



MEETING TITLE Trust Board Meeting held in Public		MEETING DATE 28/04/2022	
TITLE of PAPER		Freedom to Speak Up Annual Report 2021/22	PAPER REF TB22.005
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE(S)		Provide a safe and caring service which demonstrates an efficient use of resources Develop and retain a highly skilled, engaged and motivated workforce	
PURPOSE OF THE PAPER		To provide an annual review of issues raised and developments related to Freedom to Speak Up.	
For Approval		<input type="checkbox"/>	For Assurance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
For Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussion/Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
AUTHOR / LEAD	Luzani Moyo, Freedom to Speak up Guardian Steve Page, Director of Transition	ACCOUNTABLE DIRECTOR	Steve Page, Director of Transition
DISCUSSED AT / INFORMED BY: – Reviews throughout the year at Trust Management Group Monthly meetings with the FTSU Guardian, the Head of Investigations & Learning and members of the Executive Team including the CEO. Quarterly discussions in Quality Committee and Audit Committee			
PREVIOUSLY AGREED AT:		Committee/Group:	Date:
RECOMMENDATION(S)		It is recommended that the Board: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes the contents of the annual report, • Receives assurance on the actions taken and supports the plans for further development 	
RISK ASSESSMENT			Yes
Corporate Risk Register and/or Board Assurance Framework amended <i>If 'Yes' – expand in Section 4. / attached paper</i>			<input type="checkbox"/>
Resource Implications (Financial, Workforce, other - specify) <i>If 'Yes' – expand in Section 2. / attached paper</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Legal implications/Regulatory requirements <i>If 'Yes' – expand in Section 2. / attached paper</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Diversity and Inclusion Implications <i>If 'Yes' – please attach to the back of this paper</i>			<input type="checkbox"/>
ASSURANCE/COMPLIANCE			
Care Quality Commission Choose a DOMAIN(s)		All	
NHSI Single Oversight Framework Choose a THEME(s)		6. Leadership & Improvement Capability (Well-Led)	

1. PURPOSE/AIM

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide an annual review of issues raised and developments related to Freedom to Speak Up.

2. BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

- 2.1 Developments related to Freedom to Speak Up are reported to the Trust Management Group, Quality Committee and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.
- 2.2 During the last year there has been a significant review of the Trust Freedom to Speak Up policy and processes. The review and re-launch of the policy has been underpinned by a campaign of broader communication and engagement, which is continuing into 2022/23.
- 2.3 To complement the regular Committee reports, this annual report summarises the issues raised by staff, key learning and improvement arising from the process and wider developments to support Freedom to Speak Up.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Board:
- Notes the contents of the annual report
 - Receives assurance on the actions taken and supports the plans for further development

4. APPENDICES / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 Appendix 1 - Freedom to Speak Up Annual Report 2021/2022



Freedom to Speak
Up at YAS
Speak up, be heard



Freedom to Speak Up



Annual Report 2021/2022

FREEDOM TO SPEAK UP

ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022



Chief Executive's Foreword

There are many factors which combine to create a successful organisation like ours, but one of the most fundamental is how we work together as *One Team* to create and sustain a culture in which all staff feel able to contribute their thoughts and ideas about opportunities for development and improvement.

Our people, with their wealth of knowledge and experience, are uniquely placed to understand where things aren't working well or could be improved in some way. It is therefore vital that we create the right environment where people feel comfortable speaking up and confident that their voice has been heard and will make a difference.

Our aim is that this is ingrained in our way of working - part of the 'YAS DNA' - and that staff can raise concerns or give feedback routinely as part of their everyday work. I recognise, however, that this isn't always the case, and while we continue to work hard to create this supportive environment for all staff across the Trust, it is also important that we provide alternative options for staff who wish to speak up. Our Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and the processes he leads help to ensure that staff can always have an outlet for their concerns.

Sometimes, the issues our staff wish to raise are difficult to hear and there is the potential for this to result in a negative response towards people who speak up. This can both close opportunities for learning and affect the willingness of people to provide feedback or ideas in the future. I believe that speaking up provides a valuable opportunity for us to learn and improve as an organisation and we should celebrate the value that this brings to the quality of our services as well as to the experiences of our staff.

As an organisation, I know we don't always get things right for our patients and our staff, but I am proud of our significant achievements in the face of sustained pressure and of the way we keep learning and improving as a team. Supporting colleagues to speak up is key to this journey and I would like to thank our Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, the team of Advocates, all the staff who have shared their concerns and the many others who have responded positively to this feedback and helped support our *One Team, Best Care* vision, for their important contributions over the last year.

Rod Barnes
Chief Executive



FREEDOM TO SPEAK UP ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022

1. Introduction

Origins of Freedom to Speak Up

Freedom to Speak Up originated following the scandals surrounding Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust which initially exposed unacceptable levels of patient care but also revealed a staff culture that deterred staff from raising concerns.

It is about speaking up about anything that gets in the way of doing a great job.

Whilst the initial focus was on patient safety, since the publication of national Freedom to Speak Up guidance, it has become clear that Freedom to Speak Up should be seen as a vehicle for promotion of a transparent, learning culture and for staff to raise concerns about any type of work-related issue rather than just those relating to patient safety.

Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU): An independent review into creating an open and honest reporting culture in the NHS was published by Sir Robert Francis in February 2015. The aim of the review was to provide advice and recommendations to ensure that NHS staff would feel safe to raise concerns, confident that they would be listened to, and the concerns would be acted upon.

Freedom to Speak Up in YAS

Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) NHS Trust was quick to implement the recommendations set out in the Freedom to Speak Up Review and has since continued to develop Freedom to Speak Up across the organisation, responding to national guidance when required and playing an active role in regional and national developments.

Freedom to Speak Up Guardian

The Trust actively promotes opportunities for staff to speak up about issues of concern. To support staff in raising concerns and ensure that concerns are listened to and acted on, the Trust has a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian. The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, independent of management, is recruited through a thorough selection process and is drawn from the Trust's workforce.

Emergency Medical Technician Luzani Moyo, pictured right, has been in post as Freedom to Speak Up Guardian since 2019.



Luzani is available so staff can raise and discuss their concerns in confidence. He often helps staff with ways to address their concerns directly with relevant managers or, if this is not possible and with the agreement of the person raising the concern, he brings the issues to the attention of a YAS Freedom to Speak Up Review Group, where concerns can be discussed and the most appropriate action agreed. Importantly, the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian has direct access to the Chief Executive, Chair and other directors whenever needed, to ensure that concerns can always be heard at the right level. The Chief Executive is personally engaged with Freedom to Speak Up and the consideration of issues raised by staff.

Network of Freedom to Speak Up Advocates

Luzani is supported by a network of 12 Freedom to Speak Up Advocates, who are also members of staff working in departments across the Trust (see page 16 for details). The Advocates are recruited by the Guardian following expressions of interest from staff and are able to support colleagues in their area of work to raise and address concerns. They report any concerns to the Guardian so they can be logged and appropriate action taken.

Senior management support

In addition to these dedicated roles, the Trust has designated a director to take a lead on championing the process, supporting the independent role of the Guardian and ensuring that appropriate management action is taken in response to concerns. Other key managers in the HR and Patient Safety teams also have a specific role in supporting the process both individually and through their wider teams.

Designated Non-Executive Director

The Trust has a designated Non-Executive Director to support Freedom to Speak Up. This role is also distinct from the executive management of the Trust and provides a valuable sounding board to the Guardian and independent advice on specific concerns where necessary.

Jeremy Pease is the Non-Executive Director lead for Freedom to Speak Up.



Rigorous process to manage concerns

All concerns raised by staff are recorded in a confidential log and are tracked to ensure that appropriate action is taken. The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian maintains contact with the person raising the concern to ensure that they are aware of progress and receive feedback on the outcome. The Trust Board and Quality Committee receive regular updates from the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and discuss the key issues of concern to staff and the learning for the organisation.

Independence, confidentiality and fairness

The Trust recognises how vitally important it is that staff and managers have confidence in the independence, confidentiality and fairness of the Freedom to Speak Up process. These key principles are rigorously maintained and reinforced in the way we deal with all concerns raised. We also seek regular feedback from staff who have spoken up and from managers involved in addressing concerns and use this feedback to help us to improve the process and experiences of staff and managers in the future.

2. Our ambition

An open, learning culture

YAS is committed to honesty, openness and accountability.

We believe that having an open learning culture is key to the delivery of safe and compassionate care. For it to be effective, the raising of issues or concerns (often referred to as “whistleblowing”) should be embraced as a normal part of everyday work, where staff feel confident and safe to speak up without fear of any repercussion or reprisal.

Speaking up is a valuable alert process that can help to save lives, improve the quality of our services and reduce waste from inefficient processes. It can also help to improve the work experience and wellbeing of staff.

We want to share the positive benefits of Freedom to Speak Up and celebrate our successes in tackling issues and making improvements. In the coming year we will be focusing much more on sharing outcomes and staff experiences.

Making it easy for staff to raise concerns

There are a range of processes available to support staff who wish to raise work-related concerns, including the person's immediate supervisor or more senior manager in the department, and HR processes including those relating to dignity and respect and issue resolution. Trade union representatives are also available to support staff in raising issues or concerns. The Trust aims to provide a working environment where employees feel empowered, confident and safe to raise issues through these routes as part of their everyday work experience.

The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and Freedom to Speak Up processes act as a safety net, complementing these other routes for raising issues or concerns, for example in situations where staff do not feel confident to speak up via other routes or the issue remains unresolved after the route map for raising concerns has been followed.

The Freedom to Speak Up route map

Route Map for Raising Concerns



Managers who are confident in responding positively to staff concerns

At the same time, we want to nurture a culture in which leaders feel confident to receive concerns from staff, respond positively and use them as opportunities for learning and development. We will continue to work with leadership teams across departments, to support their understanding of Freedom to Speak Up. Skills development and support for leaders is also a key priority in wider Trust plans for the coming year.

The Aims of our Freedom to Speak Up strategy

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

3. An overview of concerns raised in 2021/2022

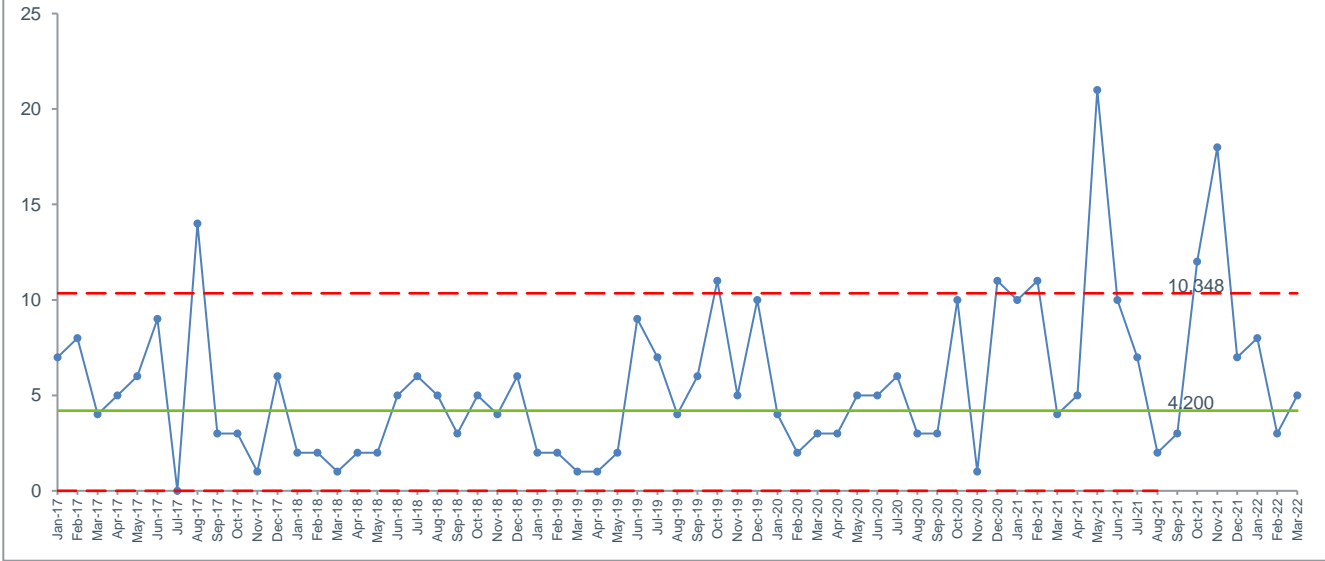
Challenging times for staff and managers

The last year has been an extremely challenging one for all kinds of reasons. After over two years of working through the COVID-19 pandemic, even the most resilient staff and managers are feeling the effects of the prolonged pressure. In our many patient care or support roles, staff have faced significant challenges. During this time, we recognise that it is vital for staff to be able to raise concerns and for staff to feel that Trust leaders are listening and acting on the issues that matter to them. It is also important that managers working under pressure are supported to be able to respond positively to concerns raised and to welcome them as an opportunity for improvements.

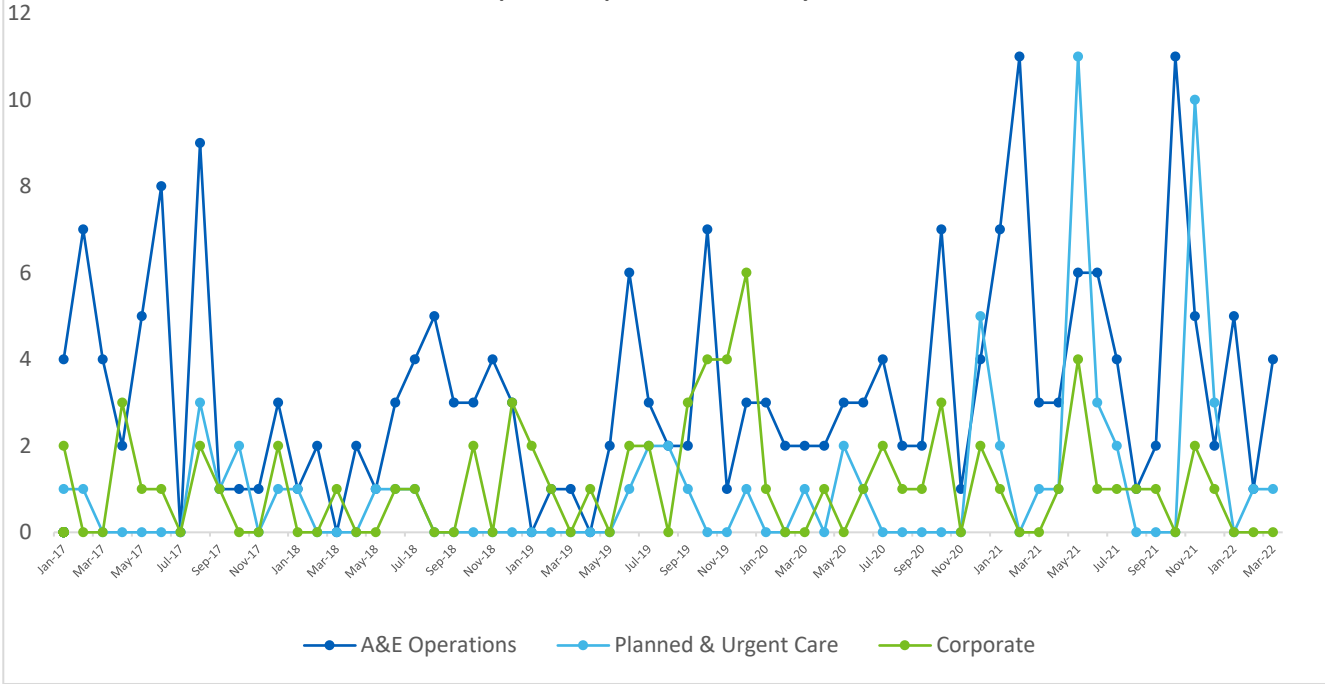
Annual overview

During 2021/22 an increasing number of staff have raised concerns through the Freedom to Speak Up process. This has been a changing pattern since the initial launch of Freedom to Speak Up in the Trust in 2015 (see the graphs overleaf).

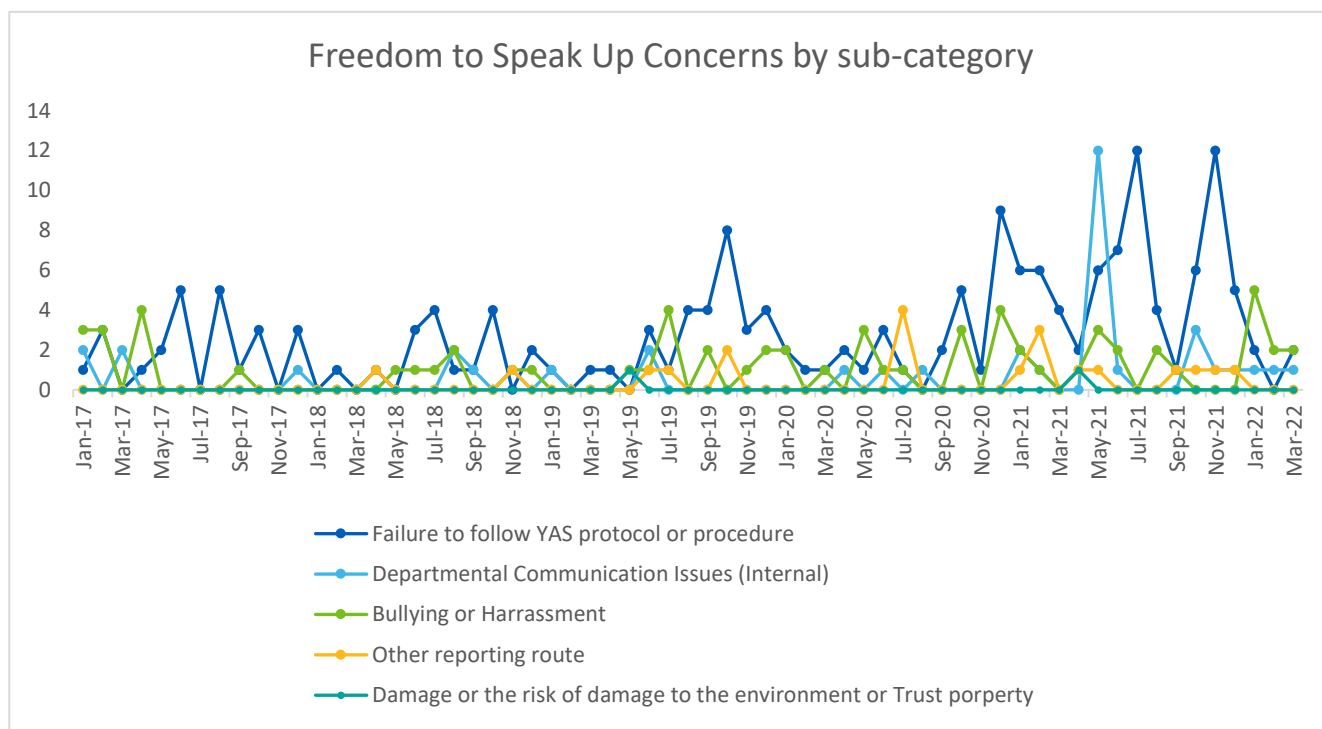
All YAS FTSU Concerns



Freedom to Speak Up Concerns by Business Area

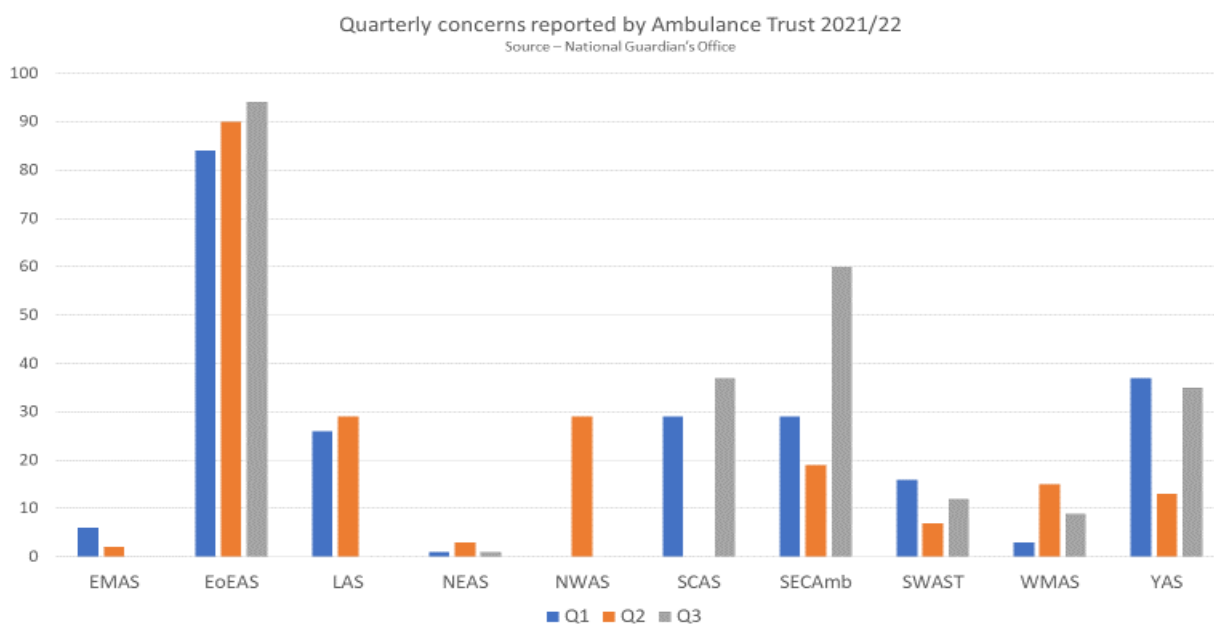


The graph below provides a summary of the different kinds of concerns we have received in the last year.



How do we compare with others?

All NHS trusts in England are required by the National Guardian’s Office (NGO) to submit brief details of all concerns raised through the FTSU process. This provides an opportunity to compare YAS FTSU activity with other trusts. The National Guardian’s Office publishes regular benchmarking figures of the numbers and types of concerns raised and the comparison of YAS with other ambulance trusts for the first three quarters of 2021/22 is shown in the graph below:



What do the numbers mean?

It is always difficult to interpret whether a higher number of concerns is a positive or negative sign. On one level, we would want a culture where all staff feel comfortable to raise concerns with their supervisor in their day-to-day work, so it might be reasonable to think that having no concerns raised via Freedom to Speak Up would be a good sign. On the other hand, a larger number of concerns raised could be seen as a positive indicator that staff are aware of the Freedom to Speak Up process and have increasing confidence in its value.

In general, when reviewing our own and national benchmarking information, we believe that it is reasonable to see the rise over the last year as a positive sign relating to staff awareness and confidence. We recognise however, that feedback from the annual staff survey tells us that we still have some way to go to ensure that all staff feel comfortable in raising concerns and this remains an important area of development for the Trust.

4. The positive benefits of speaking up

How we manage concerns from staff

All concerns raised under Freedom to Speak Up are logged by the Guardian and reviewed confidentially (and anonymously if necessary) in the fortnightly Freedom to Speak Up Review Group, which includes the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, Head of Employee Relations, Head of Investigations and Learning, the executive lead for Freedom to Speak Up and the Chief Executive. This group agrees the most appropriate way of addressing each concern raised and tracks the follow-up to ensure that issues have been tackled and feedback has been provided on the outcome.

In most cases, issues raised are referred via the Guardian, with the consent of the person raising the concern, to the relevant service manager or specialist adviser. In some cases, the concern has raised a need for further communication and clarification for staff, rather than specific remedial action. In a small number of cases, there is a need to commission an additional review or investigation to understand the issues in greater detail and identify any action that might be needed. Sometimes the issues raised through Freedom to Speak Up triangulate with similar themes identified through other routes and, in these cases, the Trust has commissioned a review with a wider focus on themes or issues so that broader lessons can be drawn out for action.

“FTSU was very easy to access. It has given me a lot of support through what has been a very stressful and unsatisfactory experience.”

Integrated Urgent Care staff member

A summary of issues raised in the 2021/22

The table overleaf provides a summary of all concerns raised during the last year. As noted above, the majority of the issues raised by staff were addressed and resolved in liaison with department managers and relevant specialist advisers.

A summary of issues raised in the 2021/22

Department	Theme	Summary of Issues Raised
A&E Operations	Operational concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern about process for locating patients living in caravan parks Access to patient record system without genuine reason Cleanliness of an ambulance station Crew not wearing correct PPE when patient suddenly in cardiac arrest Safety and design of operational vehicle Availability of finger probe equipment Concern that specific Patient Group Directives had expired Concern about observations of blue light driving below defined standard Waiting time of Low Acuity Transport crew for urgent EOC response Concerns relating to deployment and support of new/inexperienced staff Concerns about Low Acute Transport crews' scope of practice Delay in technology to enable clinical messaging - 999 to primary care
	Leadership and team culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern about management of recruitment and disciplinary processes Concerns about bullying and harassment/inappropriate management behaviour in specific locations Alleged racial discrimination Concern about the Trust Procurement Group and senior attendance
	Staff welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern about welfare of colleague Complaint about harassment by colleague Concerns related to a student paramedic racially abused by a patient Concern about lack of laptop equipment for use with coursework Concern about provision of equipment for staff with dyslexia Reported lack of support after return from sickness Concern about response to flexible working request Concerns relating to rotas Unsupportive telephone communications with on-scene crew
	Staff behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person advocating random drug and alcohol testing for frontline staff. Observed inappropriate behaviour of staff in an Emergency Department Observed lack of professionalism at a vehicle workshop
Patient Transport Service	Operational concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of cards for access to lifts in a hospital Poor quality network connection that meant that crews sometimes did not have any way to get in touch with their control room
Integrated Urgent Care	Leadership and staff support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns about unsupportive working environment – lack of breaks for staff on short shifts, desk availability at shift start, lack of time to access emails, access to recommended equipment after DSE assessments Concerns about management style and unsupportive application of policy – performance review, comfort break, sickness, incident reporting, flexible working Concerns about team leader cover and lack of proactive management of staff behaviours - mobile phone use, 'not ready' codes, smoking, bullying of colleagues Concerns about opportunities for career development and flexible working
Corporate departments	Operational concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern related to management of staff vaccination records
	Leadership and staff support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns about leadership behaviour and team culture in some areas Fairness in management of recruitment process Concern relating to application of the disciplinary process
	Staff welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response to flexible working request

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about lack of flexibility in annual leave at year end
	Staff behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alleged bullying and harassment by a colleague

Positive outcomes

Most concerns raised by staff can be addressed relatively easily, whilst others require additional work or relate to issues already being addressed through an existing plan.

“Contacting the FTSU Guardian was easy and immediately, I was reassured, encouraged and provided with support. Luzani has been incredibly supportive and comforting. I have been able to speak openly and confidently with complete faith in Luzani.”

Emergency Operations Centre staff member

We also recognise that it is not always possible to resolve all of the concerns raised by staff to their satisfaction and that sometimes concerns cannot be resolved individually but need to be considered and addressed in a broader context. Where this is the case, our aim is to make sure that the person raising the concern is aware of how the issue has been considered and the rationale for the response. There have been many positive outcomes of concerns raised by staff in the last year and the following section provides a summary of the learning and improvement informed by staff who have chosen to speak up.

Issues resolved with explanation/assurance

Some concerns raised by staff are due to a lack of information or clarity relating to a particular issue.

Where this is the case, the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian has liaised with the relevant managers to support the sharing of additional information or to provide more detailed assurance to help address the person’s concerns.

In the last year, this has included:

- Substantial additional assurance from published research provided by the Head of Fleet in relation to the safety of ambulance vehicles.
- Clarification of the process relating to Patient Group Directives.
- Provision of additional assurance on the management of staff vaccination records.
- Clarification for staff of the approach within a department about the management of annual leave at the year end.
- Information about the plans and challenges of technology roll-out to enable clinical messaging.

A concern relating to a crew not wearing correct PPE during an unexpected cardiac arrest highlighted the dilemmas staff face in such situations. This was resolved through a supportive reflective process with reference to Trust guidance and the specific circumstances of the reported event.

Issues referred to and addressed by managers

Many of the concerns raised were referred by the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian to the relevant department manager or specialist adviser and were resolved through action at this level.

- Concerns about cleanliness in an ambulance station were quickly addressed through

a review of the cleaning rota in that location. One station had ongoing problems with pigeons inside the station garage and this was resolved in liaison with the Estates team.

- The dispatch advice for locating patients in a caravan park was updated in the light of staff feedback.
- A concern about finger probe availability was resolved with support from the Procurement team and staff are now assured that appropriate equipment and replacements are readily available when needed. Further consideration is also being given to how we can ensure that operational issues and concerns can be fully addressed in regular Procurement Group meetings.
- Laptop equipment for staff on courses was made available via the YAS Academy through an existing process.
- Discussions were held involving managers, staff and trade union representatives to resolve concerns about the deployment of Low Acuity Transport crews and measures were taken to reinforce the standards of supervision and support for new or inexperienced staff. Further work is continuing to provide ongoing assurance on the experiences of new or inexperienced staff.
- The HR Business Partners for the relevant areas were engaged in a number of concerns, such as those relating to flexible working, disciplinary and recruitment policy, to provide direct support to managers and staff in addressing the issues raised.
- A number of concerns relating to standards of behaviour or practice were referred to the relevant managers and addressed on a local basis or through additional communications and guidance to staff.

Issues resolved following additional investigation/follow-up

Some issues raised by staff could not be dealt with quickly by individual managers and additional work was needed to fully understand the problem and identify the right solution.

- Concerns about inappropriate access to the patient records system have been addressed through discussion between operational managers and the ICT team, to ensure that both management processes and inbuilt technical controls are in place to manage access.
- Card access for PTS staff to patient lifts in a hospital was resolved through liaison between the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, service manager and hospital team.
- The staff experience of poor telephone network quality was resolved through a planned change to the network operator.
- Staff access to urgent advice from the Emergency Operations Centre has been challenging through the periods of intense operational pressure. The concern raised by staff reflected the general pressures of the service. The focused performance plans for the EOC and recruitment of a substantial number of additional staff are designed to address these pressures. These measures are ongoing but had a significant positive impact during the latter part of the year.
- In the previous year a number of staff had highlighted bullying behaviour of a minority of colleagues on a staff social media site. The site is operated by Trust staff, for staff themselves and is not administered directly by the Trust, but detailed discussions led to the agreement of actions to strengthen the response to inappropriate behaviours and ensure that staff can continue to experience the positive benefits of the platform.
- The experiences of a student member of staff suffering racial abuse by a patient provided a valuable opportunity for reflection on the support available within the Trust and with university colleagues on how students could be prepared for such challenges. The feedback also reinforced the Trust's zero tolerance focus on abuse by members of the public and the processes which underpin this.
- A number of the concerns related to staff experience of specific HR processes. Where individual members of staff had raised concerns about their own situation or

experience, the response was facilitated through discussion with the HR business partner, line manager and others as appropriate. In some of these cases a process was already underway with the relevant policy and issues raised have been fed back and discussed to enable them to be addressed as part of the ongoing process. On a broader level, there has been significant consultation and review of some key policies and processes, underpinned by additional support for managers on their application. This has included reviews of the Flexible Working Policy, Recruitment Policy and process and an ongoing review of the Disciplinary Policy. A new Health Passport was also introduced to enable staff to record and share their specific health needs and agreements about reasonable adjustments.

Issues subject to wider commissioned reviews and action plans

Some of the concerns raised have been triangulated with other sources of information and have been used to increase our focus on specific teams which may require additional support and on Trust-wide learning to inform changes in organisational policy and practice.

This has entailed the commissioning of focused, independent reviews to explore specific issues or themes in more detail and to identify recommendations for further action.

Issues raised by staff and included in the scope of these reviews have mainly been related to aspects of leadership, team culture and staff support. Concerns about racial discrimination or language and behaviour from colleagues which do not support the Trust's values of diversity and inclusion have been a feature in a small number of concerns raised and are also being explored further.

Four reviews have been completed in the last year – three in operational areas and

Staff case study

“Firstly, let me say, I had no idea about the value of FTSU. I was aware of it in the background, but over the course of the last two years, I have come to realise its immense value in terms of assisting me in communicating my thoughts and feelings to the relevant parties. Before I felt I didn't have a pathway to be heard.

In actual fact, I was directed to FTSU by a senior manager. I was very surprised that he recommended this – in other circumstances a more cynical view would be that the management wouldn't have encouraged such interaction. However, this was the best recommendation I have had in my career.

Luzani Moyo and his FTSU expertise has been a fantastic support, help, conduit and guide throughout a very difficult time in my career. Not wanting to break any confidentiality, I don't think I would have still been with the Trust if I didn't have the FTSU available to me. I felt the more well-known routes for communication had been exhausted and had, in essence, failed me. A very important point about FTSU, is that it is outside your normal line management/department team so the ability to speak freely is very true! It is a breath of fresh air.

I can't endorse strongly enough my thoughts about the value of FTSU and would encourage anyone in the Trust who has a concern to make contact. It doesn't have to be a serious issue; it could just be to share a viewpoint or idea. I've found that this contact has given me a voice that has been heard and taken to the relevant parties. Not just about my personal issues, but about ideas within the Trust. And there is no feeling of lack of confidentiality, no feeling of not being heard, and because of this facility, I actually felt valued within the Trust.”

Support Services staff member

one in a corporate support function. One additional review in an operational area is outstanding, with the final report expected soon. Each of these reviews has resulted in an action plan to address the issues identified, which has been fed back to relevant staff and has been taken forward by the department leadership team with ongoing staff engagement and appropriate Trust support.

Wider organisational learning

While the response to staff concerns is often tailored to the individual issue and the commissioned reviews are focused on specific departments, there are a number of themes with a wider resonance for the Trust, including:

- Style or frequency of communication and engagement with staff, and concerns about limited feedback on issues raised by staff with managers.
- Values and behaviours not seen to be fully enacted or reinforced and action not taken consistently to challenge or address poor standards or behaviours. Examples have included bullying behaviour, racially inappropriate language or comments, and poor standards of practice.
- Lack of support for staff development or opportunities for progression, sometimes associated with perceptions of favouritism or cliques by some managers.
- Inconsistent, disjointed and sometimes protracted application of HR processes by managers leading to perceptions of unfairness.
- Challenges with support for newly-trained or newly-appointed staff.
- Visibility of senior operational leaders in some areas.
- Concerns about the consequences of speaking up or 'rocking the boat' – either with managers or colleagues, and a lack of confidence in some areas that meaningful action will be taken.

"I had reason to contact the FTSU Team due to some situations at my station. Staff were demotivated and there were some cliques and behavioural problems that affected other staff as well as me. The FTSU Guardian was really nice to talk to and listened to all my issues. At times I felt overwhelmed with the situation at work and Luzani reassured me and made me feel like I could deal with the situation. I cannot thank Luzani enough for his support during this time."

A&E Operations staff member

These themes have been shared with directors and senior managers and are being used to inform wider organisational development plans and priorities.

Freedom to Speak Up supporting the Organisational Development programme

Some of the key elements relevant to the themes are summarised below:

- The Trust's values and behaviours, developed with extensive staff engagement, are well-recognised by staff and continue to underpin the action on these themes. The *Say Yes to Respect* campaign was launched before the pandemic and this is being refreshed for the coming year.
- The investment in team leader roles in A&E Operations is seen to be key to creating a supportive environment for staff. Further work is continuing to embed this fully in Operations and consideration is being given to how the learning from this development can be adapted to other areas. It is recognised that the development of team leaders needs to include a focus on both 'soft' leadership skills and technical management knowledge including those relating to HR processes.
- The importance of meaningful conversations for staff with their supervisor or manager is recognised to ensure that staff feel valued and have an opportunity to

discuss their contribution, wellbeing and personal development. A new approach to the appraisal process was launched last year and further work will focus on embedding this across all areas.

- The HR Business Partner team has been significantly strengthened over recent months to enable a greater focus on support for local management teams and consistency in the application of HR processes.

5. Supporting an open, learning environment

Refreshing the policy and raising awareness

In the last year we have completed a detailed review of our Freedom to Speak Policy in the light of updated guidance and case studies published by the National Guardian's Office and internal learning. The updated policy includes a significant refresh of the key principles and messages for managers and staff. A communications and engagement campaign is underway to support wider awareness and understanding of Freedom to Speak Up and the value of speaking up. This includes publication of new explanatory material for staff and leaders and more information to highlight the value in learning and improvement. The updated guidance is being supplemented by a programme of direct discussions with departmental leadership teams to reinforce the positive value and address any challenges or concerns. This will continue through 2022/2023.

Using feedback to improve the way we respond to concerns

Getting feedback is important to ensure that we improve our FTSU processes, and a questionnaire is sent out to staff when their concern is closed. Previous feedback has highlighted the importance of a positive response by supervisors and line managers to concerns raised in the workplace and the value of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian as a safety net where the person has not experienced this.

Feedback has emphasised the importance of ongoing contact with the FTSU Guardian and updates on progress, particularly if the process of resolution is complex or lengthy. The feedback has also highlighted the need to continue to increase awareness of Freedom to Speak Up.

This has informed our communication programme and programme of station and department engagement for the coming year.

"The process is an ideal solution in resolving any potential conflict informally. However, I feel there is little awareness of the process or advertisement to allow staff to be aware of the process. In my opinion, a staff engagement session explaining the process would be incredibly useful in allowing a wide range of staff members to be know the process exists and how to access it."

Emergency Operations Centre staff member

In addition to the refresh of the policy, work has also been undertaken to strengthen the FTSU process. This has included:

- Updating the standard operating procedure used by the Review Group in light of experience and feedback from staff and managers, with a stronger focus on assurance and feedback on outcomes.

- Formalising the terms of reference of the FTSU Review Group and its reporting to Trust Executive team and Trust Management Group.
- Development of criteria and sign-off processes for investigations and independent reviews.
- Development of a checklist for investigations and independent reviews, covering the requirements before, during and after review, to ensure the rigour and consistency of approach.

6. Looking forward to the coming year

Continuity through difficult times

Luzani Moyo has been in post for three years as the Trust Freedom to Speak Up Guardian. In normal times, we would be seeking a successor after a two-year period to provide an opportunity for a new Guardian to bring a different perspective to the role and to build on the achievements of our previous Guardians. We recognise, however, that the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that the last two years have been anything but normal and that there is value in continuity through this period. Luzani has therefore agreed to continue in the role into the start of 2022/23, with an ambitious plan for engagement with staff and managers. Planning for future recruitment to the role will begin in the coming quarter.

Work with colleagues to support culture

Freedom to Speak Up is just one element amongst many contributing to the way staff experience working for YAS and the quality of patient and carer experience. The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian will continue to work with colleagues in the HR and Organisational Development teams and with leaders across departments to support wider action which helps to nurture and embed the positive, learning culture we aspire to. This will include continuing to share key themes and learning, joint engagement and development initiatives and a review and refresh of the content relating to Freedom to Speak Up in all Trust induction, education and training programmes.

Ongoing engagement

In the coming year we will continue to take forward our Freedom to Speak Up awareness campaign, supported by direct engagement with teams on stations and in different departments. In particular we will continue to build on the publication of outcomes and staff experiences and the promotion of the positive benefits of speaking up for the users of our service, staff and the organisation as a whole.

7. Where can I find more information about Freedom to Speak Up?

YAS-specific information can be found on the [Trust website](#) and in Public Trust Board papers, and on the staff intranet.

A wide range of other resources, including guidance documents, training material, statistics about concerns raised in NHS trusts and case studies are available on [The National Guardian's Office website](#).



Meet your Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and Advocates



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