

## Board of Directors (in Public) Item 5.3

**Subject:** Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Q3 - 2023 /24  
**Date of Meeting:** 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024  
**Presented by:** Helen Martin, Head of Risk Management/ FTSU Guardian  
**Purpose of Report:** For Assurance

BAF Ref	Impact on BAF
ALL	The report provides assurance on the arrangements in place to support staff to speak up and to ensure learning from staff concerns is identified and embedded.

Level of assurance ( <i>please tick one</i> ) <i>To be used when the content of the report provides evidence of assurance</i>					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Acceptable assurance</b> Controls are suitably designed, with evidence of them being consistently applied and effective in practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Partial assurance</b> Controls are still maturing – evidence shows that further action is required to improve their effectiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Low assurance</b> Evidence indicates poor effectiveness of controls

### 1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Trust Board with an update of the work of the Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Guardian and Champions in supporting the safety culture within the Trust, reflect on the progress made by the FTSU Network in empowering staff to speak up freely and encouraging ongoing positive cultural change. The paper provides an overview of issues and concerns raised in the quarter with comparison of figures for previous quarters.

Updates from the National Guardians Office (NGO) for Freedom to Speak Up are provided, with the aim of providing assurance that the local arrangements in place continue to meet best practice and support staff to raise concerns. This is done in the context of an evolving and maturing national agenda, that is learning from the collective experiences of FTSU Guardians, their champion networks and those at the National Guardian Office.

Good progress is being made against the delivery of the strategic priorities set for 2023/24 which included an extensive review of the policy in line with the NGO recommendations.

Breaking barriers to speaking up was the theme for FTSU month in October 2023. The Trust used a number of methods in order to raise awareness.

A new Guardian commenced in post in November 2023 and is in the process of meeting Champions and managers across the Trust.

The Board of Directors is asked to review the quarterly report and receive assurance that the FTSU arrangements in place continue to meet best practice.

## 2. Background

The Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) policy has undergone an extensive review and continues to be integrated at Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital alongside the Trusts other forms of Speak-Up Safely channels. In line with the national guidelines, the Trust has appointed Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, whose role it is to provide of an alternative channel for workers to raise concerns, ensuring that concerns received are escalated, investigated, and followed up to enhance patient safety and worker experiences.

The FTSU Guardians (FTSUG) continues to maintain engagement and communication with the National Guardian's Office and the Northwest Regional Network of FTSU Guardians for regular updates, continued learning and support. The FTSUG continues to work closely with the FTSU Executive Director, champions and senior leaders to enable effective escalation, review and triangulation of safety and welfare concerns. A standard operating procedure within the governance process ensures that all concerns, especially any patient safety or serious issues are escalated immediately to the Chief Executive, investigated, and followed up.

Through a personal speak-up safety pledge, the Trust's Chief Executive encourages all staff to speak up and gives assurance that any concerns raised will be investigated, and the staff will be protected from any detriment after speaking up.

The FTSU network at LHCH comprises of the FTSU Executive Director, Non-Executive Director Lead, two Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, a Deputy Guardian, and a network of multi-disciplinary FTSU Champions. A newly appointed Guardian commenced in post in November 2023.

## 3 Assessment of FTSU concerns Quarter 3 2023/24

The Trust has several safety reporting channels such as speaking directly to line managers, the HALT process, incident reporting and team and trust Safety Huddles. Issues raised in other channels are not logged as FTSU unless referred to or raised directly to the FTSU Guardian or champions. A total of 8 concerns (1 of which was anonymous) were raised through the FTSU policy in Q3.

The themes of the FTSU concerns raised in Q3 2023/24 as categorised by the NGO guidelines and outcomes are detailed in the table below.

**Table 3.1: Themes of FTSU concerns (categorised by the NGO guidelines and outcomes)**

Themes of concerns as categorised by the NGO	No. of concerns (Q3 23/24)	Outcome	Status (Closed/ in progress)
Number of cases raised anonymously	1	Raised with relevant managers	Closed
Element of Patient Safety / Quality	2	Raised with Senior teams	1 closed 1 in progress
Element of Worker Safety, policies or Wellbeing	3	Raised with relevant teams	3 Closed

Themes of concerns as categorised by the NGO	No. of concerns (Q3 23/24)	Outcome	Status (Closed/ in progress)
Element of Bullying or Harassment	2	Discussed with Senior Managers of the Divisions	1 Closed 1 in progress
Number of cases where disadvantageous or demeaning treatment (detriment) from speaking up is indicated	0		
Other Category: Safeguarding	1 (attitudes and behaviours towards a member of staff)	Discussed with Manager of the team who raised it with the relevant member of staff	Closed

Comparative numbers and themes to previously reported quarters are set out below.

**Table 3.2: Comparative themes**

Themes of concerns as categorised by the NGO	Q3 2023/24	Q2 2023/24	Q1 2023/24	Q4 2022/23	Q3 2022/23
Element of Patient Safety or Quality	2	2	3	0	1
Element of Worker safety, policy or Wellbeing	3	0	8	5	0
Element of Bullying or Harassment	2	2	0	0	3
Number of cases where disadvantageous or demeaning treatment (detriment) from speaking up is indicated	0	0	0	0	0
Other:	1	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Number of cases raised anonymously</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

In line with the NGO guidance, comparative views of concerns raised in the reported quarter and the previous quarters, per professional groups are provided below.

**Table 3.3: Comparisons of staff groups raising concerns**

Concerns raised by staff bands	Worker	Senior Manager	Senior Leader	Unknown/ Undisclosed	Total
<b>Q3 2023/24</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Q2 2023/24</b>	5	0	0	0	5
<b>Q1 2023/24</b>	11	0	0	0	11
<b>Q4 2022/23</b>	5	0	0	2	7
<b>Q3 2022/23</b>	4	0	0	0	4

The table below reflects comparative data of concerns raised by different professional groups for the current and previous 4 quarters, as per the National Guardian Office guidelines.

**Table 3.4: Comparison of concerns raised by different professional groups**

Concerns raised by professional groups	Q3 2023/24	Q2 2023/24	Q1 2023/24	Q4 2022/23	Q3 2022/23
Medics	1	0	2	0	2
RGN/ Midwives/ ANPs	2	0	7	2	0
Nursing Assistants & HCA	0	0	0	1	1
Allied Health Practitioners	2	4	0	1	0
Admin, Clerical	0	0	2	0	0
Maintenance/Ancillary/Cleaning/ Catering/ Porters	1	1	0	0	1
Corporate Service Staff	1	0	0	0	0
Undisclosed	1	0	0	1	0
<b>Total number of speak-ups</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>

In terms of analysis of FTSU concerns and actions:

- The speak ups have largely been managed by the FTSU Guardian speaking to relevant managers and either the FTSU Guardian supporting further communications between the staff members and the managers or by the managers discussing the concerns with the staff members involved and reaching a positive resolution.
- The anonymous speak up was raised at the end of December 2023 and at the time of this report being written the investigations and actions are still in progress.

The following areas for wider organisational learning areas were identified and have been shared extensively through a range of communications channels:

- Manager support and consistency – training re handling speak ups locally was conducted with managers across the ward/department areas and was well received
- FTSU Guardians and Champions often provide support through signposting colleagues and/or factfinding/ information gathering
- Listening can help individuals to determine the action they want to take
- Triangulation of data with HR colleagues remains important to ensure a long-term resolution is found
- The importance of values and behaviours at all levels

#### **4. Update on previous ongoing cases**

The majority of speak ups that have been raised in previous quarters have been closed. Cultural work is being undertaken in the areas affected to help improve the overall behavior in the area.

#### **5. Progress on Internal assessments and Governance**

The FTSU Policy has undergone an extensive review in line with latest revision of the NGO policy. Updates include clarification regarding escalation and process.

Engagement with the FTSU champions for support and updates continues through regular correspondence and quarterly FTSU workshops. These create opportunity for champions to learn and share / showcase their experiences. The Q3 workshop was held on the **5<sup>th</sup> October 2023** and was attended by the FTSU Executive Director, the NED lead for FTSU, the FTSU Guardian and Deputy Guardian and the majority of champions. We have good representation across the Trust and staff are still coming forward to volunteer to become Champions.

The new FTSU Guardian commenced in post on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

## Freedom to Speak Up Month - October

In order to celebrate and raise awareness of Freedom to Speak Up, a number of activities were arranged to take place in October, which is the nationally designated month for FTSU. This years theme for the month was 'Breaking Barriers to speaking up'.

- Several champions manned an awareness raising stand in the main corridor. They highlighted the ways in which staff can speak up and were successful in recruiting several new Champions.
- Extra walk arounds took place throughout the clinical and non-clinical areas.
- Blogs were written by the Executive Lead for FTSU, the NED Lead for FTSU, the FTSU Guardian and the Chief Executive Officer which were shared widely.
- Weekly screensavers were present to raise awareness.
- Videos of why staff volunteer to be an FTSU Champion were shared.

## FTSU Strategy Priorities 2023/24

A set of priorities has been developed to ensure the continued enhancement to FTSU arrangement.

These include:

- Conducting an FTSU survey to ascertain the needs of staff and identify barriers to speaking up, and an action plan developed to address concerns
- Reviewing and updating the FTSU policy in line with the NGO policy
- Expanding visibility of FTSU across all shift patterns
- Training for managers on how to manage when a speak up is raised in their team
- Continuing to expand the Champions network across the organisation
- Develop and deliver against a formal communications plan
- Improving sharing of learning from speak ups where possible
- Inclusion of the FTSU module on Inphase to aid staff to speak up

Progress against the priorities is good, including the completion of the survey; delivery of training to managers; review of the FTSU policy; and more volunteers coming forward to be Champions. Communications continuing throughout the year with additional opportunities for FTSU month in October.

The newly appointed FTSU Guardian has arranged introductory meetings with the Champions and senior managers in the organization, will be leading a self-assessment against the new NGO toolkit and is now a member of the EDIB Steering Group.

## 6. Updates from the National Guardian Office

- This year's theme for FTSU month in October was 'Breaking Barriers' – removing the obstacles which people feel stop them from speaking up.
- The National FTSU conference in March 2024 is being advertised and the new LHCH FTSU Guardian has registered to attend.
- A summary of the Q2 data submitted to the NGO showed that
  - ✓ *7,173 speak up cases were raised with guardians in Q2 2023/24; an 8% increase in the number of cases reported compared to the previous quarter (6,673 cases) and a 16% increase compared to the same quarter last year.*

- ✓ *Just under two-fifths of cases (36%) included an element of inappropriate behaviours and attitudes (other than bullying and harassment) and almost one third of cases (32%) included an element of worker safety or wellbeing.*
- ✓ *Almost one-fifth of cases (20%) included an element of patient safety, an increase from 17% in the previous quarter.*
- ✓ *19% of cases included an element of bullying and harassment, a decrease from 21% in the previous quarter.*
- ✓ *1 in every 25 cases (4%) reported to Guardians are from workers indicating that they have suffered detriment after speaking up*

## **7. Conclusion**

FTSU arrangements compliment existing speak-up safely policies and processes within the Trust, providing an alternative channel for staff to speak confidentially or anonymously. The policy provides assurance that concerns will be escalated, and workers are supported during the process and investigations.

The FTSU Guardians are supported by the network of Champions to continue to maintain engagement with staff, to raise the FTSU profile, support staff who have raised concerns, record and follow-up cases raised. A recent call out for FTSU volunteers has seen the Champions network increase with further members of staff in clinical and non-clinical departments.

The FTSU Guardians will continue to provide quarterly and annual reports on the number of concerns raised through the FTSU Network and any common themes to the Board of Directors and the National Guardian's Office. Learning from cases will continue to be reviewed and shared appropriately. The FTSU guardians will continue to maintain engagement with the National Office and regional networks to ensure that national updates are cascaded and implemented.

## **8. Recommendations**

The Board of Directors is asked to:

- i) note the Q3 2023/24 FTSU report.
- ii) receive assurance that local FTSU arrangements are in place and continue to meet best practice.