

**Press release**

Monday 12 June 2017

**National Guardian for the NHS launches Freedom to Speak Up case review process**

Dr Henrietta Hughes, the National Guardian for the NHS, has today launched a 12 month trial of her case review process.

The National Guardian will review the handling of concerns and the treatment of people who have spoken up, where there is evidence that good practice has not been followed. Cases which offer the greatest potential for learning will be prioritised.

The development of a process for reviewing the handling of concerns raised by NHS workers was a key recommendation of Sir Robert Francis' Freedom to Speak Up Report. This measure was recommended alongside the creation of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role which is designed to promote a positive culture of speaking up and to provide an additional channel for workers to use when speaking up. All trusts and foundation trusts have Freedom to Speak Up Guardians and, to the end of March, they had already responded to 2,850 issues, 737 of which were related to patient safety.

Dr Henrietta Hughes, the National Guardian for the NHS, said: "I want speaking up to become business as usual in the NHS and the work of this office, and that of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians is helping to create the culture in which this is possible. Staff are already speaking to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians in their thousands which shows that they are providing a vital additional channel. However, no speaking up process is perfect and I know that people have suffered as a result of speaking up. Case reviews will enable both poor and good practice to be identified so that failings can be addressed, and good practice learnt from."

She said: "I would encourage anyone who feels that there is a lesson to be learnt from their experience to consider submitting their case for review. Whilst a review won't change the outcome for them, cases and the lessons that the highlight will help create the environment where people are able to speak up safely."

Reviews and their findings will be published alongside recommendations of how the speaking up process could be improved. The National Guardian will ask NHS trusts to draw up action plans to implement those recommendations, and monitor how they do so, requesting regulators to take further action where necessary.

Where a review finds evidence of trusts' positive support for speaking up, this will also be highlighted to ensure good practice is encouraged and widely shared.

The office will accept referrals for review from a wide variety of sources, including current NHS workers and anyone who has worked in the NHS within the last two years, regulators, and Freedom to Speak Up Guardians.

Ends

Notes to editors:

- Further information on submitting cases, including a referral form and a user guide will be available on our [webpages](#) on 12 June. A summary of the case review process is available [here](#)
- Case review referrals can be sent to the National Guardian's Office by email to: [enquiries@nationalguardianoffice.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nationalguardianoffice.org.uk)
- After chairing the Mid-Staffordshire Inquiry, Sir Robert Francis recommended the establishment of an Independent National Officer resourced jointly by regulators and oversight bodies to review the handling of concerns raised by workers in NHS trusts and the treatment of the person or people who spoke up.
- The National Guardian's Office provides support for Freedom to Speak Up Guardians appointed by each trust in accordance with the 2016/17 NHS England contract. They support the creation of an environment where speaking up can become business as usual for all NHS workers.
- The role and purpose of the National Guardian and the National Guardian's Office are described in the Freedom to Speak up Review, published in February 2015,