

National Guardian Freedom to Speak Up

Press Release, 8th October 2019

Additional support for NHS workers who speak up as Freedom to Speak Up Index published and £100,000 support scheme rolled out

NHS staff feel more empowered to speak up about patient safety issues than ever before according to the first ever report monitoring 'speaking up culture' in the NHS. The publication of the Freedom to Speak Up Index comes out at the same time as NHS England announces a £100,000 investment in a scheme to support staff who speak up.

Evidence consistently shows that a positive speaking up culture leads to better care for patients and the Long Term Plan committed to making the NHS a better place to work by promoting a culture of respect and fair treatment.

Following a successful pilot, NHS England is now offering support to any doctor, nurse, or back office worker who is experiencing difficulty finding suitable employment in the NHS as a result of raising concerns at work.

The £100,000 scheme will offer staff career coaching, shadowing opportunities, work experience, CV writing advice, interview skills practice, financial advice and resilience training.

Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of NHS England said:

"NHS staff raise concerns because they care about our patients, and every member of our workforce - midwife, therapist, cleaner, surgeon or receptionist - who spots and reports poor practice should be supported to help put things right.

"The NHS Long Term Plan sets out a world-leading package of measures to improve patients' treatment and care, but we must keep getting the basics right, which is why we produced the first ever national patient safety strategy, are making it easier for our people to report problems and are taking steps to show our clinicians and other staff the same duty of care that we offer patients."

The launch of the scheme follows two pilots which helped 16 people who became unemployed, suspended or resigned after they raised concerns about their organisation.

The pilot, which began in 2017 helped eight people, five of whom have now successfully regained employment in the NHS.

The announcement comes as a new index monitoring 'speaking up culture' in the NHS has found 180 trusts (82%) have made it easier for staff to speak out since 2015, with London Ambulance improving its rating by 18%.

NHS England commissioned the National's Guardian Office to develop the index based on four questions from the annual NHS Staff Survey including whether staff feel secure raising concerns if they see something unsafe.

Dr Henrietta Hughes, National Guardian for the NHS said:

"Broadly speaking the index reveals a very strong correlation between trusts that are rated highest by the CQC and those that have the highest rated speaking up cultures,"

“Trusts should see the index as an insight into the views of their workforce around the issue of speaking up.

“The aim of the report is to commend those trusts doing well and those that have shown significant improvement, while encouraging those that have room to improve to take the opportunity to address the issues that may be affecting their index scores.”

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are now well established in trusts and over the last two years they have reported handling over 19,000 cases.

The National Guardian’s Office provides training and guidance and also carry out case reviews in trusts where workers report that best practice has not been followed. The recommendations that arise from these case reviews not only allow the organisation concerned to address issues impacting negatively on their speak up culture, but can be used by all trusts in England to embed learning and continue improvement of their own processes and practices.

In addition to a table highlighting where every trust in England stands, the Freedom to Speak Up Index Report also showcases the achievements of the trusts that have the best FTSU cultures in the form of case studies.

These illustrate how the top performing trusts are encouraging a Speak Up culture and provide learning for others to follow.

For commissioners and regulators, the FTSU Index provides a new indicator which can be viewed together with other information about safety, workforce and culture.

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PHOTO: Dr Henrietta Hughes, National Guardian for the NHS.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the report.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The National Guardian’s Office supports the National Guardian for the NHS, Dr Henrietta Hughes, in providing leadership, training and advice for Freedom to Speak Up Guardians based in all NHS trusts.
2. Dr Hughes’ role was a key recommendation from Sir Robert [Francis’ Freedom to Speak Up Review](#) in response to the Mid-Staffordshire scandal.
3. Freedom to Speak Up feeds into the Care Quality Commission well-led inspection framework, with guardians contributing directly to inspections.

Methodology

The FTSU Index was calculated as the mean average of responses to four questions from the 2018 NHS Annual Staff Survey.

Where percentage point improvement is recorded, this is based on the overall changes recorded between 2015 and 2018.

Nationally the median FTSU score has improved since 2015. Some trusts have seen a rapid improvement in their FTSU index score and in others there has been a reduction in the score.

The survey questions used to make up the FTSU Index are:

- % of staff responded "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" that their organisation treats staff who are involved in an error, near miss or incident fairly (question 17a)
- % of staff responded "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" that their organisation encourages them to report errors, near misses or incidents (question 17b)
- % of staff responded "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" that if they were concerned about unsafe clinical practice, they would know how to report it (question 18a)
- % of staff responded "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" that they would feel secure raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice (question 18b)

The FTSU Index

The following represent the trusts with the highest FTSU index result for 2018, broken down by trust type:

Trust type	Trust	FTSU index value 2018
Community	Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust	87%
Combined mental health / learning disability and community trust	Solent NHS Trust	86%
Acute Specialist	Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	86%
Acute	The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	84%
Combined acute and community	Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust	83%
Combined mental health / learning disability	Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	81%
Combined mental health / learning disability	Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust	81%
Combined mental health / learning disability	Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust	81%
Combined mental health / learning disability	Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust	81%
Ambulance	Isle of Wight NHS Trust (ambulance sector)	79%

The Freedom to Speak Up Index for each trust and the CQC ratings for Overall and Well Led are included in Annex 1 of the report. The information is taken from the CQC website and the annual NHS Staff Survey at the time of publication.