

Board of Directors (in Public)

Item 5.1

Subject: Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Q1 – 2024/25
Date of Meeting: 30th July 2024
Presented by: Ceri Thomas, Freedom to Speak Up 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 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 during Q1 in comparison to figures for previous quarters.

Updates from the National Guardians Office 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 2024/25 with increased walkabouts and FTSU training for managers arranged for July.

Last year, LHCH was ranked in the top 5 Trusts in the country for FTSU, and in the previous FTSU index (2021) were at number 10. In the latest Staff Survey, LHCH have been ranked as top in the

country for the FTSU sub score.

The Board 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 recently undergone an extensive review and continues to be integrated at Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital alongside the Trust's other forms of Speak-Up and Safely channels. In line with the national guidelines, the trust has appointed Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, whose role 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) continue 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 continue to work closely with the FTSU Executive Director, champions, and senior leaders to enable effective escalation, review and triangulation of safety and welfare concerns.

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.

3 Assessment of FTSU concerns Quarter 1 2024/25

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 3 concerns were raised through the FTSU policy in Q1.

The themes of the FTSU concerns raised in Q1 2024/25 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 (Q1 24/25) | Outcome | Status (Closed/ in progress) |
|--|----------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Number of cases raised anonymously | 1 | | |
| Element of Patient Safety / Quality | 1 | Raised with relevant managers | 1 Closed |
| Element of Worker Safety, policies or Wellbeing | 0 | | |
| Element of Bullying or Harassment | 2 | Raised with Senior team and HR processes already in place. | 2 Closed |
| Number of cases where disadvantageous or demeaning | 0 | | |

| Themes of concerns as categorised by the NGO | No. of concerns (Q1 24/25) | Outcome | Status (Closed/ in progress) |
|---|----------------------------|---------|------------------------------|
| treatment (detriment) from speaking up is indicated | | | |
| Other Category: | 0 | | |

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 | Q1 2024/25 | Q4 2023/24 | Q3 2023/24 | Q2 2023/24 | Q1 2023/24 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Element of Patient Safety or Quality | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Element of Worker safety, policy or Wellbeing | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 8 |
| Element of Bullying or Harassment | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Number of cases where disadvantageous or demeaning treatment (detriment) from speaking up is indicated | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other: | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 3 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 11 |
| Number of cases raised anonymously | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |

In line with the NGO guidance, comparative views of concerns raised in Q1-2024/25 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 |
|--------------------------------|--------|----------------|---------------|----------------------|-------|
| Q1 2024/25 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Q4 2023/24 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Q3 2023/24 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8 |
| Q2 2023/24 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Q1 2023/24 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 |

The table below reflects comparative data of concerns raised 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 | Q1 2024/25 | Q4 2023/24 | Q3 2023/24 | Q2 2023/24 | Q1 2023/24 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Medics | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| RGN/ Midwives/ ANPs | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 7 |
| Nursing Assistants & HCA | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Allied Health Practitioners | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 |
| Admin, Clerical | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

| | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Maintenance/Ancillary/Cleaning/ Catering/ Porters | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Corporate Service Staff | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Undisclosed | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Total number of speak-ups | 3 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 11 |

In terms of analysis of FTSU concerns and actions:

- The speak up regarding an element of patient safety or quality was raised with the relevant managers and resolved. Training was arranged and delivered within a few days.
- The speak up with an element of bullying and harassment was escalated to senior managers and there was already a HR process in place.

Q1 has seen fewer speak ups than Q1 the previous year. Triangulation of data with HR colleagues indicates that with the exception of specific cases, that this has been a general settled theme across the Trust.

During walkabouts, talking with teams, there appears to be a good awareness of avenues to speaking up. According to the 2023 NHS Staff Survey results, LHCH is the top trust in the country in terms of the Freedom to Speak Up sub-score, providing further assurance.

The following areas for wider organisational learning areas were identified:

- Manager support and consistency – training re handling speak ups has been arranged for July 2024.
- Ensuring all staff across all shifts have access to information and support and supporting those we find hard to reach.

4. Update on previous ongoing cases

There are no ongoing cases.

5. Progress on Internal assessments and Governance

A Board Self-Assessment was completed jointly by the Director of Risk and Improvement and the FTSU Non-Executive Director lead in May 2024. The assessment was concluded full compliance against criteria across all areas.

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 Q1 workshop was held on 3rd April 2024 and was attended by the CEO, FTSU Exec Lead the two Guardians and a number of our 27 champions. Staff volunteering to be Champions are still coming forward.

FTSU Strategy Priorities 2024/25

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

- 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 Guardian will continue to establish her role, promote FTSU and support the Champions.

- Further develop the Communications strategy.
- 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. 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.
- Guardians 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 monkey to assess against the previous survey 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 others to speak up.

Progress against the priorities is good, including planned delivery of training to managers; evening walkabout to raise awareness and support for night staff; more volunteers coming forward to be Champions; new boxes for anonymous speak ups.

6. Updates from the National Guardian Office

- New mandatory refresher training for Guardians.
- The NGO has an updated strategy which was planned to be shared on 3rd June which has been delayed due to the general election.
- FTSU Guardian job description is currently under review.

7. Achievements

- LHCH ranks top for FTSU in 2023 Staff Survey. This is recognition of the culture within the Trust and the number of ways that our staff can speak up.
- New "Speak Up post boxes" yields a speak up within first 2 weeks of implementation.

8. Conclusion

The FTSU compliments 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 supported by the network of champions continue to maintain engagement with the staff to raise the FTSU profile, support staff who have raised concerns, record and follow-up cases raised.

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.

9. Recommendations

The Board of Directors is asked to:

- i) note the Q1 2024/25 report.

- ii) receive assurance that local FTSU arrangements are in place and continue to meet best practice.