

Board of Directors (in Public)

Item 5.1a

Subject: Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) 2023 /24 Annual Report
Date of Meeting: 30th April 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"/>	Acceptable assurance Controls are suitably designed, with evidence of them being consistently applied and effective in practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	Partial assurance Controls are still maturing – evidence shows that further action is required to improve their effectiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Low assurance Evidence indicates poor effectiveness of controls

1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Trust Board with an annual report on the work of the Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Guardians 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 over the last 12 months and updates form the National Guardians Office for Freedom to Speak Up 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 has been 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.

In June 2023, the LHCH CEO was notified to advise that LHCH is in the top 5 Trusts in the country for FTSU. In a previous FTSU index (2021) LHCH were ranked at number 10.

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 note the assurances provided within the FTSU annual report and the proposed 2024/25 priorities.

The annual report is also accompanied by an updated FTSU policy and self-assessment for Board approval.

2. Background

The National Guardian Office for Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) continues to lead the way in improving the speak-up culture nationally. NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts are mandated to employ a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian (FTSUG), whose role is to provide 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 FTSUGs provide the Executive Board of Directors with quarterly and annual reports of the issues raised and updates from the NGO with anonymised thematic speak-up data. Themes and trends of concerns raised nationally are analysed to inform guidance and improvements at a national level.

At a local level, the Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital FTSU policy has undergone an extensive review in 2023/24 and continues to be integrated within the organisation alongside the Trust's other channels for raising concerns such as incident reporting, safety huddle and HALT. Through a personal speak-up safely pledge, the Trust's Chief Executive Officer encourages all staff to speak up and gives assurance that any concerns raised will be investigated and staff will be protected from any detriment after speaking up.

The FTSU internal network comprises of an FTSU Executive Director lead, Non-Executive Director lead, two Freedom to Speak Up Guardians (one newly appointed Guardian in November 2023), a Deputy Guardian, and a network of multi-disciplinary FTSU Champions, which was further refreshed during 2023/24. The FTSUG's work closely with the FTSU Executive Director lead and senior leaders to enable effective escalation, review and triangulation of safety and welfare concerns.

The FTSU Guardians continue to maintain engagement and communication with the National Guardian's Office and the Northwest Regional Network of FTSU Guardians for support and continued learning and updates.

3. FTSU arrangements and speak ups in 2023/24

The FTSU arrangements are embedded across the Trust, and there has been a continued focus on ensuring awareness and access to channels for speaking up. Due to one of the FTSUG's leaving the organisation, 2023/24 has seen the appointment of a new FTSUG, and a further expansion of the Champions Network. A summary of the issues raised and the arrangements in place for FTSU are detailed below.

3.1 Assessment of FTSU issues raised in 2023/24

A total of 27 concerns were raised through the FTSU in the 2023/24 financial year. These are concerns raised directly with the FTSUG / Champions network. Concerns raised through other safety channels e.g. with line managers or through incident reporting, HALT, Safety Huddles are not logged through FTSU unless referred to the FTSU Guardian. In summary

- There were six concerns raised where staff perceived an element of bullying or poor behaviour from other members of staff. Each concern was investigated and discussed with the relevant manager and followed up by the Guardian. Where possible, the staff member who had raised the concern was kept updated.
- Twelve concerns were regarding working policies and related to managing attendance, attending training, appraisal, rota management.
- Seven concerns related to patient safety concerning listing practices, attitudes affecting safety, management practices, staff competency.
- In triangulation meetings with HR, a number of the concerns raised that concerned bullying or working practices had also been highlighted to HR.

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

Table 3.1: Comparative view of concerns raised in quarters 1,2,3,and 4 2023/24

Themes of concerns as categorised by the NGO	Q1 2023/24	Q2 2023/24	Q3 2023/24	Q4 2023/24	Total
Element of Patient Safety or Quality	3	2	2	0	7
Element of Worker safety, policy or Wellbeing	8	0	3	1	12
Element of Bullying or Harassment	0	2	2	2	6
Number of cases where disadvantageous or demeaning treatment (detriment) from speaking up is indicated	0	0	0	0	0
Other: e.g. Poor communication, health and wellbeing	0	1	1	0	2
Total	11	5	8	3	27
Number of cases raised anonymously	2	0	1	1	4

Of the 27 cases, 24 have been investigated and closed (noting that some have been raised via HR processes and are being managed via alternative policies).

The Trust continues to put patient safety at the centre of its work, with a continuing emphasis on the Be civil, Be kind program. The program aims to improve values and behavior with regular digital comms bulletins to highlight trust values / behaviors.

3.2 Assessment of those speaking up through FTSU in 2023/24

Guidelines by the NGO require recording of the professional level and category of the speak-up staff where identifiable. The following table reflects the professional level of individuals who raised a speak up in the four quarters, as per the reporting guidance issued by the National Guardian Office.

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 3.2 Concerns raised by different staff in 2023/24

Concerns raised by Worker staff bands		Senior Manager	Senior Leader	Unknown/ Undisclosed	Total
Q1 2023/24	11	0	0	0	11
Q2 2023/24	5	0	0	0	5
Q3 2023/24	7	0	0	1	8
Q4 2023/24	3	0	0	0	3
Annual Totals	26	0	0	1	27

The table below reflects the professional groups who raised concerns for the current and previous 3 quarters as per the National Guardian Office guidelines.

Table 3.3: Comparison of concerns raised by different professional groups

Concerns raised by professional groups	Q1 2023/24	Q2 2023/24	Q3 2023/24	Q4 2023/24	Total
Medics	2	0	1	0	3
RGN/ Midwives/ ANPs	7	0	2	1	10
Nursing Assistants & HCA	0	0	0	1	1
Allied Health Practitioners	0	4	2	0	6
Admin, Clerical	2	0	0	0	2
Maintenance/Ancillary/Cleaning/ Catering/ Porters	0	1	1	0	2
Corporate Service Staff	0	0	1	0	1
Undisclosed	0	0	1	1	2
Total number of speak-ups	11	5	8	3	27

The undisclosed group consists of concerns raised anonymously as well as colleagues who contacted the FTSU champions confidentially.

3.3 Comparative data for the past 5 years

The table below shows a year-on-year comparator of concerns raised.

Year	Bullying and Harassment	Worker safety/ Working policies*	Patient Safety	Detriment from speaking up	Other	Total cases raised
2019/20	7	-	1	0	11	19
2020/21	10	-	7	0	17	34
2021/22	7	-	3	4	14	31
2022/23	9	7	2	1	2	26
2023/24	6	12	7	0	2	27

*The category of working policies was introduced by the NGO in the 2022/23 year and as such were not previously recorded.

3.4 FTSU Arrangements and Governance

One of the established FTSU Guardians left employment with the Trust in August 2023 and a new Guardian was appointed in November 2023 following external recruitment.

The FTSU policy has undergone extensive review and updating in line with the National Guardians Office.

The escalation process is publicised widely, and shared with the FTSU champions, to ensure consistency when a speak up is raised.

Engagement with the FTSU Champions for learning, development, updates and guidance are maintained through quarterly workshops. The FTSU Executive Director lead regularly attends the workshops and invites are also extended to the Non-Executive Director.

Monthly meetings between the Executive Director lead for FTSU and the Guardians provides guidance and support. Concerns are escalated as they are raised for information and also to ensure discussion as required with the relevant Executive Director.

The quarterly Safety Surveillance meetings are used to facilitate triangulation of FTSU with other patient-safety metrics.

Monthly meetings between FTSUG's and HR Business Partners have been maintained which enables a triangulation of FTSU concerns to be considered with ongoing employee relations cases, along with progress and support to resolve issues raised.

In July 2023, the organisation implemented a new risk management system. Included in the suite of modules for incident reporting, risk register management, complaints and claims is a new module for reporting concerns to the FTSUG's. While reporting is open for all staff, the concerns are visible only to the FTSUG's. This provides another platform for staff to record and raise concerns.

The FTSUG has reported to the Board of Directors on a quarterly basis throughout the year.

3.6 FTSU Awareness Raising Activities

A number of awareness raising activities have been undertaken in 2023/24

- FTSU policy, network posters with contact information, as well as the Chief Executive Speak-Up Pledge are displayed and accessible on the trust intranet, and notice boards around the trust.
- Regular FTSU awareness raising walkabouts are conducted. Any safety concerns picked up during these walkabouts are escalated immediately or colleagues signposted as applicable.
- Presentations at Trust's monthly Team Brief continue to raise awareness of recurring themes and cascade information from the NGO.
- 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.

3.7 Board Self-Assessment

A Board Self-Assessment was completed jointly by the Director of Risk and Improvement and the FTSU Non-Executive Director (NED) lead in May 2022. This has been reassessed and completed using the new NGO assessment tool in 2024.

The assessment concluded full compliance against the criteria across all areas, confirming that the Board:

- Behaves in a way that encourages workers to speak up
- Demonstrates commitment to FTSU
- Has a strategy to improve the FTSU culture
- Supports the FTSU Guardian
- Are assured the FTSU culture is healthy and effective
- Are open and transparent
- Has confirmed individual responsibilities

3.8 Highlights from the National Guardian Office

During 2023/24 the FTSU Guardians kept abreast of the guidance released by the NGO and any actions needed. In summary:

- ❖ The 2024 FTSU conference was held in March and concentrated on inclusion. The LHCH FTSU Guardian was in attendance at the conference.
- ❖ Monthly lunch and learn webinars are held which provide an opportunity to catch up on a variety of topics such as inclusion, support for Guardians, culture review of ambulance trusts
- ❖ This year's theme for FTSU month in October was 'Breaking Barriers' – removing the obstacles which people feel stop them from speaking up.

3.9 Speaking Up Culture

Awareness raising for FTSU is ongoing throughout the year with monthly updates on Team Brief and dedicated walk rounds to all areas across the organisation. There are now 20 FTSU Champions, who are situated across most areas in the organisation. The Champions are from many disciplines and levels allowing good access for staff to raise concerns.

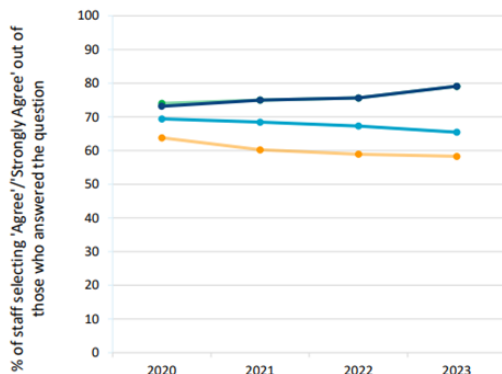
The national NHS Staff survey results 2023 show that LHCH is top in the country for being a place to work and staff engagement.

The following graphs are taken directly from the survey results and demonstrate that LHCH is the best Trust for staff feeling able to speak up about anything that concerns them.

LHCH is the best Trust for Staff feeling confident that the organisation would address concerns being raised. This question has seen a 4% rise in the response in comparison with the 2022 results.

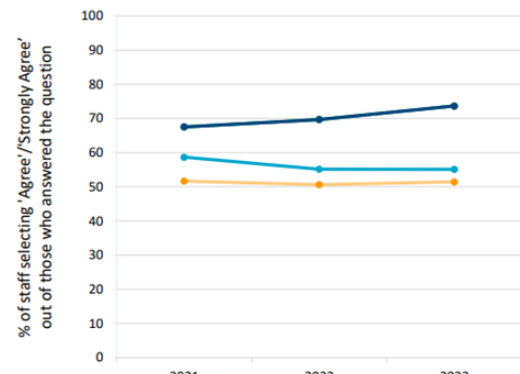


Q25e I feel safe to speak up about anything that concerns me in this organisation.



	2020	2021	2022	2023
Your org	73.16%	75.02%	75.63%	79.13%
Best result	74.04%	75.02%	75.63%	79.13%
Average result	69.41%	68.44%	67.30%	65.48%
Worst result	63.81%	60.23%	58.93%	58.29%
Responses	1099	1015	1236	1202

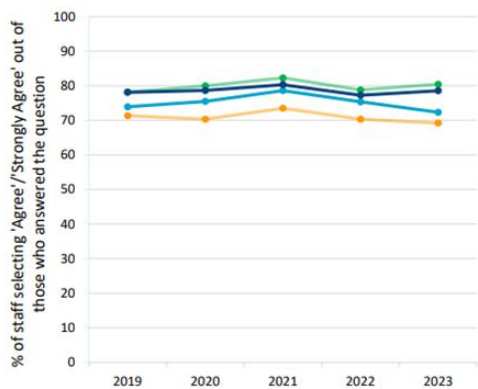
Q25f If I spoke up about something that concerned me I am confident my organisation would address my concern.



	2021	2022	2023
Your org	67.52%	69.68%	73.64%
Best result	67.52%	69.68%	73.64%
Average result	58.66%	55.15%	55.11%
Worst result	51.68%	50.61%	51.44%
Responses	1011	1235	1204

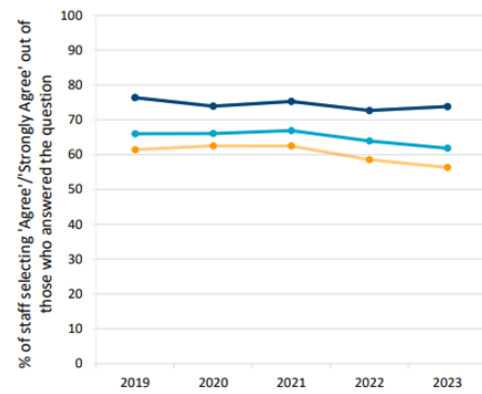


Q20a I would feel secure raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice.



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Your org	78.11%	78.63%	80.31%	77.26%	78.55%
Best result	78.18%	79.95%	82.28%	78.79%	80.43%
Average result	73.90%	75.47%	78.63%	75.34%	72.31%
Worst result	71.32%	70.32%	73.49%	70.32%	69.21%
Responses	1013	1100	1025	1240	1201

Q20b I am confident that my organisation would address my concern.



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Your org	76.37%	73.90%	75.28%	72.66%	73.82%
Best result	76.37%	73.94%	75.28%	72.66%	73.82%
Average result	65.99%	66.06%	66.89%	63.93%	61.84%
Worst result	61.42%	62.50%	62.49%	58.56%	56.31%
Responses	1013	1100	1025	1234	1199

3.10 Progress against 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 - complete
- Reviewing and updating the FTSU policy in line with the NGO policy - complete
- Expanding visibility of FTSU across all shift patterns – in progress
- Standardising documentation to support feedback from Champions when a speak up has been raised with them - complete
- Training for managers on how to manage when a speak up is raised in their team – complete (with more sessions to be arranged)
- Continuing to expand the Champions network across the organisation - ongoing

- Develop and deliver against a formal communications plan - ongoing
- Improving sharing of learning from speak ups where possible – ongoing
- Inclusion of the FTSU module on Inphase to aid staff to speak up - complete

Good progress has been demonstrated against the priorities including delivery of training to managers; review of the FTSU policy; and more volunteers coming forward to be Champions. Communications have continued 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 organisation and has led a self-assessment against the NGO toolkit.

3.11 FTSU Strategy Priorities 2024/25

Following the completion of the FTSU self-assessment the following priorities have been identified for 2024/25

- FTSU having an input into revising policies and toolkits for Civility and Respect. To include Grievance and Disciplinary policies as well as working closely with Wellbeing and HR to continue to complete walk abouts and awareness raising events to ensure we are more proactive and not just reactive.
- New FTSUG will continue to establish her role, promote FTSU and support the Champions.
- Further development of the Communications strategy including positive stories – to find new ways of getting feedback from those accessing FTSU.
- Revisit the training and optimise number of individuals who access this. Look at building into communications and liaise with OD to look at different strategies. Continue to provide awareness / guidance and training to managers and in particular, for identified departments where there is need.
- FTSUGs to foster good links with staff network groups and have a presence in relevant strategy meetings. The Guardian can then bring in learning from the networks into reporting to provide a more rounded picture of the information available to us.
- To support international staff and other groups we find hard to reach, to speak up.
- Conduct a survey to compare to the previous survey to see if there has been an improvement in the LHCH FTSU offer (April 2024).
- Emphasising the 'no wrong door' policy for staff regarding how and who to speak up to.
- Supporting everyone to speak up.

4. Key Achievements

- **NGO ranks LHCH in the Top 5 for FTSU**
In June, the LHCH CEO was notified to advise that LHCH is in the top 5 Trusts in the country for FTSU. Of course, its recognized that this is about the wider culture, and FTSU is a key part of this. In a previous FTSU index (2021) LHCH were at number 10.
- **BME Leadership network meeting**
In April 2024, the Deputy Guardian and the two Guardians were asked to speak to the BME Leadership network regarding LHCH approach to FTSU and our recruitment of Champions. The session was well received by the participants.

5. Conclusion

The processes for Freedom to Speak-Up compliments the well-established safety culture in the trust where staff are encouraged to raise concerns. The FTSU internal network provides an alternative channel for staff to speak confidentially or anonymously with assurance that concerns will be escalated and workers are supported while concerns are investigated.

The FTSU Guardian's continue to maintain an active role in engaging with staff to maintain the profile of FTSU.

The provision of quarterly and annual reports to the Board of Directors on the concerns raised through the FTSU internal network ensures oversight of issues raised across the organisation.

The FTSU Guardian's will continue to engage with the National Guardians Office and regional network to ensure LHCH continues to lead the way in relation to best practice.

6. Recommendations

The Board of Directors is asked to:

- i) Note the assurance provided in the 2023/24 FTSU annual report to demonstrate that local FTSU arrangements are in place and continue to meet best practice.
- ii) Approve the FTSU Self-Assessment (refer Item 5.1b).
- iii) Approve the FTSU Policy (refer Item 5.1c).