

Agenda item 2.iii

Report to:	Board of Directors	Date: 08 January 2026
Report from:	Tony Bottiglieri, Freedom to Speak up Guardian	
Principal Objective/Strategy:	To inform the board of progress on Speaking Up Service	
Title:	Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Update Report Q1 & 2:2025/26	
Board Assurance Framework Entries:	Staff Engagement Patient Safety	
Regulatory Requirement:	Recommendation from Francis Review 2015; Governance – Well-led Framework Workforce	
Equality Considerations:		
Key Risks:	Staff do not feel confident to speak up and raise concerns	
For:	Information	

1. Executive Summary

In line with the recommendations of the Freedom to Speak Up Review (Francis, 11.2.15), the Trust has a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian who took up post in August 2018. This report reflects the period Q1 & 2 – 2025/26. The intention of this report is to inform the board of progress and of key issues.

2. Context and background

The development of the FTSU guardian role was a recommendation of the Sir Robert Francis FTSU review following the Mid Staffordshire Public Enquiry. The Trust appointed its first FTSU Guardian in 2016. The current FTSU guardian is the 2nd appointment.

In line with national recommendations, the Board is to receive a six-monthly update report followed by a yearly report on Freedom to Speak Up. This report covers the period April – September 2025. The board have received the previous year's annual report for 2024/25, presented on 5th June 2025. The FTSU guardian post holder is currently appointed to role in fulltime hours (1 wte) since 8.07.2024.

3. Progress to date

I am pleased to present this report to the board reflecting mid-point of the year (2025/26). A full report is scheduled for presentation in June 2026. Several activities have continued alongside additional planned and agreed organisational speak up platforms. For example, launch of the anonymity reporting platform which came into effect June 2025, alongside atriums stalls and drop-in surgeries.

There has been an increasing number of staff expressing interests in training into the role of FTSU Champion, evident across both reporting quarters with staff providing wider service coverage across all areas of the trust, across areas and locations. Staff wishing to speak to

a champion provides the trust with the opportunity to learn, develop and improve. This is an effective role which provides colleagues with the opportunity to access advice and guidance through signposting into the most appropriate service or personnel. Noticeable has been the demand for improved clinical service efficiencies with increasing concern on how the trusts behavioural values are being tested. In all cases, across both quarters, staff are thanked and reassured that speaking up matters and is valued. We currently have 42 FTSU champions, with a further 3 awaiting training.

Activities and events developed in 2024/25 are ongoing to help maintain and sustain awareness of the importance of speaking up. I am sure there is agreement that encouraging speaking up is an ongoing matter. Identifying and utilising methods and opportunities has shaped some of the staff engagement and promotion activities. It is important that staff are reminded of the value in which the trust places on speaking up. Some indicators identified through NHS survey data (2023/24 & 2024/25) and 2024/25 FTSU G annual report highlight concerns for increasing staff on staff incivilities. Messaging by the FTSU G, supported by our champions, continue to encourage all to work towards a just culture, where staff can experience a safe, supportive, and rewarding work culture. In all conversations, staff were thanked and assured that speaking up matters.

Our champions have been supported by “reach in” calendar invites. This continues to be an effective method of “touching base” with the FTSU Guardian. It enjoys an established pattern, set for every 3rd week in the month (2 hrs). Six drop-in surgeries are planned for 2026 with 2 further atrium stalls to profile anonymity reporting alongside our existing speak up pathways.

Engagement with a variety of networks and committees has continued across Q1 and Q2.

4. Update on speaking up anonymously.

Initially reported in 2024/25 annual report, launched in June 2025, all staff with a Papworth NHS email account have been invited to generate a private account. Creating an account requires two factor authentication. The trust has a user license for up to 2500 staff, where capacity is maintained by adding new starters and removing staff leavers monthly. To date, 2,442 user accounts have been registered, where 205 having been activated. 22 staff have raised a conversation during this reporting period.

Reflections across the sector (where the platform is currently in use in other NHS trusts) indicates a conversation rate of around 4-5 per month. This rate is the medium across larger acute hospital providers. The rate of submitting a message at Royal Papworth Hospital is similar. All conversations raised are reviewed by the FTSU G through a two-way process. Issues raised are communicated to the most appropriate service area leads. Issues of concern are collated into the FTSU G quarterly reporting templates.

Encouragement and awareness of the use and protections built into anonymity reporting still require greater promotion. Topics which were envisaged as being too sensitive to speak up about (sexual safety for example) have not appeared across the two quarters. However, the platform has enabled staff to speak up on concerns related to issues which appear through our other reporting methods. Namely, that of inappropriate staff on staff behaviours; staff performance and conduct management; incidents of racism and sexism; and discrimination-based behaviours. The anonymity platform has provided staff with the opportunity to report

whilst remaining anonymous. Comments received indicate that staff have been emboldened by this. In some of these cases, staff have disclosed concerns for detriment if identities become known and so opt to utilise this method of raising a concern. To remind, the utility of this platform is to be reviewed on or around June 2026 as we approach license renewal.

It is anticipated that the platform will, overtime, improve staff confidence in speaking up on issues which I believe will remain difficult to do so.

Speak2Us.at/rph



For information, link to the FTSU Guardian page. This includes contact details, information about the role in supporting staff in speaking up, a hyper link to the electronic poster of freedom to speak up champions, as well as (on the left-hand column) the link to the anonymity reporting platform <https://staff.royalpapworth.nhs.uk/safeguarding-freedom-to-speak-up> (Reference pack Item 2.iii.a)

FTSU anonymity platform details and hyper link to site

<https://staff.royalpapworth.nhs.uk/safeguarding-freedom-to-speak-up-anonymous-reporting> (Reference Pack Item 2.iii.b)

Link to poster –

<https://staff.royalpapworth.nhs.uk/download/freedom-to-speakup-champions-poster-25072024pdf.pdf?ver=17645&doc=docm93jjm4n7176> (Reference Pack Item 2.iii.c)

5. National reporting - The role and function of the National Guardian Office (NGO)

Following the publication of the Patient Safety Landscape Review (The Dash Review: Patient Safety across the health and care landscape - NHS England, July 2025), as outlined in the recommendations, the function of the NGO is to be transferred to NHS England. This is anticipated to be completed by March 2026. Until this point, the NGO remains the primary support and main point of contact for Guardians.

NHS England have confirmed that Freedom to Speak Up, and the role of Guardians, will continue to be incorporated into the NHS Standard Contract for 2026/27. NHS England will assume responsibility for leading this work from 2026/27 onwards.

The update is provided here as recommendations appeared during this reporting period. Updates on the transition of functions will be provided as further details become available.

6. Quarterly reporting the National Guardian Office continues until further notice.

Q1 and Q2 incident reporting to the NGO have been undertaken within expected timeframes. Period's Q1 and Q2 2024/25 appear as a comparator.

Period 2024/25	Q1	Q2	Q1 – 25/26	Q2 -25/26
Number of cases brought to FTSU Guardian	37	41	52	42
Number of cases with an element of bullying or harassment	6	10	10	7
Number of cases with an element of patient safety/quality	6	2	1	3
Number of cases where staff indicate they are suffering detriment as a result of speaking up	1	0	4	4
Number of cases raised anonymously	0	0	9	5
Number of cases with an element of other inappropriate attitudes or behaviours (24/25)	10	19	26	24
Number of cases with an element of worker safety	12	4	11	7
Number of cases by specific group				
Admin/Clerical	3	6	10	9
AHPs	0	2	12	2
Medical/Dental	0	2	3	4
Additional clinical services	5	0	10	5
Reg Nurses/Midwives	15	20	13	13
Ambulance	0	0	0	0
Additional professional scientific and technical	9	8	0	3

Estates and ancillary	4	2	0	2
Healthcare scientists	1	1	0	1
Students	0	0	0	2
Not Known	0	0	4	1
Other	0	0	0	0
Given your experience, would you speak up again?				
Total responses	24	29	43	28
Yes	11	14	23(43%)	8 (35%)
No	2	5	5 (12%)	6 (15%)
Maybe	7	7	15 (32%)	14 (50%)
Don't know	4	3	0	0

6.1 DN259 - Freedom to Speak up, Raising Concerns (whistleblowing) policy updated, reviewed by Joint Staff Council and Audit Committee.

7. Themes from cases brought to FTSU Guardian (Q1 & 2 – 2025/26)

- Concerns that staff in leadership roles are not tackling/addressing inappropriate behaviours and so reducing risk of escalation and behaviours becoming normalised/culturally embedded.
- Datix, increasing frequency of inappropriate behaviours (incivilities/inappropriate behaviours/sexual safety) between staff are being reported as Datix incidents. Disclosure of staff identities.
- Value and benefits of exit interviews – how is information used? Opportunity to learn and improve.
- Inconsistencies in how staff behaviours are managed/tolerated across service areas.
- Oversight on different sources of incident reporting into trust committees (amalgamate themes whilst ensuring protection of personnel).
- Confidence in reporting concerns undermined by poor role modelling
- Timelines regarding investigations and keeping those involved updated
- Non-medical students reporting for sexual safety

Example of cases reported during Q1 & 2

- Staff member undertook/arranged a survey to enlist staff concerns against named practitioners (remote and specific)
- Temporary staffing - application of terms and conditions of work
- Interpretation of data breach
- Sexual harassment and supporting staff in reporting and acting
- Students reporting of concerns

8. Recommendation

The Board of Directors is asked to receive and discuss this report from the Freedom to Speak up Guardian relating to Q1 & 2 - 2025/26.