

# National Guardian Freedom to Speak Up



## National Guardian's Office **Annual Report 2017**





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Sue Franklin (far right), Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

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## Feedback to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians

Quotes from people who have spoken to a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian.

*"It's the best job in the trust as it makes staff feel listened to and keeps patients safe."*

*"This proves that an impartial agent to take things forward is a valuable asset."*

*"I felt supported throughout the process and was immediately put at ease. I was made to feel that someone cared about me and valued my opinion and role."*

*"Your role has been absolutely invaluable."*

*"Your action was swift and made sure that the issues were escalated and addressed. You also kept everyone up to date with your actions, which was very reassuring."*



Jenni Fellows, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.



## The National Guardian's Office

An Independent National Guardian and Freedom to Speak Up Guardians were key recommendations made by Sir Robert Francis QC in the Freedom to Speak Up review.<sup>1</sup>

The National Guardian's Office is an independent body sponsored equally by the Care Quality Commission, NHS Improvement, and NHS England, with a remit to lead culture change in the NHS so that speaking up becomes business as usual. Dr Henrietta Hughes, the National Guardian for the NHS, took up post in October 2016.

Guardians are appointed by their trusts and lead the culture change within their own organisations. This involves supporting workers who wish to speak up, ensuring that they are thanked for speaking up, that the issues they raise are responded to, and making sure that they receive feedback on the actions taken as a result of them raising an issue. Guardians also work proactively to tackle barriers to speaking up and to promote openness and transparency.

Dr Hughes and her office provide advice, guidance and training for the newly created national network of guardians. The office has also started a case review process to assess the speaking up culture in trusts where it appears that accepted standards of good practice have not been followed. The National Guardian makes recommendations to promote best practice in speaking

up and provides national leadership to the NHS and surrounding organisations.



Pauline Lewitt (left), Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, Dr Henrietta Hughes (centre), Jo Dawson (right), Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust.

<sup>1</sup> <http://freedomtospeakup.org.uk/the-report/>

# Welcome to the Annual Report

For the first time we have published data on Speaking Up in the NHS in England. Until the end of June 2017 nearly four thousand staff have spoken to their Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, knowing that the right actions will be taken as a result. Over a thousand patient safety issues have been raised through this new channel.

We have surveyed guardians about their perceptions of speaking up in their trust. There appears to be a correlation between barriers to speaking up, how well staff are supported to speak up by managers and leaders and the trust's overall Care Quality Commission rating.

Even after only one year in post, I feel that we are already bringing the principles set out in the Freedom to Speak Up review to life. We are, however, only taking the first steps on what will be a longer journey to change the culture of the NHS.

During this year, I have listened to the experiences of NHS workers who have spoken up, risking their health and careers for the benefit of patient safety and staff experience. I can also see that, with so many pressures on NHS services, there is a constant risk that a focus on finance and activity could lead to these priorities driving the culture within an organisation, at the expense of patient safety and staff experience, just as they did at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. My learning over the last year leads me to believe that with an open and

transparent culture where speaking up thrives it is possible to nurture and value NHS workers and keep patients safe.

Freedom to Speak Up is an investment in the amazing staff that are the life blood of the NHS and this report highlights the excellent work that is being done across England to deliver safe high quality services without compromising staff experience. The network of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians that we have created is testimony to this. I have never worked with a more passionate, values driven and mutually supportive group of people where professional background, geography and seniority create no barriers to the shared enterprise of supporting staff to speak up.

Leadership is key to success and the support and encouragement of leaders at all levels and from many organisations within and around the NHS has enabled the progress that has been made to date. Partnership working is also paramount and I am delighted at the support and relationships that have been created with organisations and individuals across the system. Leadership, partnership and the commitment and passion of freedom to speak

up guardians and those supporting me and my office has resulted in some notable successes during the year including:

- The appointment of over 500 individuals across all trusts in a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, Champion or Ambassador role representing a powerful social movement
- The creation of regional networks to support guardians and delivery of two national training and development events
- Development and delivery of highly-rated foundation training for guardians
- Incorporation of Freedom to Speak Up into the Care Quality Commission well-led inspection framework
- The first survey of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians and the development of principles for the role based on the results
- The start of regular publication of speaking up data
- Co-production and roll-out of a pilot case review process based on the principles set out in Sir Robert's review

This report, based on the principles set out in Sir Robert's review, describes the work to date, the future priorities and the possibilities for an NHS where speaking up is business as usual. We have taken the first steps; we now need to continue the journey.

### Dr Henrietta Hughes

National Guardian for the NHS





# Foreword – Sir Robert Francis QC

It became clear to me from the Mid-Staffordshire inquiries and the Freedom to Speak Up review that poor standards of care can proliferate unless both patients and staff are listened to by the leaders of our health services and their concerns welcomed and acted upon. A crucial part of the change of culture required to ensure that this happens is that all who work in the service accept their responsibility to raise issues of concern and to support others who do so. Speaking up should be the norm, not a dangerous exception to a general practice of keeping one's head down. Every healthcare leader from ward to board level has to promote a culture where speaking up about legitimate concerns can occur without fear of harassment, bullying or discrimination.

It is easy to say that this should be the position, but it can be more challenging for those whose jobs and personal well-being may be in jeopardy to act in this constructive way. It is for that reason that in the Freedom to Speak Up review I proposed a set of principles which should be followed within every healthcare provider. I believe that it is important that these principles are put into practice everywhere patients are being cared for and are embraced by all who serve them. This cannot be done by diktats from on high, but needs to be implemented through collaborate endeavour in every workplace. I have therefore been pleased that the principles have been widely accepted.

However, all this is not necessarily easy to do, and it has to be recognised that help may be required. For that reason I recommended that every provider should have a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, someone acting with the authority of the leadership, trusted by staff, and capable of independent judgement and action, to help ensure that concerns are listened to and those who raise them are appropriately supported. This report demonstrates that guardians have not only been appointed in every NHS trust but have been doing valuable work in supporting staff and management in dealing with sometimes challenging issues. A variety of approaches to the appointment of and support for guardians is apparent and that is only to be expected when there are different needs in different places. I am glad to see that the National Guardian is encouraging through networking and other events reflection on the most successful approaches. At various events organised by the National Guardian's Office I have been privileged to meet many guardians of whom their organisation should be very proud of the contribution they are making to supporting staff in difficult circumstances.

This report also shows the hard work that the National Guardian and her office have been undertaking in supporting guardians, prompting good practice and setting up the processes for case reviews. In these ways the office has a valuable contribution to make in the advancement of the Freedom to Speak Up principles, in supporting guardians, as well as staff who find themselves in difficulties through speaking up.

I believe this report shows that great progress is being made. Clearly there is also more work to do. Inevitably the development of an open patient focussed culture is a journey, but one which will continue to be assisted by the work of the National Guardian and her staff.

**Sir Robert Francis QC**

Chair, Freedom to Speak Up review



# Foreword – Minister of State for Health

I welcome this inaugural annual report describing the work of the National Guardian's Office and that of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians working in trusts and foundation trusts across the NHS in England.

Since Sir Robert Francis made the initial recommendation, it is good to see such a strong start has now been made in recruiting a new and important network of individuals within NHS organisations. I believe that NHS staff have always wanted to speak up when they see that something is wrong – both as part of their professional duty and because it fits with their values. This has not always been welcomed in the past and cultures have developed that do anything but encourage people to speak up when they know they should.

The development, over the past eighteen months, of a network of some 500 individuals all committed to guiding and supporting NHS staff who wish to speak up is therefore significant and a very welcome start. I know that their job is not an easy one; as well as supporting individuals, they are there to challenge and change culture within their organisations so that barriers to speaking up, whatever they are, wherever they are, are identified and addressed.

I make a point of seeking to meet Freedom to Speak Up Guardian when I visit a hospital. This allows me to learn first-hand, from the guardians, or ambassadors or champions they work with, the impact this team is having. I have been hugely impressed by the commitment of the individuals I have spoken to and the positive reaction they

are receiving from members of staff who confide in them. I am also pleased to learn from them of the constructive approach taken by trust boards and the access given to guardians to raise issues of concern.

These are early steps along the journey towards making speaking up business as usual. No one can guarantee, or indeed believes, that the path we are following will be an entirely smooth one, but I am confident that the National Guardian for the NHS, her office, and the new network of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, are becoming part of the everyday life of the NHS.

**Philip Dunne**

Minister of State for Health



## Impact

Speaking up to a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian is not intended to replace normal channels available for workers to raise concerns and issues. Nevertheless, the numbers of cases dealt with by guardians is an important indicator of the impact that this new role is having.

Up to the end of June 2017, guardians had dealt with nearly 4,000 cases. Systematic reporting and publication of the number of issues raised started in 2017. Returns were received from 144 trusts until end of Q1 2017/18. In addition to quantitative data, qualitative data has been received with examples of case studies and feedback from staff.



# 3,974

issues raised to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, Ambassadors or Champions



# 1,009

of these cases included an element of patient safety/ quality of care

# Leadership

Active engagement by the leadership of trusts and foundation trusts is a key driver of positive culture change. It is not surprising, therefore, that results from the first Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Survey we conducted suggest a correlation between the Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating and the support that leaders and managers give to speaking up.

The influence of the cultures within the many bodies that support, commission and regulate health services are also not to be underestimated – these act as role models for the rest of the system and in themselves they can be powerful drivers of wider change. To support this, NHS England, NHS Improvement, Health Education England and the Care Quality Commission have already appointed Freedom to Speak Up Guardians for their own staff. We are in discussions with other organisations to support this development further and we will offer training and support to these guardians in the same way as we do for trusts and foundation trusts.

The National Guardian's Office has developed strong relationships with many organisations and will continue to attend learning and engagement sessions, informal discussions and other events that will enable us to spread the speaking up message.



Neelam Mehay, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust.



# Working together

The National Guardian's Office is independent but not isolated and cannot create the culture change it wishes to see without working in partnership with others. Over the year, many supportive and productive partnerships have been forged within the NHS, the wider healthcare system and other sectors. These relationships have already produced a number of significant outcomes, including:

- Refreshing the specification for the NHS Whistleblowing helpline with the Department of Health
- Supporting the development of the new inspection framework for the well-led domain and co-producing guidance for inspectors with the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- The creation of e-learning modules and a film on speaking up with Health Education England
- Issuing a joint letter to independent providers of NHS funded care concerning Freedom to Speak Up Guardians with CQC

- Co-authoring a paper on speaking up for the Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners with NHS England
- Supporting the development of guidance for governors of foundation trusts, with NHS Providers, guidance on referrals and revalidation with General Medical Council, and guidance on advice for whistleblowers with the British Medical Association

The NHS has much to learn from other sectors – many of whom have learnt from tragedies which could have been prevented if staff had been supported in speaking up. The National Guardian's Office has therefore launched a pan sector network which will enable cross-sector learning. The first meeting of this developing network was attended by representatives of the Civil Aviation Authority, the Institute of Business Ethics, the Parliamentary Health Standards Ombudsman, the Human Factors Group, KPMG, Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch, and NHS Improvement.

  
**Health Education England**

**General  
Medical  
Council**

  
**England**



  
**Leadership Academy**

  
**Improvement**  
 **professional  
standards  
authority**



  
**NHS Providers**

 **Nursing &  
Midwifery  
Council**

**Academy of  
Medical Royal  
Colleges**

 **CareQuality  
Commission**

  
**ibe**  
Institute of  
Business Ethics

## Case study: making a practical difference

On Monday 12 June 2017, eight weeks after the formal launch of the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust's 'F2SU' scheme, two concerns regarding the same issue were raised with the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, after initially being discussed with one of the organisation's 'F2SU Advocates'.

The concerns were raised by staff working in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), where 999 calls are handled. The centre receives approximately 1.5 million 999 calls every year, so it can be an extremely busy and highly stressful environment to work in. At times of very high demand there are occasions when unanswered 999 calls stack up. During these times, unfortunately, there is an increase in abandoned calls.

Following an incredibly busy night shift, the staff concerned noticed that 420 calls between 00:00 and 07:30 had been abandoned. Standard procedures meant that every caller who had abandoned their call had to be re-contacted to determine whether an ambulance was required – an extremely time consuming exercise.

When brought to his attention, the guardian raised the issue with the director of operations who immediately took action. The resulting investigation highlighted how complicated and time-consuming the call back procedure had become, an issue of which the executive management team were not aware. Following an in-depth review, just six weeks after staff had spoken up about the issue, changes were made to procedures which meant that calls which had been abandoned before connection were no longer routinely re-contacted, giving staff more time to answer waiting 999 calls.

The people who spoke up received a personal thank you from the director of operations.

This is a great example of how staff who spot an issue, supported by their guardian, and with an executive management team willing and able to listen, can make a timely, practical change to improve the quality and efficiency of a service.



(Left to right) Chris Gresty, Freedom to Speak Up Advocate, Michael Huddart, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, Mohammed Khan, Freedom to Speak Up Advocate, Dr Henrietta Hughes and Rachael Foot, Assistant Freedom to Speak Up Guardian.

## The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role

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The standard NHS contract required all organisations subject to the contract to nominate a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian by October 2016.

The guardian role was issued in April 2016, with a revised example job description published in September 2016. The guardian role is novel and challenging. It has proactive, reactive, strategic and tactical elements and requires excellent partnership working. Above all, the person in the role needs to gain the trust of workers throughout the organisation so that everyone feels supported and empowered to speak up. It also requires both independence and the skills to work in partnership with an organisation's leadership team so that senior leaders are fully engaged in the agenda and lead from the top.

We see the role as being values driven – having the right person in the role is more important than specifying a particular level of seniority or position in the organisation.

Appointments to the guardian role are made and funded locally and implementation needs to reflect local need as well as the expectations of the National Guardian's Office. It is unsurprising therefore that we have seen a wide variation in how the role has been implemented.

Results of the first Freedom to Speak Up Guardian survey were published in September 2017. These gave valuable information on how the role is being implemented and, for the first time, asked guardians, ambassadors and champions for their perceptions of Freedom to Speak Up in their organisations.

We see great benefits being drawn from the diverse experience and expertise of individuals who have been appointed to the role but it is important that the role is properly supported and resourced. Potential conflicts of interest (real or perceived) resulting from guardians carrying out another role alongside their Freedom to Speak Up responsibilities also need to be managed.

The role is still in its infancy, though some early adopters have gathered a great deal of experience which others are learning from as insight is shared amongst the regional guardian network. Using our recommendations from the survey all organisations will probably need to change their approach to some degree as they learn more, and some organisations may need to make more substantial revisions to their initial approach. We would

encourage all those involved to make changes in an open and transparent way and to accept change as a healthy response to listening and learning – principles which are at the heart of speaking up.

Training for Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, funded by Health Education England and delivered by Public Concern at Work, commenced in June 2016, was rolled out throughout 2016 / 17 and is now being delivered in-house by the National Guardian's Office.

Freedom to Speak Up Guardian regional networks were launched in October 2016, designed to enable guardians to get the peer support they need, and learn from one another. A 'compact' has also been developed setting out the expectations of the National Guardian's Office and how guardians will be supported.



Barbara Kozłowska, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust.

# Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Survey 2017

The results from the first Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Survey have led to ten principles that we recommend are followed when implementing the guardian role.



**Fairness**

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians should be appointed in a fair and open way



**Conflict**

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians should guard against potential conflicts caused by holding additional roles



**Reach**

The Freedom to Speak Up message should reach everyone – developing a local network of ambassadors can help with this



**Diversity**

All staff groups, especially the most vulnerable, need routes to enable them to speak up – staff networks can support this



**Communication**

Freedom to Speak Up messages should be included in training and feedback on how it generates change should be disseminated regularly

10 principles for the role.

These principles are derived from the findings of this 2017 survey.



**Partnership**

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians need to forge strong partnerships with teams and individuals throughout their organisation



**Leadership**

Leaders should demonstrate their commitment to Freedom to Speak Up and CEOs and NEDs should meet regularly with their Guardian



**Openness**

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians should present regular reports to their Board, in person



**Feedback**

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians should gather feedback on their performance



**Time**

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians should have enough time and other resources to meet the needs of workers in their organisation



# Over 500

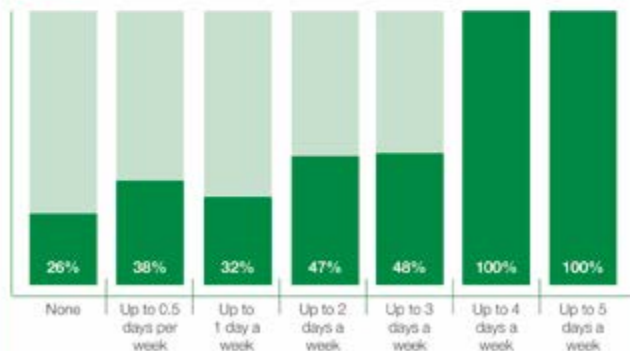
Freedom to Speak Up  
Guardians, Ambassadors  
and Champions in England.



**86% of respondents** said that they had direct access to their CEO and **76% of respondents** said that they have direct access to their NED with responsibility for speaking up.



"I have sufficient time to carry out the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role appropriately for my organisation."

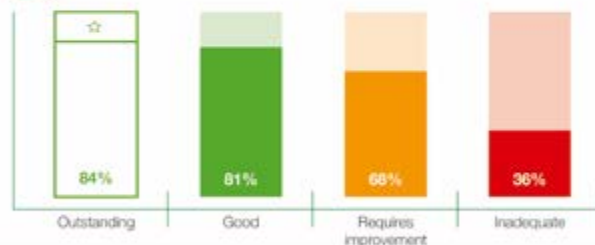


Time ring-fenced for the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role

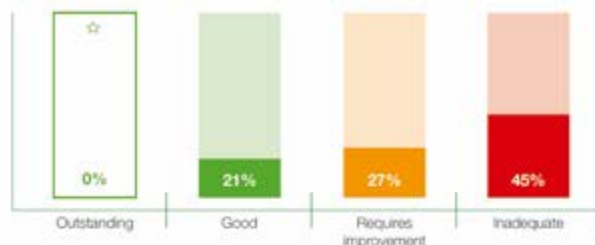
## Proportion of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement



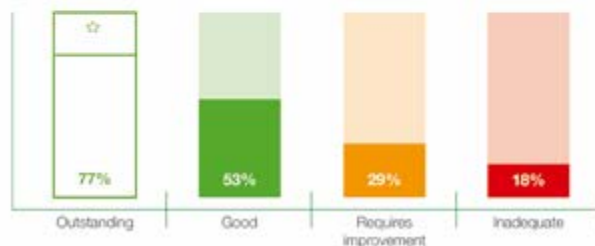
"Speaking up is taken seriously in my organisation."



"There are significant barriers to speaking up in my organisation."



"Managers support staff to speak up."



CQC rating

## Case study: dealing with the immediate and making changes for the future

Jacqui Pollington, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian at Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, encountered a situation where a patient was transferred from one ward to another and the receiving nurse raised a concern with her. The nurse was concerned about the ward's ability to safely manage the patient – she had spoken to the bed manager about this who thought that the transfer was appropriate, but she still had doubts. The nurse remained concerned about how the privacy and dignity of the patient could be maintained. Jacqui escalated the issue immediately and the patient was moved within 30 minutes.

Looking further into the matter, the situation revealed that the protocol that was being followed had been developed without a critical review by the nursing directorate and did not adequately cover the situation that had been encountered. Jacqui was therefore able to use the concern that had been raised to trigger a review of the protocol which resulted in it being changed so that privacy and dignity was prioritised.

The nurse who raised the concern commented, “I am really pleased that I raised this concern with the guardian because, for the first time, I have been given some feedback on the situation and I can see that something has been done about my worry. I would definitely raise a concern again.”

Diane Edwards, Assistant Director of Nursing for Medicine, said, “Our staff have the solutions to so many of the problems we face and we welcome the guardian role as another way of enabling staff to raise concerns.”



Jacqui Pollington, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

## Case study: a Board perspective

Anna Morgan, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian for Norfolk Community Health & Care NHS Trust, was keen to become the Board lead for Freedom to Speak Up as it is closely aligned with her trust's patient safety and quality strategy.

Anna said, "I have personal experience as a nurse of speaking up and how difficult it can be. I understand how important it is to have an open culture where it is safe to talk about the things that worry us or the things that go wrong."

She said, "Without an open and supportive culture, staff can feel unsafe and it can also be damaging to one's confidence and self-esteem if there is any fear associated with being open. If we want our patients to receive excellent care then our staff must also be cared for and feel able to exercise their right to be heard and to be supported to deal with the difficult things."

Following their Freedom to Speak Up training, the board for her trust have all signed up to become Freedom to Speak Up Champions to support Anna Morgan and Geoff Rivers in their roles as guardians for the trust. They agreed that, as part of the board's 'walkaround' visits, they would promote the message of Freedom to Speak Up at every opportunity.

The Director of Finance and Performance said, "I've signed up as a champion because this is all about helping improve the quality of care and the experience of our patients - that cannot happen if staff cannot air their concerns and are afraid to identify potential areas of poor practice. We have to be open and honest about this and allow staff the opportunity to develop and learn and thereby improve patient care".

Geoff said, "A culture of openness and honesty is necessary for any organisation to achieve what it is set up to do; they are values which encourage involvement, improvement and development both for the individual and the organisation.

He said, "Freedom to Speak Up gives everyone the right to play an active part in achieving these. Organisations that flourish are those which encourage staff involvement and participation."



Geoff Rivers and Anna Morgan, Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust.

## Update from the regions

In October 2016, the National Guardian launched the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian regional network. Based on an established footprint, this is divided into ten regions and two national networks. Each region and network is led by a locally elected chair, and works to agreed terms of reference. The regional networks are there to support

guardians in their role, to promote learning and sharing of best practice and to engage with partner organisations at a regional level. Regional meetings are attended by the National Guardian's Office so that national learning can be informed by local developments and disseminated across England.

### Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Regional Network



- East of England region
- East Midlands region
- London region
- North East region
- North West region
- South East Coast region
- South West region
- Thames Valley/Wessex region
- West Midlands region
- Yorkshire and Humber region

## Liz Keay – East of England region



I am very proud that people within my organisation are seeing me as someone they can talk to and trust to help them. I hear similar stories from regional colleagues and can see them learning from new situations and sharing that learning with each other in our meetings. I'm proud with how

generous my regional colleagues are with their expertise and solid relationships are being forged through buddying and sharing experiences.

For the future I would like to be confident that every Freedom to Speak Up Guardian in our region feels they have support from me and the rest of the team and are able to ask for or give support without compromising whatever else their role might involve.

## Helen Auld – East Midlands region



I have felt privileged to undertake this role and work closely with such a dedicated and passionate group of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians. Throughout the year the network has formed some great relationships with open and honest dialogue throughout our meetings and all members have shared experiences and learnt from each other.

In the future I would like to see the network offer local support by reviewing cases for each other, and help the national network develop by sharing some of the ground-breaking initiatives that guardians have undertaken. I am confident that the East Midlands regional network of

guardians will lead great culture change and I am thankful and proud to be the coordinator for such a dedicated and innovative group of individuals.

## Georgina Charlton – London region



My highlight so far as the regional chair for the London region is experiencing the passion and commitment that Freedom to Speak Up Guardians within the region bring to their roles. Some have been in post longer than others, however their dedication to supporting staff

in a compassionate and empathetic manner is always apparent and can be heard through the sharing of their experiences and stories.

I often hear examples of great practice and innovative ideas of how people manage, promote and embed their Freedom to Speak Up services. Ensuring that we have effective and efficient methods of sharing good practice and ideas across the London region is my ambition for the future. The meetings are always hugely insightful and I come away from every meeting learning something new.

## Neil Cockling – North East region



Being a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian is not simply about dealing with a caseload, but about encouraging a culture within our trusts. As we each operate in different ways, as sole guardians, or in a shared role, and with varying amounts of time dedicated to the



role, it has been particularly good to have the opportunity to learn from one another and offer one another advice.

We have a very loose agenda at our meetings, in order to offer the best use of our time together. We meet to share what we are doing in our own trusts and always have time to exchange updates about any difficult issues we are addressing, or any particular obstacles to cultural change in our organisations that we are experiencing.

## Heather Bruce and Jane Butcher – North West region



We have had two well attended regional meetings. Amongst other things we have discussed how to tackle bullying and harassment and how, by making Freedom to Speak Up inclusive and fair, we will help contribute to making bullying a thing of the past.



The region has conducted an analysis of their collective skills and competencies to identify expertise and gaps and contributed to the production of the National Guardian's Office training framework.

In the future I hope that, as a region, we can support new Freedom to Speak Up Guardians as they come into post. The North West is definitely in favour of the share and learn ethos; for this to be possible we need to make sure that trusts appreciate the vital importance of Freedom to Speak Up and give enough time and support to their guardians.

## Catherine Sharpe – South East Coast region

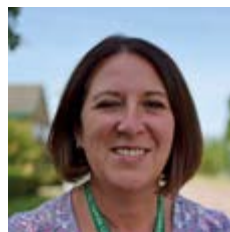


The regional network is an excellent opportunity to develop relationships and buddy systems for advice and support in this often isolated role. Guardians in the South East Coast region have a variety of experiences and job roles which enhances the conversations, reflections and ideas that we have.

There has been an openness and willingness to share resources and ideas within the region. The meetings are well attended and other forms of communications have been utilised between meetings. There is always a respectful approach between all members of the regional group regardless of previous experience and position.

My ambition for the future is to continue to provide support to guardians in this isolated role and to rotate regional coordinator responsibility to maintain a fresh and varied approach to meeting agendas and discussions.

## Sonia Pearcey – South West region



As an experienced Freedom to Speak Up Guardian my initial hopes were to support new guardians and help them develop their own role and gain confidence in addressing concerns that are raised to them.

I am proud of the many things that we have achieved as a region, and our collective commitment to making the South West a leading region

for speaking up. We have a supportive approach and each one of us is ready and willing to help each other. Learning is at the top of our agenda and we regularly share challenges, best practice and case studies.

It has been a very successful year considering how new the network is. My ambitions for the future include further promoting leadership development within the role, for all trusts to actively engage in the agenda, and for the region to be recognised as being a place that is open and honest where people want to come and work. I would like to thank all the guardians that have supported the network as it develops.

### Mike Foster – Thames Valley/ Wessex region



Guardians from across the region have shown a shared enthusiasm for the role and lively discussions are held at our meetings on a wide range of subjects. The opportunity to share confidentially some of the challenges we are experiencing and the chance to get some support from peers has

been valuable. We thought it would be helpful to add an education slot to the meeting and have identified a number of subjects, such as holding difficult conversations, which we want to learn more about.

Between meetings network members share information and are using each other to find answers for the questions that are arising as their new role develops.

### Neelam Mehay – West Midlands region



My passion and belief in Freedom to Speak Up led me to want to do what I can to support the region. With the support of the vice regional lead, we have aimed to shape a supportive, engaging and informative network. The role so far has been one of variety and has entailed meeting

and talking to new Freedom to Speak Up Guardians as they have been appointed, sharing best practice and innovative ideas, keeping the network updated with new developments and developing partnerships.

The network has embedded a culture that represents the values of Freedom to Speak Up. Everyone has contributed towards our network's successes, with one of the most memorable moments being training on managing difficult conversations devised and delivered by one of the members of the network. Belonging to a network that values the importance of partnership has been a particularly rewarding aspect of my role.

### Judith Graham – Yorkshire and Humber region



Despite the challenges, it has been a huge privilege to work alongside some of the most compassionate and motivated people I have met throughout my time in the NHS.

Within our region we meet quarterly, but also have a buddy system for people to seek and gain peer supervision between meetings. As a region we co-produced our support

system agreeing to vary where we hold our meetings due to our large geographic spread and to rotate chairing the meetings so that we can all receive support.

Our region is positive and open to exploring different topics with a thirst for learning. My ambitions for the future is to support the region to develop a 'communities of practice' model and to consider whether there is a need to expand the regional support provided, either face-to-face or by digital means.

### Jock Crawford and Anna Price – National ambulance trusts network



Developing the ambulance network has been an excellent opportunity to make changes to the pre-hospital arena, an area that is not greatly understood by the wider health economy. We are a dynamic group with other roles and we are using our collective expertise to help us develop into resilient Freedom to Speak Up Guardians.



We are beginning our first project work which is around the personal development of guardians. We hope that this will provide a firm foundation to help us meet the challenging

demands of this role. In the near future, we will be looking at emerging themes and trends affecting ambulance services and seeing how Freedom to Speak Up can respond to these challenges and support the amazing people who work in the pre-hospital setting.

### Liz Lubbock – National community and mental health trusts network



I offered to create the community and mental health trusts network following a conversation with other Freedom to Speak Up Guardians who felt that some of the issues we face are different from those faced by acute trusts. Many of our staff are lone workers and our geographical spreads provide for interesting challenges in embedding Freedom to Speak Up. The hope was that, between us, we would be able to support each other, be creative with ideas, and strive for continuous improvement as we address challenges. It has been invaluable to share experiences as we set up our guardian arrangements and to think about how we can use our learning to make these more effective.

# Trust visits

The real everyday experience of NHS workers, and the patients they care for, is at the heart of Freedom to Speak Up. Visits to trusts provide the National Guardian's Office with an invaluable opportunity to see Freedom to Speak Up in practice, observe the successes and challenges that Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are experiencing, and offer one-to-one support and guidance.

Over the year, the National Guardian and members of her office have visited trusts and foundation trusts in every region of England, visiting over 45 hospitals and other organisations.

Some particularly memorable highlights have been visits to:

- The Emergency Operations Centre at London Ambulance Service NHS Trust, meeting call-handling and dispatch staff and their managers and listening to their experiences of working in this challenging environment, how it has traditionally been difficult for staff to raise concerns, and the impact that the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian is having.
- Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Trust and hearing about well-attended morning safety huddles in the Chief Executive's office and the use of the HALT campaign to give authority to everyone to stop any action that could result in harm to patients or staff. HALT stands for: Have you a concern about your care?; Alert the professionals providing your

care; Let them know why you are concerned; Tell them what you want to be reviewed.

- University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, meeting staff and hearing about the positive changes that have taken place at the trust over the past few years including the introduction and impact of the behaviour framework.
- Leicester Partnership NHS Trust and taking part in an excellent training session including the "Alzheimers Whodunnit" performed by performance poet and registered nurse Rob Gee.



Christine Mars (left), Catheter Laboratories, Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.





Fergus Cass (centre), London Ambulance Service NHS Trust with colleague.



Anita Vincent (2nd from left), Croydon Health Services NHS Trust, with colleagues.



Heather Bruce, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust (right of Dr Hughes), with North West Region Freedom to Speak Up Guardians.



# Training and guidance

## Introductory and Foundation Training

Introductory workshops, delivered in collaboration with Public Concern at Work and Health Education England, and new Freedom to Speak Up foundation training sessions, delivered in-house by the National Guardian's Office, have been rolled-out to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians since June 2016. 70% of respondents to our survey said that they had completed training in the role.

## Guidance

In addition to the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian example job description, guidance and information documents for guardians have been issued on recording cases, Care Quality Commission inspections, and the case review process.

Webinars have also proven to be a popular way to offer guidance and share information. To date over 300 guardians have signed up to take part in webinars and the National Guardian's Office will be looking to expand the number and range of webinars on offer in the future.

One-to-one support for guardians is central to the work of the National Guardian's Office and any guardians can call the office for guidance or to help them with challenges that they are encountering. The office has regular phone-in sessions and telephone advice clinics for guardians.

## Newsletter and bulletin

Working in such a new field means that the Freedom to Speak Up landscape is evolving at a rapid pace. There are always new developments to keep abreast of and, as challenges are learnt from and experience is built, it is vital that this learning is disseminated. We have therefore developed a regular bulletin for guardians and a newsletter for our expanding family of stakeholders.



Anne Burton, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and Robert Simcox, Deputy Director of HR Operations, Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

## Case reviews

In June 2017, following listening events earlier in the year, the National Guardian's Office launched a pilot of its case review process, based on the principles set out in the Freedom to Speak Up review. Individuals or organisations are able to refer cases to the National Guardian's Office where they think there is evidence that the handling of a speaking up case did not meet with good practice. The purpose of a case review is to identify areas that can be improved and make recommendations on how improvements can be made. Examples of good practice that a case review identifies will also be commended. Case reviews are there to promote learning, so are undertaken in an open and transparent way, with findings being published so that they can be shared and taken up by other organisations.

The case review pilot will last for 12 months, after which a thematic report setting out learning points and next steps will be published.

So far, we are delighted by the reaction we have received from the trusts that we have approached when taking on a case review. They have been welcoming, supportive, and transparent in their actions, publicising the fact that a case review is being undertaken on their websites.

In response to feedback from Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, the National Guardian's Office is developing a local case review process. This will enable guardians to carry out a first level review of how speaking up matters are handled and enable them to respond to individuals

who have spoken up but feel that the matter that they raised has not been dealt with in accordance with best practice.



Carol Love-Mecrow (left), Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, with colleague.

# Governance

The National Guardian's Office is equally funded by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), NHS Improvement and NHS England and senior representatives from each of these organisations form the accountability and liaison board (ALB).

Board members are:

- Sir Robert Francis, QC
- Dame Moira Gibb, DBE
- Kate Moore (formerly Helen Buckingham)



The ALB meets four times a year and is responsible for:

- Acting as a critical friend and sounding board on strategic developments
- Strengthening the relationship with, and acting as a liaison point between, the National Guardian's Office and sponsor organisations
- Acting as an independent reviewer of complaints

The office also presents a report to the Boards of the CQC, NHS Improvement and NHS England once a year.

The National Guardian's Office is developing an advisory working group. Individuals and organisations have been

invited to be part of this group to ensure that expertise and experience can be harnessed reflecting a wide range of backgrounds and interests. The first meeting of this group will be in the autumn of 2017.

## Structure

When fully staffed, the National Guardian is supported by a team of eight.

## Finances

The total budget for the National Guardian's Office for 2016/17 was £993,044 (actual spend was £608,596) and for 2017/18 is £992,409.

## Prescribed Body

The National Guardian's Office is a prescribed body and will report on protected disclosures made to it annually.

## Future priorities



*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”*

**Margaret Mead**

Culture change requires a movement not a mandate. Already thousands of NHS staff have spoken up to their Freedom to Speak Up Guardians. The feedback that has been given to guardians so far has been overwhelmingly positive. It is clear, however, that there is a wide variation across the NHS with excellent organisations leading the way and others lagging behind. A key priority for the National Guardian's Office is to reduce this variation. A first step for trusts to take is to understand their starting point on the journey to make speaking up business as usual.

The principles set out by Sir Robert Francis QC in the Freedom to Speak Up review provide sound guidance about speaking up, form the foundation of the National Guardian's Office case review process and have informed the guidance used by Care Quality Commission inspectors in the well-led domain.

Areas for improvement exist at every level of healthcare and the National Guardian will continue to call this out as she speaks up for the benefit of patient care and staff experience. Senior leaders across the health system will no doubt have identified issues during their own careers and will have either spoken up about them or not – the National Guardian invites them to talk about their own experiences,

reflect on them, and encourage others to speak up and listen well. Leaders are the role models for the change we wish to see - NHS staff are looking to them and will benefit from hearing their experiences. It is for this reason that we are pleased to see speaking up incorporated into the final assessment of the NHS Leadership Academy Aspiring Chief Executives Programme. We believe that other leadership programmes should follow this lead.

The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian regional network is still establishing itself and growing, and the case review process is developing. Both need to continue to be nurtured and the National Guardian's Office will continue to engage with organisations across the system and seek their support to help create the culture change we are promoting. There is much to do, however, and our future priorities will include:

- Publishing and implementing a good practice guide to speaking up, which will give guidance on established best practice and incorporate a self-assessment tool for organisations
- Producing and implementing a training guide for Freedom to Speak Up Guardians

- Continuing to disseminate and embed learning on all aspects of Freedom to Speak Up
- Launching an advisory working group with key stakeholders from organisations within and around the NHS and individuals with experience of speaking up
- Supporting NHS England to embed Freedom to Speak Up into primary care
- Developing the approach to speaking up for the independent sector
- Expanding and developing a pan sector network
- Publishing guidance on key aspects of legal and HR processes which can act as barriers to speaking up
- Monitoring the impact of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian model including an annual survey to review the adoption of recommendations
- Publishing leaders' experiences of speaking up

As we continue the journey further priorities will, no doubt, come into view but, for the benefit of patients and staff, we will maintain our focus on moving towards an open and transparent culture in the health sector where speaking up is business as usual.



Derek Eaves, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust.

# Timeline - National Guardian for the NHS, year one

*"It is astonishing how short a time it can take for very wonderful things to happen."* – Frances Hodgson Burnett

