



Freedom to Speak Up Strategy **Embedding an open and transparent culture**

2018 – 2022
VR.0.1



Introduction

Freedom to Speak Up promotes and encourages the raising of concerns from NHS workers, sub-contractors and volunteers to ensure patient safety is maintained at all times and to make the health service a better place to work.

Positive leadership and a culture that places less emphasis on blame when things go wrong and more importance on transparency and learning from mistakes¹ is required across the NHS in order to achieve this.

Yorkshire Ambulance Service is committed to embedding an open and transparent culture; one in which staff members and volunteers feel empowered to raise concerns, with confidence that these concerns will be acted upon and without fear of detriment for speaking up. This includes creating the appropriate structure and process that supports speaking up and ensuring that all staff members demonstrate the values and behaviours required to deliver this in practice.

This strategy sets out our vision for speaking up and demonstrates our commitment to making it safe for our staff to raise concerns and always keeping the patient at the centre of everything we do. It has been developed in conjunction with the Trust's management team, Guardian and Advocates, operational staff and the Critical Friends Network (CFN).

“Failure to speak up can cost lives. We need to get away from a culture of blame, and the fear that it generates, to one which celebrates openness and commitment to safety and improvement. If these things are achieved, the NHS will be a better place to work. Above all, it will be a safer place for patients.”

Sir Robert Francis QC

¹ NHS Health Education England e-Learning for Healthcare.

Corporate Strategy

The Freedom to Speak Up Strategy supports the delivery of the Trust's corporate strategy and contributes to the overall strategic direction of the organisation.

Our Purpose

To save lives and ensure everyone in our communities receives the right care, whenever and wherever they need it.

Our Vision

To be trusted as the best urgent and emergency care provider, with the best people and partnerships, delivering the best outcomes for patients.



Four of the Trust's core values and associated behaviours particularly underpin the ethos behind our Freedom to Speak Up Strategy:

One team

- We share a common goal: to be outstanding at what we do
- We actively listen to each other and will provide constructive feedback
- We respect and share knowledge, skills and best practice within the team

Empowerment

- We take responsibility for doing the right thing, at the right time for patients and colleagues
- We take ownership of issues and ask questions to gain clarity and understanding
- We take a positive learning experience from our mistakes and will share this with others

Compassion

- We are passionate about the care of patients and their carers
- We treat colleagues, patients and carers as they would like to be treated
- We build trust through understanding, building strong relationships and mutual respect

Integrity

- We are open and honest
- We adhere to professional standards and are accountable to our communities and each other
- We listen, learn and act on feedback
- We speak up and challenge poor behaviour even though it may feel uncomfortable

To support the implementation of the Freedom to Speak Up Strategy, leaders in the organisation will need to model and develop these behaviours and promote them within the teams that they work. We aim to ensure that openness, transparency and embedding a positive learning culture is visible to everyone.

The Freedom to Speak Up Strategy is one of eight enabling strategies developed by the Trust contributing to the delivery of the overarching vision for the organisation over the next five years. It is recognised Freedom to Speak Up will have some interface with the other strategies and in particular the Quality Improvement Strategy, Clinical Strategy and the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

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Freedom to Speak Up Strategic Aims

We aim to work with our staff members, patients and volunteers to:

- Create a culture where all staff feel safe to raise concerns
- Enable our leaders to be responsive to concerns and act on these promptly
- Celebrate concerns raised and share the learning to improve patient safety

National Drivers

The NHS Staff Survey² showed that in 2017;

- 70% of staff said that they would **feel safe/secure** raising concerns
- 57% of staff would **feel confident** that their employer would deal with any concerns raised with them

In February 2015 Sir Robert Francis QC published the report on his independent review into creating an open and honest reporting culture in the NHS. The review was set up following exposures of substandard and sometimes unsafe patient care and treatment and in some cases it was apparent there was a lack of awareness by the organisation's leadership of the existence or scale of problems known to the frontline.³

His review identified five key themes. These were the need for:

- Culture change
- Improved handling of cases
- Measures to support good practice
- Particular measures for vulnerable groups
- Extending the legal protection

These were underpinned with 20 identified principles and subsequent recommendations for all NHS organisations. This included the mandate for all NHS Trusts to have an appointed Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and a policy in place.



Since the review was published in February 2015 there has been extensive work nationally to further develop these principles and to ensure delivery of this programme across the NHS. The National Guardian's Office (NGO) was set up with an appointed National Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, workshops, training sessions and learning events have taken place across the country as well as the establishment of regional networks and relevant to YAS, the National Ambulance Network.

Additional guidance issued by the NGO in May 2018⁴ prescribes the requirement for all NHS organisations to develop a Freedom to Speak Up vision and strategy to strengthen and support delivery.

In April 2015 Monitor issued the *Well-led framework for governance reviews: guidance for NHS foundation trusts* and in June 2017 this was refreshed to apply to NHS trusts also. It is acknowledged that providers continue to operate in challenging environments; characterised by the increasingly complex needs of an ageing population, a growing emphasis on working with local system partners to create innovative solutions to long-standing sustainability problems, workforce shortages and the slowing growth in the NHS budget.⁵

² NHS Employers 2017

³ Freedom to Speak Up – a review of whistleblowing in the NHS, 2015.

⁴ Guidance for boards on Freedom to Speak Up in NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts. May 2018.

⁵ Development reviews of leadership and governance using the well-led framework: guidance for NHS trusts and foundation trusts. June 2017.

It is therefore recognised that to respond to these challenges, leaders need to be equipped to be able to do this and robust governance processes should be in place to structure this approach.

The NGO has worked in partnership with the CQC to support the development of the new inspection framework for the well-led domain.⁶ The CQC assesses a trust's speaking up culture during inspections under Key Line Of Enquiry (KLOE) 3 as part of the well-led question which aims to assess that the leadership, management and governance of the organisation assures the delivery of high quality and person-centred care, supports learning and innovation, and promotes an open and fair culture.⁷

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⁶ National Guardian's Office Annual Report 2017.

⁷ CQC Key lines of enquiry, prompts and ratings characteristics for healthcare services.

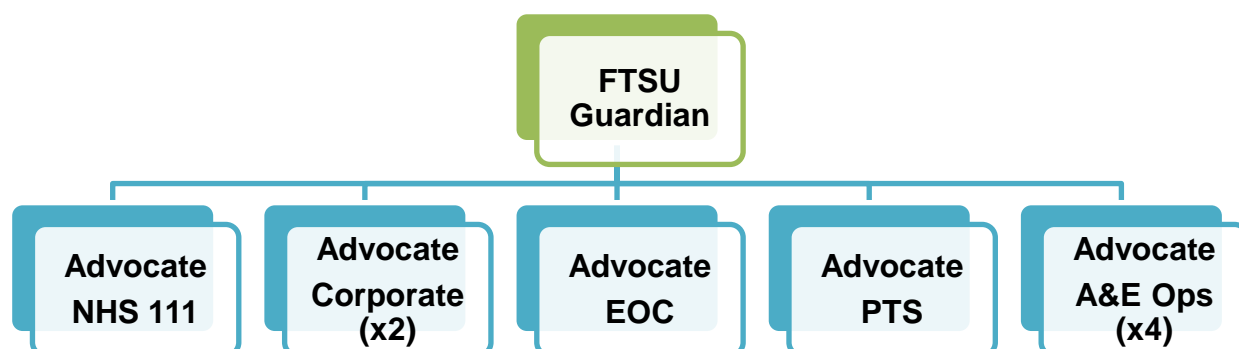
Work undertaken so far

In 2015 the Trust established a working group consisting of operational staff, staff side representatives and managers from all areas of the organisation including A&E operations, the Patient Transport Service (PTS), the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), NHS 111 service and corporate services. The working group considered the recommendations made nationally and developed an action plan for the organisation including the development of a Freedom to Speak Up Policy in line with national guidance and a route map for staff which is shown below.

Route Map for Raising Concerns



In addition, the Trust appointed a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian with the role developed as a part-time opportunity alongside their substantive role. The Guardian is supported by 9 Advocates spread geographically and by area across the organisation to ensure full accessibility for people wishing to raise concerns. This is shown in the structure below. The Guardian and Advocates have all received training in line with national recommendations.



The Trust uses Datix to log any concerns raised and these can be done anonymously if preferred. In 17-18, 56 concerns were raised within YAS. Concerns are managed by the Guardian in conjunction with the relevant management team and in addition monthly review meetings are held with the Guardian, the Chief Executive Officer, the Executive Director of Quality, Governance & Performance Assurance, the Director of Workforce and Organisational Development and the Head of Investigations & Learning.

Updates on concerns raised and actions are reported through the Incident Review Group, the Clinical Quality Development Forum, the Quality Committee, Audit Committee and to the Trust Board.

Feedback is collected from members of staff who have raised concerns and monitored to assess any inequalities that require addressing and to identify any areas for improvement in the handling of the concerns.

Awareness of Freedom to Speak Up has been delivered through attendance at management meetings, delivery of road shows, 'lunch and learn' sessions upon launch of the programme, a Freedom to Speak Up Week in 2018, production of merchandise and poster displays and drop-ins at Accident & Emergency Departments. Awareness is also raised via educational sessions including the Corporate Induction and as part of the investigation skills training days. The Trust's Guardian continues to attend meetings with vulnerable staff groups including the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) Group, the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) Group, the Learning Disability Network and presents to students at local universities.

The Trust has been recognised nationally for their implementation plan for Freedom to Speak Up and in 2017 presented at the National Guardians' Conference on delivering 'Visibility and Reach' across a challenging geographical area. The Trust's Guardian also co-chairs the National Ambulance Network.

Core work streams

The Trust is committed to progressing and strengthening the work undertaken so far to continue to build an open and transparent culture that supports staff to raise safety concerns. There is still much work to be done to embed this further and these will be focused by our strategic aims.

Create a culture where all staff feel safe to raise concerns

The principle behind developing a culture that embraces speaking up is to empower staff to raise concerns where they believe there is a patient or staff safety risk or it is a matter of public interest to do so.

We want staff to speak up when they have a genuine concern about the following:

- Abuse of patients/service users
- Clinical malpractice including ill treatment of a patient
- Criminal offences which have been committed or are likely to be committed
- Financial malpractice including fraud or suspected fraud
- Disregard for legislation particularly in relation to health & safety at work
- Damage or the risk of damage to the environment or Trust property
- Failure to comply with any legal duty
- A deliberate attempt to cover up any of the above

(the list is not exclusive or exhaustive)

We would hope that all staff members would feel comfortable and confident in raising these concerns within their management teams who would be responsive to the concern raised and take the appropriate action. However we recognise that this may not always be the case and it is important that alternative routes exist, including Freedom to Speak Up.

To support the culture change all staff including leaders need to have an awareness of speaking up and recognise the importance of it. The Guardian and Advocates need to promote this in all interactions with staff and we hope for raising concerns to be part of 'business as usual'.

We will:

- Ensure all our staff, sub-contractors and volunteers are aware of Freedom to Speak Up
- We will encourage speaking up and thank and support those who do so
- We will challenge poor behaviour when these do not align with our vision and values
- Actively encourage an open and transparent learning culture in all that we do
- Self-assess as a Board to reflect on our commitment to speaking up and identify any improvements required

Enable our leaders to be responsive to concerns and act on these promptly

We recognise that when a concern is raised with managers it is important that they know how to handle the concern and have the correct escalation processes to ensure action is taken to

resolve these concerns. This involves a lot of collaborative working across departments and trust and confidence in colleagues' commitment to respond appropriately.

It is acknowledged that there has been a shortfall in training provision at a leadership level within the organisation and there is an opportunity to strengthen this, incorporating the Trust's visions, values and behavioural expectations, including listening to and acting on staff feedback.

We want leaders to welcome concerns that are raised and to view these as opportunities for improvements, keeping patients and our staff at the forefront of our mind to make YAS a great place to work and improving the care delivered to our patients.

We will:

- Work to embed the vision, values and behavioural expectations across our leadership team working in conjunction with our Academy
- Work collaboratively with all colleagues to resolve concerns
- Create the appropriate structures for concerns to be managed and escalated including regular meetings between the Guardian and the Chief Executive connecting the Board to the frontline.
- Continue to ensure that all staff have access to Freedom to Speak Up through the Guardian and Advocates
- Monitor the concerns raised at a senior management level and the progress made on these to ensure these are addressed promptly
- Share learning from these concerns to demonstrate our responsiveness and the actions that have been taken

Celebrate concerns raised and share the learning to improve patient safety

To help deliver a change in culture we know that staff members need to have confidence in raising concerns, know that they will be taken seriously, the concerns will be acted upon and they will not suffer detriment as a result of speaking up.

In order for us to do this we must share learning and feedback from the process that evidences this.

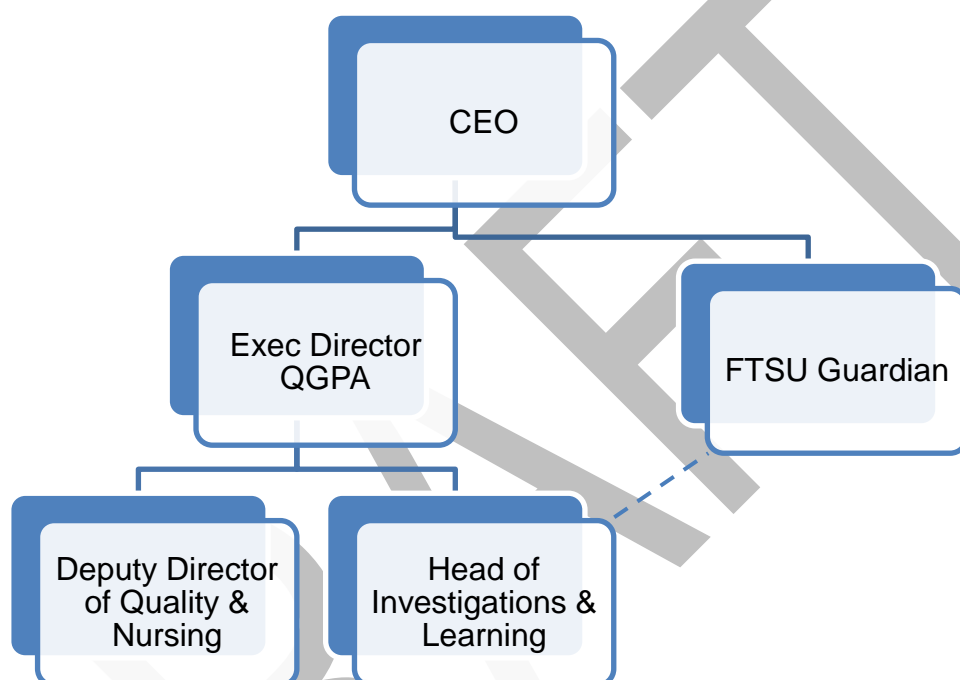
We will:

- Actively share and celebrate improvements made as a result of speaking up
- Report nationally on our concerns raised and benchmark against other ambulance services so that we can share learning
- Share results from the feedback received from those who have accessed the Freedom to Speak Up process
- Support all of those involved in raising concerns
- Measure our success using feedback mechanisms such as the NHS Staff Survey to assess any improvements in raising concerns

Delivering the strategy

Ultimately the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has overall accountability and responsibility for ensuring the Trust meets its statutory and legal requirements and adhered to guidance issued by the Department of Health and other NHS bodies. The Trust Board is responsible for ensuring that the Trust creates an open and transparent learning culture that is designed to keep patients and staff safe and well cared for.

Freedom to Speak Up sits within the Quality, Governance & Performance Assurance Directorate and is therefore led by the Executive Director responsible and supported at a management level by the Head of Investigations & Learning. As mandated nationally the Guardian will have a direct line to the CEO. The structure below outlines this.



Underpinning the strategy is the Freedom to Speak Up Policy and the route map. It is accepted that there may be changes made at a national level as Freedom to Speak Up evolves over the coming years and this strategy will therefore have to be flexible in its delivery to respond to national drivers. As such the timeline below shows key deliverables for year one of the strategy.

Implementation Plan 18-19

