

Annual Report of Freedom to Speak Up – Accompanying Action Assurance

Public Board
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Presented for:	Assurance
Presented by:	Brendan Brown, CEO
Author:	Rachael Meal, Senior OD Practitioner
Previous Committees:	None

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Exemption	☐ YES (restricted from the FOIA) ☒ NO (available to the public under the FOIA)
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Link to Strategic Objective	Support and develop our people
Link to Provider Capability Assessment	People and culture
Link to CQC Well-led Statement	Freedom to speak up
Regulatory Impact	Regulation 17: Good governance

Key points	Purpose
This paper accompanies the ‘Annual Report of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian’ paper, and in response, provides assurance on the recognition, and action identified/progressing, including: - 2025 statutory FTSU bi-annual self-assessment progress - NHS Staff Survey High Impact Actions - Refresh and launch of Trust values - Speaking up Champions model and infrastructure review - Speaking up CSU framework and maturity matrix - Communications campaign - Guidance and policy development - Data triangulation and governance - Targeted work with CSUs	Assurance

Risk Appetite Framework			
Level 1 Risk	Level 2 Risks	(Risk Appetite Scale)	Impact
Workforce Risk	Workforce Retention Risk - We will deliver safe and effective patient care, through supporting the training, development and H&WB of our staff to retain the appropriate level of resource to continue to meet the patient demand for our clinical services	Cautious	Choose an item.
Clinical Risk	Patient Experience Risk - We will comply with or exceed minimum patient experience targets.	Cautious	Choose an item.

1. Summary

This paper accompanies the 'Annual Report of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian', and in response, provides assurance regarding the Trust's recognition of the data, utilised to inform the identification and progression of improvement action.

This includes continued progression of the nationally mandated bi-annual speaking up self-assessment (completed and reported to Board in May 2025), and of several additional improvement actions underway for 2026.

2. Update

All actions are informed by the data presented within the 'Annual Report of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian', and are progressing well, with updates as follows:

2025 Bi-Annual Self-Assessment:

- Significant progress against the self-assessment action plan (Appendix 1) has been made, with one remaining action.
- **Communications Plan** (remaining action): Scoping and design is complete, with a strategy developed for implementation across 2026/27, identifying specific actions each quarter. The campaign focusses on building collective understanding of various speaking up routes, building understanding and confidence in their purpose and impact, and develop a culture of a collective responsibility to speak up, listen, act and follow up. The communications plan will be underpinned by the new Trust values of Kind, Open & Honest, Responsible, and one Team.

2026 Additional/Aligned Improvement Actions:

- **The 2026 NHS Staff Survey High Impact Actions** have been informed by the most recent survey, and incorporate a focus on 'Acting on concerns raised by colleagues, and tackling poor behaviour'. The inclusion within this action plan ensures a collective focus and prioritisation across the People Function and CSUs, and requires frequent assurance updates from action leads. The High Impact Actions include many of the following actions:
- **Trust Values:** The Trust values have been refreshed and launched. They align, underpin and advocate for a strong speaking up culture, and include: Kind, Open & Honest, Responsible and Team. Behavioural statements, guidance, communications, and embedding of the values is now in development.
- **CSU Frameworks:** The new speaking up CSU framework has been embedded across all clinical CSUs, ensuring effective local governance and assigned 'Lead Champions'. A CSU framework 'maturity matrix' has been designed and piloted within oncology, with roll-out across clinical CSUs now progressing. Completion of the matrix is embedded within the new CSU Framework, and aims to demonstrate the maturity of CSU infrastructures and processes, whilst identifying improvement opportunity. Work is now required to progress implementation across non-clinical CSUs additionally.
- **Champions Model:** A review of speaking up and Inclusion & Belonging Champions model is now complete. The approved SBAR identified improvement activity to strengthen and align the model, champions and champions development/support. Implementation is now underway.
- **Targeted Intervention:** The guardian has delivered targeted interventions to hotspot CSUs, informed by triangulated data. Intelligence, progress improvement

and oversight is supported by the FTSU alignment to the new People Improvement Framework (see section directly below)

- **Policies and Guidance:** All People Function policies are transitioning into easy-read 'policies on a page' to enable local, effective implementation. This additionally aims to support the effective use of the FTSU Policy, and the Resolution Policy, of which the Guardians report recommends. This is accompanied by Speaking Up Manager Guidance, and Poor Behaviour Manager Guidance, to support managers in understanding their role and response in relevant circumstances.

Data Triangulation and Governance

- The FTSU Guardian now attends the monthly People Improvement Framework meetings. This provides triangulation of workforce and patient safety & quality metrics and intelligence, enabling identification of CSUs of concern and multi-disciplinary focused support required.
- Meetings with the Non-Executive FTSU sponsor, Executive sponsor and CEX are taking place with the Guardian; reviewing detriment and focusing attention on support for those raising and receiving concerns.
- Given the removal of National Guardian's Office, next steps include the review of the harassment policy and reporting structure.
- Meetings with Executive Sponsor focusses on themes and improving the triangulation of HR cases with FTSU where appropriate.
- The FTSU Executive Sponsor is working with the guardian to hear concerns direct from colleagues where the Guardian believes intervention is required, either to nominate a series of actions or to progress actions timely and effectively.

3. Financial Implications

There are no new financial risks beyond what we have already committed to. The People Function resource review is underway, which includes the previously reported additional Freedom to Speak up Resource. Improvement work will continue to be embedded and supported through various accompanying action plans, including, the 2025 LTHT FTSU Self-Assessment Action Plan, NHS Staff Survey High Impact Action Plan, and the Inclusion & Belonging Improvement Plan.

4. Risk

There are no material changes or impact to the risk appetite, as previously reported, there is a workforce retention risk (Cautious). This work continues to emphasise simplicity, consistency, shared responsibility and practical impact; creating infrastructures that strengthens and embeds an aligned speaking up culture.

5. Communication and Involvement

Improvement action has been shaped by a variety of stakeholders, with colleague networks, CSUs, Corporate Departments, Professional groups, and all colleagues remaining key partners in delivery. Alongside the FTSU Steering Group, Colleague Engagement Forum, and Inclusion & Belonging Strategic Group stakeholders who are embedded within consultation and action progression via formal meetings and workshops.

Improvement Actions, as outlined above, include a revised Trust-wide communications plan for 2026/27, incorporating bespoke activity for specific target audiences.

6. Impact on Equality & Health Inequalities

The actions have been informed by an analysis and triangulation of available data, with consideration to the needs of, and targeted activity required, for various audiences and demographics, based on their experiences, including, across different and intersectional protected characteristics, professional groups, seniority, and CSUs. This has formed the underpinning of the FTSU Self-Assessment and development of the NHS Staff Survey High Impact Actions, resulting in the identification of 'hotspot' areas. Impact measures are aligned to each High Impact Action, to enable assurance on progress.

7. Publication Under Freedom of Information Act

This paper has been made available under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

8. Recommendation

Note and be assured of the progress since Board May 2025.

9. Supporting Information

Appendix 1: 2025 Bi-Annual Statutory Speaking Up Self-Assessment
Accompanying Paper: Annual Report of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian

Appendix 1 – 2025 Bi-Annual Statutory Speaking Up Self-Assessment

	Actions	% Achieved	Status
1	A revised communication & Education plan	75%	In Progress
2	Review requirement to mandate training	100%	Complete
3	Provide options for robust FTSU Guardian cover	100%	Complete
4	Support for Managers – Speaking Up Toolkit	100%	Complete
5	Targeted in reach	100%	Complete
6	Mobilise Senior Leadership; Take opportunities to share learning and seek support in embedding good practice with senior leaders.	100%	Complete
7	Explore reported negative impact: Working with the FTSU Guardian, identify how the negative impact to staff speaking up could be monitored	100%	Complete
8	Reiterate our approach for multiple routes for speaking up	100%	Complete
9	Continue to Develop Champion confidence, capability and connectivity	100%	Complete
10	Embed formal Executive Summary into governance process	100%	Complete
11	Embed Speaking Up metrics into IQPR	100%	Complete
12	Support use of CSU Framework	100%	Complete

