this report relates to conversations and psychological safety as opposed to physical safety and wellbeing. There have been no cases that would be described as having a sexual safety or physical violence component.



Caring

We remain committed to thanking all those who speak up and feedback to us. We continue to only deem a concern concluded once there has been mutual agreement. Through our pro-active work we have sought to target all staff and break down the barriers that stop people speaking up. We have worked alongside the Wellbeing team to promote the importance of individual and team wellness. During our visits to services, we continue to promote the building of an open, just culture.

Most represented gender: **Female** 83%

Most represented Band : **1-4** 34% **4-6** 43% **7+** 22%

Most represented Ethnicity: w/British 86% non-white 11%

Due to low numbers accurate non-white ethnicity data not disclosed here to ensure anonymity. **trusts Ethnicity figures for the workforce are white: 80.6% BME : 6.0% not declared : 13.4%.

Some typical feedback examples

Thanks for your support for listening, advice and signposting to the relevant departments.

I have already noticed a change in the discussions and meetings that are being held with a focus on making a change.

Thanks again for your help and advice

Responsive

The methods of contact remain unchanged for this year and the aim is always to respond within 72 hrs.

There has been 1 incident where a person could not quickly locate Guardian contact details causing them some distress. This led to reviewing information, discussions with switchboard operators and communications teams to ensure details are in the right places. The Loop page which is updated by the Guardian and Communication Team regularly continues to be the main point of information for staff as well as posters in services.

All concerns raised with us are confidential unless agreed otherwise with the person raising the concern. All methods of contacting us have been used – there has been 1 instance of an anonymous approach to the guardians this year via the app. Whilst direct feedback was clearly not possible the issue was already known to the relevant senior leaders - who were able to give assurance of knowledge of and managing the issue, as well as giving service wide feedback to hopefully re-assure the person.

As Guardians we have continued to promote that staff should feel comfortable speaking up to their managers and senior leaders before approaching us. The majority of those that raise concerns have expressed they have done so locally already but have not had a positive experience. Through coaching and confidence building we always try to facilitate the individual in resolving their concern locally.

Leaders across services continue to be accepting of contacts and inputs and do seek to resolve situations as necessary. Guardians have not faced organisational challenges in communication or seeking resolutions.

Effective

The Guardian continues to be accessed by staff across all areas of the Trust. The ceasing of the Datix contact route in March 2024 has reduced the actual numbers which has enabled the focus to remain with those who have directly sought our assistance. Our visibility in services and at meetings/forums gives us confidence that the Guardian role is represented well across services.

Champions continue to be placed in their services amongst their peers and colleagues. By wearing the identifiable FTSUP Lanyards they continue to highlight the focus of FTSUP, contact with the Guardian continues to be via Digital methods. Champions information and the general FTSUP information is contained within the dedicated Loop page and on the NCHC App.

As Guardians we completed the yearly refresher training provided by the National Guardian Office and Nijck attended the National conference in March 2025. Additionally, webinars and communications by the NGO are routinely accessed.

The national NHS staff survey results are a guide for us as leaders to review ongoing effectiveness. The NGO in reviewing the data nationally reflected the below outcomes when looking at the Questions relating to the People Promise – We Each have a voice that Counts, our activity is highlighted in Green: -

- 71.5% of staff feel safe raising concerns about unsafe clinical practices (unchanged from 2023). Yet only 56.8% believe their organisation will act on patient safety concerns.
- 81.3% (81.56% in 2023) of staff feel safe raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice. 70.31% believe NCHC will act on the concern.
- 61.8% feel safe raising concerns about anything in their organisation (slightly down from 62.3% in 2023), but fewer than half (49.5%) trust their organisation to act on concerns more generally.
- 74% (75.74% in 2023) feel safe raising concerns about anything in NCHC. 63.9% trust NCHC to act.

Our local results reflect that we are above these national NGO figures but there has been a slight decline in our local scores. We will continue to seek to support our staff and the culture of speaking up, raising concerns, improving patient safety and the overall staff experience.

The NGO have highlighted 3 priority areas following the 2024 Staff survey analysis,

1. Greater accountability for leaders and organisations
2. Embedding a culture of listening and action
3. Strengthening and standardising the guardian role

Case Study 1 - Listening, Signposting, Connecting

1/8/24 “I am just wondering if I am able to speak to someone in confidence around some work-related issues I am having. I am not sure who I can't trust to talk to, and would really appreciate some confidential advice if this is possible, please? I have not been in a position where I have needed to do this before, so I am not sure if the freedom to speak up is the right avenue to help me in this sort of situation”.

23/01/24 “Things are better, HR have been great and supportive. I'm back to my usual role and feeling better, the relationship with my manager I feel is still slightly strained but other than that just trying to get on and keep my head down!”

The person's reflection was that the Guardian role and input was helpful to them in navigating a difficult situation. My reflection is why didn't the person feel able to approach their own leaders or HR in the first instance, especially as they ultimately reflected that their help was very valuable. This was not a new member of staff who didn't understand roles, yet they were unsure of who to identify to approach for support. Their feedback was that they knew they would be able to have a confidential, unbiased conversation with myself (although we had never met) before.

Case Study 2 – Wheelchair services, Signposting, Connecting, Reviewing

This service has seen staff accessing support from the Guardians previously and it has been a topic of discussion in many forums. Whilst the service continues to face challenges staff do report to me that with the involvement of Stuart Morton (Clinical Quality Director) there is greater levels of consistent communication amongst professional groups, clearer identification of issues and an overall sense that concerns are being heard and addressed. It highlights to me and those who came forward to me that consistency and collaboration in the pursuit of positive 'people support & management' can work to reduce anxiety.

FTSup Learning and insights continue to be shared in a number of forums locally and across the Trust. Regular contact with HR, Staff Engagement, Staff side, Quality and Patient Safety Teams all ensure the Guardian is able to better signpost, network and ultimately support colleagues.

Well Led

The People Promise element 'We are safe and healthy' promotes the need for all of us to have regular, effective health and wellbeing conversations with our manager or another trusted colleague. As part of the Guardian role we actively promote this, as we see the benefits of leadership and management completed successfully. Many of our colleagues concerns this year have related to unsatisfactory relationships with direct managers and colleagues which affects their personal wellbeing.

We continue to work with HR colleagues to seek resolutions that are not formal process' and regularly share intelligence to support improved curiosity, people management and overall positive outcomes. We continue to provide a voice to those of our colleagues who do not feel confident in speaking up directly.

As Guardians the continued access and support of colleagues such as Del Mitchell (Deputy Director of Nursing) and Carolyn (Director of Nursing and Quality) have led as always to free, open and honest conversations. David Crawford as our NED lead has sought to understand the challenges staff face and given great insights and positive challenges.

As we move into the Group model new relationship will be created and as the Guardian the focus will remain on supporting the colleagues we work alongside to ensure the Freedom To Speak Up Agenda remains visible and aligned to our values.

Recommendations

The committee are asked to note this report and offer comment/feedback.

Appendix B: Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust

1.0 Freedom to Speak Up Annual Report April 2024 – March 2025

1.1 How to Speak Up

Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust has **many channels** for speaking up within the organisation. Outside the Line Manager and Human Resources route, staff may choose to speak up directly to the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian or through the community of Freedom to Speak Up Champions, who volunteer for the role across different services.

- 1.2 The **annual NHS Staff Survey** also provides staff with the opportunity to speak up. A key theme of the NHS People Promise is 'We each have a voice that counts.' The Trust always scores high in this domain, and in 2024-25 is the best performing Community Trust nationally in this area.



Figure 1. NHS People Promise logo.

People Promise – Raising Concerns	2023 score	2024 score
Q20a I would feel secure raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice.	84.4%	84.5%
Q20b I am confident that my organisation would address my concern.	75.6%	77.1%
Q25e I feel safe to speak up about anything that concerns me in this organisation.	77.9%	75.9%
Q25f If I spoke up about something that concerned me, I am confident my organisation would address my concern.	68.1%	69.3%

Table 1. People Promise Sub score - Raising Concerns.

1.3 Freedom to Speak Up Champions

There is currently **25** Freedom to Speak Up **Champions** across the Trust, who expressed an interest in becoming an advocate to support staff and have been trained in role, and **3** further who have expressed an interest and are currently being trained. The Champions are **supported** by the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian who is the Company Secretary.

1.4 The work is also supported by the Chief People Officer and Deputy Chief Executive, and the Audit Committee Chair may provide independent support if required.

1.5 The Champions met together as part of their **annual review** 27 June 2024 to discuss themes and learning, and to inform the agreed actions for the forthcoming year.

1.6 **Freedom to Speak Up Reporting**

On a quarterly basis the Trust reports all concerns raised directly through the Freedom to Speak Up route to the National Guardian's Office. The Office leads, trains and supports a network of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians in England and conducts speaking up reviews to identify learning and support improvement of the speaking up culture of the healthcare sector. All reports were submitted on time to the Guardian's office.

1.7 **Freedom to Speak Up Concerns**

There have been 16 concerns raised during 2024-25, which is a decrease from 2023-24 where 39 concerns were raised. October 2024 was Freedom to Speak Up month, which may be associated with the higher number of concerns raised during Quarter 3. The table below sets out the number of cases raised each quarter in comparison with the previous two years.

	Quarter 1 April- June	Quarter 2 July- September	Quarter 3 October- December	Quarter 4 January- March	Total
2022-23	4	10*	4	0	18
2023-24	5	3	8	23*	39
2024-25	0	4	8	4*	16

Table 2 - * Cases are calculated by numbers of individuals involved.

1.8 The following chart shows the **themes of concerns** raised and the most prevalent themes related to Attitudes and behaviours:

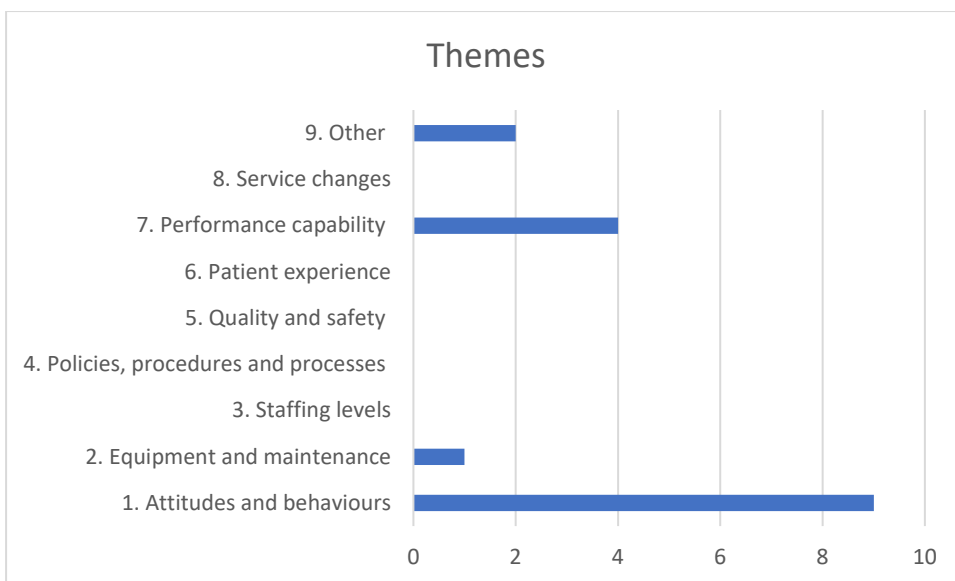


Table 3 - Themes of concerns

1.9 Freedom to Speak Up Mandatory Training

All staff complete 'Speak Up' Mandatory Training when they join the Trust. Core training is essential for all employees and covers what speaking up is and why it matters. It will help learners understand how to speak up and what to expect when they do. The annual target is 90% and the Trust achieved this throughout every month during 2024-25, and the table below sets out the compliance attainment per calendar month:

April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	98%	99%

Table 4 - Compliance percentage per calendar month

1.10 Collaboration with Peers

The Trust has supported other Trusts to improve their capability in Freedom to Speak Up and the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian is also supported in the East of England region through a Community of Practice peer group.