

Board of Directors (in Public)
Item 5.1

Subject: Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Q3 – 2024/25
Date of Meeting: 28th January 2025
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 in Q3 with comparison of 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 within 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 promotion and awareness raising within the Trust and an increase in the number of FTSU Champions.

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 recently undergone an extensive review and continues to be integrated alongside the Trust's other forms of Speak-Up 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 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 the close working with our new FTSU Executive Director, NED, 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 3 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 7 concerns were raised through the FTSU policy in Q3.

The themes of the FTSU concerns raised in Q3 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 (Q3 24/25)	Outcome	Status (Closed/ in progress)
Number of cases raised anonymously	1	Internal action by senior managers	Closed
Element of Patient Safety / Quality	0		
Element of Worker Safety, policies or Wellbeing	5	Escalated to Managers / HR process	5 Closed
Element of Bullying or Harassment	2	HR process / Management support / Guardian support	1 in progress 1 closed
Number of cases where disadvantageous or demeaning treatment (detriment) from speaking up is indicated	0		
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	Q3 2024/25	Q2 2024/25	Q1 2024/25	Q4 2023/24	Q3 2023/24
Element of Patient Safety or Quality	0	0	1	0	2
Element of Worker safety, policy or Wellbeing	5	2	0	1	3
Element of Bullying or Harassment	2	2	2	2	2
Number of cases where disadvantageous or demeaning treatment (detriment) from speaking up is indicated	0	0	0	0	0
Other:	0	0	0	0	1
Total	7	4	3	3	8
Number of cases raised anonymously	1	1	1	1	1

In line with the NGO guidance, comparative views of concerns raised in Q3 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
Q3 2024/25	7	0	0	0	7
Q2 2024/25	3	0	0	1	4
Q1 2024/25	3	0	0	0	3
Q4 2023/24	3	0	0	0	3
Q3 2023/24	7	0	0	1	8

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	Q3 2024/25	Q2 2024/25	Q1 2024/25	Q4 2023/24	Q3 2023/24
Medics	1	0	2	0	1
RGN/ Midwives/ ANPs	4	1	0	1	2
Nursing Assistants & HCA	0	0	1	1	0
Allied Health Practitioners	2	2	0	0	2
Admin, Clerical	0	0	0	0	0
Maintenance/Ancillary/Cleaning/ Catering/ Porters	0	0	0	0	1
Corporate Service Staff	0	0	0	0	1
Undisclosed	0	1	0	1	1
Total number of speak-ups	7	4	3	3	8

Analysis of FTSU concerns and associated actions can be summarised as:

- Two of the speak ups included an element of alleged racism or discrimination. One of these is, now, going through a HR process and the other is being explored more informally.
- Other speak ups related to either departmental or HR processes. They have all followed internal processes and are closed to FTSU with the exception of 1 where support continues.

Q3 has seen an increase in speak up's from Q2 and is at a similar level to Q3 last year. This coincides with Speak Up Month in October where it is usual to see an increase.

Speak Up Month consisted of –

- increased walkabouts to teams and departments.
- a stand in the promotional area which was supported by a number of our Senior Leadership Team, Guardians and Champions.
- Updated posters around the Trust.
- Increased communications.

Guardians continue to work closely with colleagues in other departments such as HR, OD, EDIB & Wellbeing Officer, Staff Side Union reps and sit on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Steering Group and Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Steering Group, contributing to the discussions and actions.

Guardians also attended the Wellbeing event held by the Health Innovation North West Coast and the in-person Regional Guardians Network meeting both held in November.

Q3 saw more staff volunteering to be Champions. During walkabouts, talking with teams, there appears to be a good awareness of the available avenues for speaking up.

Guardians have also reached out to colleagues from Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust and Liverpool Women's Foundation Trust and are due to meet over the coming weeks.

The following areas for wider organisational learning areas were identified:

- Manager support and consistency – when addressing experiences of racism or discrimination in departments.
- Ensuring all staff, across all shifts, have access to information and support and supporting those we find hard to reach.
- Culture – although the broadly settled theme across the Trust continues, there continue to be areas requiring proactive support.

4. Update on previous ongoing cases

There is only one case with ongoing Guardian support, however this case is being addressed via HR processes.

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. This assessment concluded full compliance against criteria in all areas.

Engagement with the FTSU champions for support and updates continues through regular correspondence and quarterly workshops. These create opportunities for champions to learn and share / showcase their experiences. The Q3 workshop was held on 2nd October 2024 and was well attended by the FTSU Exec Lead, both Guardians and a number of our champions.

A new feedback form has been created to include equal opportunity information. This will aid learning and hopefully suggest areas where change or development is needed as well as provide reassurance where we are getting it right.

FTSU Strategy Priorities 2024/25

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

- FTSU having an input into revising policies and toolkits for Civility and Respect, working closely with Wellbeing and HR to continue to complete walkabouts 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 – finding 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.
- 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 sound, including planned delivery of training to managers; more volunteers coming forward to be Champions; Strengthening links with other departments such as Staff Side Union Representatives and Staff Networks and a Peer visit from colleagues from other Trusts. Presence and relationship building with colleagues at HINWC.

6. Updates from the National Guardian Office

- The Guardian's Universal Job Description is under review. There have been consultation opportunities including Guardians and Chief People Officers.
- Martha's Rule and the role of the FTSU Guardian.
- New Guardian and Enquiry Management System is being developed.

7. Achievements

- Successful FTSU month in October with good engagement from teams and individuals.
- An additional 2 x post boxes for anonymous contact have been placed around the Trust.
- Our FTSU Champions network continues to grow, and we have a diverse team across departments, roles and cultures.
- Speak Up feedback form has been updated to include equal opportunity information.

8. Conclusion

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 Q3 2024/25 report.
- ii) receive assurance that local FTSU arrangements are in place and to the best of our knowledge continue to meet best practice.