

## **Freedom to Speak Up annual report 2020/21**

This report provides an overview of the activity that took place in 2020/21 across the Trust to deliver our commitment to Freedom to Speak Up – including actions taken to improve speaking up at UHBW, an assessment of the number and themes of concerns raised, learnings and recommendations.

### **Background**

The standard NHS contract requires that all trusts and foundation trusts employ a Freedom to Speak up (FTSU) Guardian. FTSU Guardians are now employed across the health and care sector, including in primary care, health charities, independent providers and arms-length bodies including health regulators. At UHBW the FTSU Guardian is the Director of Corporate Governance. The FTSU Guardian's role is to ensure patient safety and staff wellbeing by providing a mechanism for staff to speak up when they see or hear something that is not right. The FTSU Guardian also provides support to staff who raise concerns and supports the Board to develop a 'positive, compassionate, and inclusive' workplace culture in line with the vision set out in the NHS People Plan.

Regular meetings are held between the FTSU Guardian and the Chief Executive and the Non-Executive lead for FTSU to ensure themes of concerns are discussed and relevant actions are taken and followed up. The FTSU Guardian reports quarterly on concerns and themes, alternately to the Board or People Committee, and these reports are shared with the senior leadership team. The FTSU Guardian links with the National Guardian's Office via the South West regional network, which provides support and shares learning. This annual report provides an overview of activity and progress around speaking up in 2020/21, alongside assurance that Freedom to Speak Up processes are in place at UHBW and are being used.

### **Action taken to improve speaking up**

The three objectives of the Trust's Freedom to Speak Up strategy set in 2019 focus on raising awareness of and building confidence in the speaking up programme, and ensuring that our corporate leadership and management training is informed by the feedback from the programme. A more detailed breakdown of progress against these three components is available as appendix 1. Four key highlights among this work are:

#### **1. Increased resource to hear concerns and raise awareness of Freedom to Speak Up**

A full-time deputy Guardian was appointed in 1 April 2020 to support the FTSU Guardian to manage predicted increase in concerns due to the merger with Weston Area Health NHS Trust. The staff advocate network – workers across the Trust whose role is to listen to staff who are speaking up and help raise awareness of speaking up and routes to raise concerns – increased from 50 to 80 members of staff in the year.

*"I became a speaking up advocate after using the service myself some time ago. I had some issues with being bullied at work, which weren't being dealt with and which had a huge impact on my life. Had it not been for the speaking up service I would not be working in the Trust. Speaking up about what was happening to me helped me to move forwards."*

The FTSU Guardian and advocates are visible across the Trust by attending key meetings, holding training sessions and talking to different staff groups to promote speaking up messages. Face to face contact has been impacted this year by the pandemic – but contact has been maintained via virtual meetings and training, supported by online promotion.

Promotional materials advertising the contact details for the FTSU Guardian (a dedicated phone number and email address) are available across the Trust. There are regular communications about speaking up which are shared in the weekly newsletter to all staff (Newsbeat), including profiles of the advocates and case studies on concerns which have been resolved. October 2020 provided an opportunity to continue to build awareness of speaking up at UHBW as part of national speak up month – a campaign from the National Guardian's Office. The focus was on promoting the advocate network through Trust communications channels in the framework of a Speak Up ABC, in which 26 pieces of content were shared through the month and the speaking up message was linked into wider corporate messages (e.g. chief executive staff briefings) – see appendix 2.

## **2. Introduction of in-house training to support the staff advocate network**

The first in-house training session for Freedom to Speak Up staff advocates took place in November 2020 run in collaboration with the psychological health services team. Set up to provide a foundation level of training for advocates after regional training by NGO stopped due to the pandemic, the training has been taking place most months (currently hosted virtually). The training will ensure all advocates have received the same information about the importance of Freedom to Speak Up in working towards a culture where speaking up is business as usual; the role of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and the National Guardian's Office; the expectations of the role; and the core skills needed to be able to effectively support staff.

A total of 38 advocates have been trained to date. Feedback on the training from 17 participants all agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of how best to support the people who may come to them with a concern. The advocate network meets on a quarterly basis (with the Weston advocate network also meeting on a monthly basis) for peer support and to review themes of concerns and share learning. An example of some of the learnings shared by the advocates is attached as appendix 3.

## **3. Introduction of mandatory Speak Up training for all workers**

Dr Henrietta Hughes, National Guardian for the NHS, spoke to the Board on 29 October 2020 to highlight the importance of speaking up in protecting patient and worker safety and experience, including sharing and learning from concerns, and training. The National Guardian's Office and Health Education England launched a national training programme for all NHS workers in October, comprising three modules. The Board was supportive of the training and agreed to undertake all three modules (Speak Up (for all workers); Listen Up (for managers) and Follow Up (for leaders)).

From 1 February 2021, the first module of this e-learning became essential training for all staff in the Trust. In the year, face to face training was also introduced for the FTSU staff advocates to help them better support staff to speak up. The roll out is being supported by the advocate network have been encouraged to promote the training in their own teams and departments. Compliance will be monitored from 1 August 2021. The FTSU Guardian has provided guidance for line managers in responding to concerns raised with them in anticipation of an increase in speaking up activity as a result of the training. The second module of the NGO/HEE training 'Listen Up' is also available to all managers though is currently not mandatory.

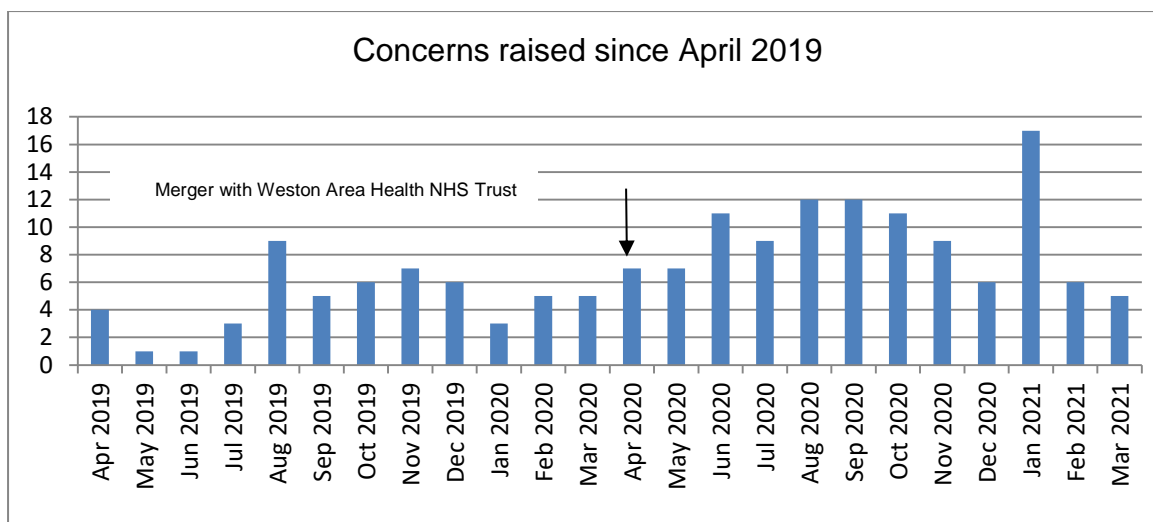
While the introduction of mandatory Speak Up training is a step forwards, training alone will not change culture. Support and follow up, particularly for managers, is needed to put learning into practice as part of a wider programme of work to building a positive, compassionate, and inclusive culture.

#### **4. Closer collaboration with colleagues**

In the year, the FTSU Guardian started a series of 'speaking up summits', which brought together individuals within the Trust who hold key roles in hearing staff voices across the Trust (including the Head of Patient Safety, Chair of the Joint Union Committee, Guardian of Safe Working, Head of HR Services, Associate Director of Education, Organisational Development Manager and Workplace Psychological Wellbeing Lead). The aim of the summits is to share themes and triangulate data around areas of concern and collaborate on a multidisciplinary approach to tackle them. The group is working together on joining up actions on management and leadership development (clinical and non-clinical); just and learning culture (and its impact on policies – i.e. grievance, disciplinary, dignity at work); and tackling bullying and harassment/ poor behaviours. Stronger links are being forged with the wellbeing team on actions from the NHS People Plan (health and wellbeing) to *'prevent and tackle bullying, harassment and abuse against staff, and create a culture of civility and respect.'*

#### **Assessment of cases**

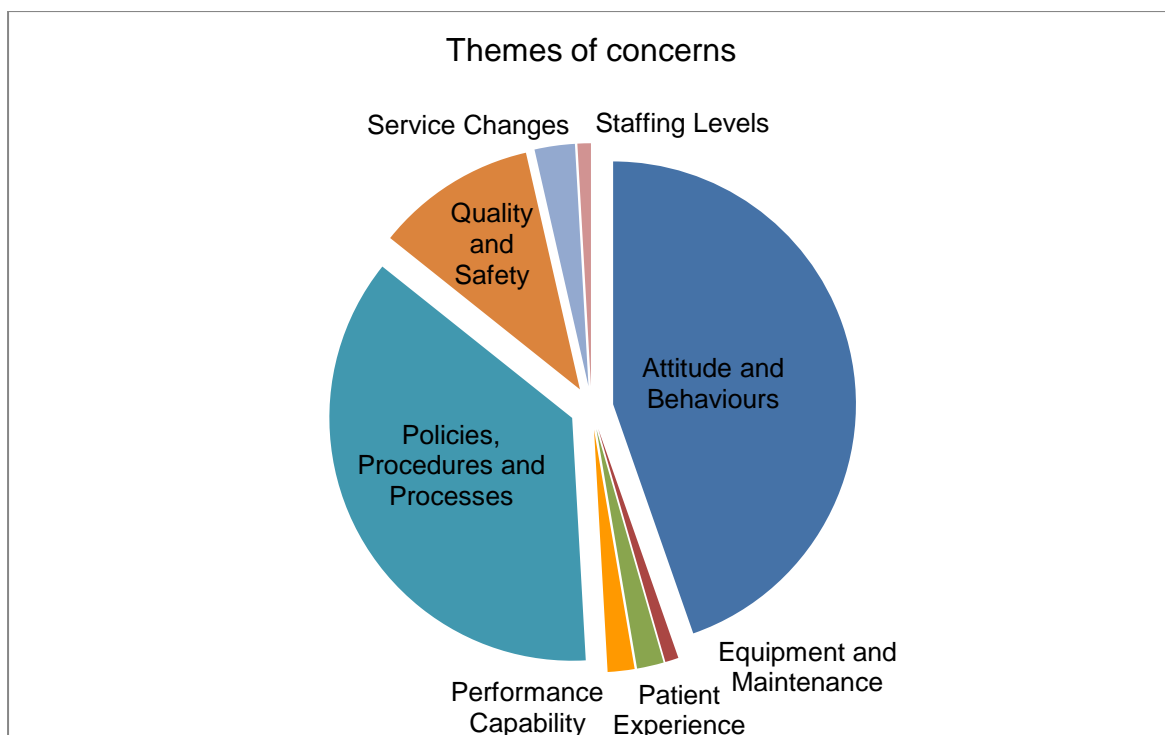
During 2020/21, a total of 112 concerns were raised to the FTSU Guardian compared to 55 in the previous financial year. Despite the significant rise in cases it is notable that the number of concerns raised from Bristol sites has remained the same in the year. Half of the concerns were raised from the division of Weston, with the remainder of concerns split fairly evenly across the other divisions. Weston Area Health NHS Trust had a traditionally higher number of concerns compared to Bristol before the two organisations merged in April 2020, but the impact of the merger on staff was clear in the concerns being raised. To provide extra support to Weston colleagues, the FTSU Guardian has been on site at Weston one day a week since October 2020, meeting staff from across the hospital. Monthly meetings with the Weston FTSU staff advocate network started in February 2021.



Looking at the themes of concerns raised, the majority relate to attitude and behaviours (50 concerns or 45 per cent) with the next highest category being policies, procedures and processes (41) – for example fairness and consistency in recruitment processes and access to training and development. There were 12 quality and safety concerns raised in the year (for example the safety of working environments, staff movements between Covid and non-Covid wards). Last financial year, 56 per cent of concerns related to attitudes and behaviours, and 22 per cent to policies, procedures and processes. The FTSU Guardian reports numbers, themes and staff groups speaking up to the National Guardian's Office on a quarterly basis. The proportion of concerns including an element of patient safety remains lower in the Trust than nationally.

Within the theme of attitudes and behaviours, 18 of the 50 concerns reflected an element of bullying and harassment (16 per cent of total concerns). Nationally, this figure was around 30 per cent last financial year. However, the attitudes and behaviours theme includes concerns such as poor language used to and about others, favouritism, manager/leader actions not aligning with words. These may be observed rather than having a direct impact on an individual/s, which is why they are not reported as bullying and harassment.

The impact of Covid-19 is clear with 47 of the 112 total concerns (42 per cent) referencing the pandemic – including concerns around visitor guidance; social distancing; appropriate rest spaces for staff; mask wearing, and the vaccination roll out. In the National Guardian's Office '*Speaking up to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians: Q1 and Q2 2020/21 Interim Data report*', it was noted that the pandemic was referenced in around a quarter of the learning points shared by Guardians across the country. There were concerns raised about the availability, suitability and proper use of personal protective equipment, and social distancing policies and the continuous communication of the importance of following these policies.



In breaking down the staff groups speaking up, admin and clerical staff again accounted for the majority of those speaking up in the year (37 per cent) followed by nursing staff (28 per cent). The national picture shows that in 2019/20, nurses accounted for the biggest portion (28 per cent) of speaking up cases raised with Freedom to Speak Up Guardians followed by administrative and clerical staff (19 per cent). There were few concerns from doctors and none from dentists in 2020/21, which is also reflected in the nation figures (6 per cent from doctors and less than 0.5 per cent from dentists).

Profession	Number of concerns raised
Administrative/clerical staff	41
Allied Healthcare Professionals	15
Cleaning/Catering/Maintenance/Ancillary staff	10
Nurses and midwives	31
Healthcare Assistants	8
Doctors	3
Unknown/anonymous	2
Other	2

An analysis by division demonstrates the spread of concerns across the hospital sites and services. This includes concerns per 1,000 FTE to allow for a more accurate comparison

and highlights the number of advocates by division. The majority of concerns were raised from the Weston Division.

Division	Number of concerns	Concerns per 1,000 FTE (FTE at April 2020)	Number of FTSU staff advocates in the division at April 2021
Diagnostics & Therapies	6	5.6	7
Medicine	7	5.8	10
Specialised Services	9	8.8	11
Surgery	10	5.8	7
Trust Services	9	10.9	17
Estates and Facilities	6	8.4	3
Weston	56	39.3	12
Women's & Children's	9	4.4	13

At the end of the year, of the 112 concerns raised, 92 were closed and 20 concerns remain open (18 per cent), with a further three concerns open from the previous year (2019/20). Of these three longstanding cases – one is still being investigated, the other two have been the subject of a lengthy review and actions are still pending. All individuals have regular contact to keep them up to date with the progress of the actions underway. Recommendations on improving the length of time taken to resolve concerns raised are summarised at the end of the report.

## Benchmarking

[Unreconciled data from Q1-Q3 reported to the National Guardian's Office](#) can be used to compare numbers and themes of concerns raised with 12 other large NHS Trusts or Foundation Trusts who submitted data for all three quarters of 2020/21.<sup>1</sup> This shows that UHBW is receiving around the average or slightly less than the average number of concerns than other organisations of a similar size. This suggests that there will be further growth in the coming year – noting that there is huge variation in the results. The highest number of cases over the whole period was 234 and the lowest 30 – compared to 84 at UHBW.

Large NHS Trusts/NHS Foundation Trusts (more than 10,000 workers)	Q1	UHBW	Q2	UHBW	Q3	UHBW
Average number of cases brought through the FTSU route	41	<b>25</b>	33	<b>33</b>	36	<b>26</b>
Average number of cases raised anonymously	7	<b>0</b>	8	<b>1</b>	6	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> Barts Health NHS Trust; Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust; King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust; Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust; Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust; Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust; Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust; St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust; The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust; University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust; University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust; University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust.

Average number of cases raised with an element of patient safety/quality	5	4	5	3	6	4
Average number of cases with an element of bullying and harassment	14	3	11	7	11	5
Average number of cases where people indicate that they are suffering detriment as a result of speaking up	2	0	1	0	2	0

## Feedback

Individuals who have raised concerns and whose concerns have been closed with their consent are sent a short feedback form to comment on the speaking up process. 10 feedback forms were returned in the year (a return of around 10 per cent). In 2021/22 the FTSU Guardian will invest in a simple and secure electronic platform to try to improve returns on feedback, recognising that the current system may be a barrier to improved compliance.

In answer to the question 'do you feel you've suffered in any way as a result of speaking up' all respondents answered no. In answer to the question 'would you speak up again', eight respondents answered 'yes' and two 'maybe'. Separately two individuals provided verbal feedback that they had suffered detriment as a result of speaking up. One individual is currently in a process, the other has left the organisation.

In answer to the statement on the feedback form, 'please explain your response to the question 'would you speak up again' and provide any additional comments, this is the feedback shared:

I raise concerns as I'm keen for problems to be addressed and improved on rather than have everyone grumble about them and nothing be achieved. I felt within speaking up, my concerns were acknowledged and addressed to the appropriate people.

In my instance speaking up helped with the problem, cleared the air and gave me the confidence to approach my line manager if I felt the issues arising again. However, I would have no hesitation in speaking up again and actively encourage others to speak up if they feel unhappy about something or are being treated unfairly.

My feelings surrounding work and the situation hasn't changed.

It would depend upon what it is regarding. Definitely not around any bullying aspect.

I'm very pleased with all the procedure of the concern, and although I'm not happy with the resolution, I do feel safe to raise my voice about anything now, I'm (or I like to think) that I'm a very conscious person and I would like to think that if in the future I have any problem, and I think I see something that isn't right, I will always speak up, either through the raising concerns tool that we have available or by any way that I will have to, thank you for your work.

## NHS staff survey results

The annual NHS staff survey results of questions related to Freedom to Speak Up are used to measure progress, and highlight areas for improvement. This year's results included a new question "I feel safe to speak up about anything that concerns me in this organisation" against which UHBW scores above the average figure for other acute Trusts. The results show a mainly stable picture, with minor gains and two falls against previous scores for UH Bristol. This is significant given some of the low scores identified in the staff survey results for Weston Area Health NHS Trust in the 2019 survey.

The [FTSU index score](#) is a measure published by the National Guardian's Office for trusts to see at a glance how their FTSU indicators compares with others. The score is calculated as the mean average of responses to four questions (16a, 16b, 17a, 17b below). For UH Bristol last year (pre-merger) this was 80.3 per cent. The average score for acute Trusts last year was 77.9 per cent. While the score for UH Bristol is higher than the average there is room for improvement.

Improvement in these scores will only happen through collaboration with colleagues across the Trust in a commitment to make the changes outlined at the end of this report.

Staff Survey questions related to raising concerns (% agreeing / strongly agreeing with the following statements):	2017 UH Bristol	2018 UH Bristol	2019 UH Bristol	2019 Weston Area Health NHS Trust	2020 UHBW	Average acute Trust
"My organisation treats staff involved in an error, near miss or incident fairly" (16a)	57.4	64	65.8	49.7	<b>63.8</b>	61.4
"My organisation encourages us to report errors, near misses, incidents" (16b)	88.7	89.3	90.7	89.4	<b>90.3</b>	88.2
"If you were concerned about unsafe clinical practice you would know how to report it" (17a)	93.3	94.3	93.8	94.5	<b>94.5</b>	94.6
"I would feel secure raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice" (17b)	67.5	71.7	72.7	67.4	<b>73.5</b>	71.8
"When errors, near misses or incidents are reported, my organisation takes action to ensure they do not happen again"	71.1	74.6	74.9	59.3	<b>75.0</b>	72.7



"I am confident that the organisation would address my concern"	57.5	61.4	63.3	51	<b>63.5</b>	59.1
I feel safe to speak up about anything that concerns me in this organisation					<b>69.6</b>	65.0

## Learning and Improvement

The following learning /improvement has taken place in the year:

- After a case review by the National Guardian's Office at Whittington Health NHS Trust (June 2020) uncovered a lack of understanding of the purpose and remit of the FTSU Guardian role particularly within the Workforce Directorate, the Guardian wrote a standard operating procedure to provide clarity on how speaking up concerns are escalated and resolved. Quarterly meetings are now in place with HRBPs to reflect on the content of the quarterly FTSU reports
- Sharing case studies, and 'you said, we did' style feedback with advocates and wider staff groups to help build confidence in the process. The attached case study shows learning in endoscopy theatres (see appendix 4).

An internal audit report on the 'Framework within the Trust for staff to raise issues' was completed in June 2020, and received a satisfactory assurance opinion. The report noted that there were "defined processes for staff to raise concerns within the Trust, which have been proactively communicated, and staff had a good awareness of how to raise concerns". However the report noted that the Trust should "look to deliver more training to managers on how to appropriately manage concerns".

The FTSU Guardian continues to hear from staff (snapshot survey and concerns) that key barriers to making improvements in our speaking up culture remain. These include:

- not addressing concerns quickly enough or at all (particularly around poor behaviours/bullying)
- interventions not seeing lasting change
- managers not having the training and ongoing support, or willingness to hear and positively deal with concerns when they are raised
- lack of time for managers to undertake training
- lack of diversity in teams
- poor communication routes in the Trust to share information (corporately and divisionally).

In last year's annual report the FTSU Guardian shared the following key learnings that remain as relevant now as ever. Change is happening locally, but we are failing to make organisational change. There needs to be greater accountability and responsibility from both managers and workers for their actions. The key learnings from 2019/20 were:

- Managers need to be visible to their teams, be open to listening to issues and communicate where action can and cannot be taken.

- Managers should hold regular team meetings to ensure staff are aware of local changes and issues, as well as wider divisional and Trust changes which may affect them.
- Managers should apply policies fairly and consistently.
- New roles need to be promoted widely to ensure fair access to opportunities as these arise.
- Improved communications about how decisions are taken which affect groups of staff differently and the rationale behind these decisions. This is to ensure that staff do not feel they are being treated unfairly.
- Confidential information should not be shared with others without consent.

Nationally, feedback shared from other organisations in the first half of the year shows similar themes. The National Guardian's Office reports communication, particularly between managers/leaders and workers, was mentioned in over a fifth of the comments about learning. Specifically, the need to explain the rationale for changes (e.g. to services and organisational changes), the need for communication through various channels and formats to reach all workers, and the need for communication of difficult messages being improved. Attitudes and behaviours of management were also raised throughout the feedback from Guardians.

In 2021/22, alongside continuing to listen to and support staff raising concerns, the Guardian will:

- continue to work with summit partners to build a coordinated approach to raising concerns across multiple channels ensuring work programmes are aligned to our strategic intent of improving our culture of compassion and inclusion
- use the combined resources of summit partners to identify and support 'hot spot' areas which build on the culture and people plans being developed in the divisions in partnership with Organisational Development (OD) in response to the staff survey
- in partnership with OD and HR support the culture change programme across the Trust (including investment in developing a resolution focused culture programme and work led by Blue Goose to refresh the organisational values)
- work in partnership with Education and OD to review leadership and management development with the aim to create an inclusive and integrated model of training and support for aspiring, new and existing managers
- support investment in increasing the number of staff trained to facilitate or mediate on issues between staff, to support staff to seek informal resolution wherever possible, and increasing the number of investigators to handle formal complaints quickly and effectively
- refresh the FTSU strategy to recognise the changing organisational context and pressures on staff, and to ensure that the FTSU service remains aligned with the needs of staff and the organisation.

## **Recommendations**

In January 2021, the People Committee heard that many of the concerns raised over the past five years since the Freedom to Speak Up process was introduced at the Trust, particularly those relating to attitudes and behaviours, and the application of policy or

process, could be deflected from the speaking up process with earlier, and positive, intervention from managers.

Earlier appropriate intervention should also help to drive down the levels of grievances, complaints and disciplinary cases in the Trust. The Committee agreed that further investment in training and supporting managers will be needed as part of making significant improvement and lasting change.

There remains a common thread throughout a large number of concerns that the key to making a step change to improve the culture within the Trust is to ensure that we all live by the Trust's values and behaviours.

**The Board is asked to:**

- Consider and comment on the themes, trends and issues arising from this report
- In recognising that improved leadership and management across the Trust will drive improvement in staff experience and wellbeing – and will support the drive for cultural change – scrutinise its approach to leadership and management development, people management and culture change, and ask the People Committee to seek assurance that clear plans are in place, that plans are progressing in these areas, and that adequate funding is in place.

## Appendix 1: Progress against the three strands of the Freedom to Speak Up Strategy

	Data 2020/21	Description of changes in year and proposed areas of focus		
Awareness				
Compliance with corporate induction training (and local induction workbook)	Compliance against completion of staff local induction workbook is 79 per cent at March 2021.	Freedom to Speak Up video no longer part of corporate induction training as part of more streamlined, virtual approach to induction as a result of the pandemic.  Mandatory Speak Up training for all staff was introduced from 1 February 2021.		
Number of updates to staff and other workers in the Trust about speaking up	Governor quality meeting	03/09/2020	10	Face to face contact impacted by the pandemic. FTSU Guardian based on site Weston one day a week from October 2020 which involves meeting staff from across the hospital. Monthly meetings for the Weston advocate network established from February 2021. In house training of staff advocates started in November 2020 and repeated in December, February and April. Walkrounds of Bristol sites to restart in 2021/22.
	Children's theatres	24/11/2020	26	
	Therapies department - BRI	21/12/2020	50	
	Employee Services team	19/01/2020	15	
	ABLE+ Forum	23/02/2021	10	
	BRHC Emergency Dept – B7s	10/03/2021	4	
Response to annual ‘snapshot’ survey relating to awareness of Speaking Up (targeted also to volunteers, agency workers, students and trainees)	85 per cent of respondents (308 in total) had heard of speaking up			Second annual survey in June 2020 saw responses increase from 57 to 308 – including all staff groups and divisions. QR code to be added to all FTSU marketing materials to improve access to information about the programme as part of ongoing promotion across all communications channels.
Number and location of Freedom to Speak Up staff advocates across the Trust	Diagnostics & Therapies		7	Number of staff advocates increased from 50 to 80 in the year – advocates are now in all sites across the Trust. Objective to train all current advocates and extend reach across different departments, working more closely with the wellbeing advocate network to share key messages.
	Medicine		10	
	Specialised Services		11	
	Surgery		7	
	Trust Services		17	
	Estates and Facilities		3	
	Weston		12	
	Women's & Children's		13	
Confidence				
Number of cases raised through the Raising Concerns phone line, email address and directly with the	112 concerns raised			Increase of 50 per cent year on year – note impact of merger with Weston. Number of Bristol-based cases remained static: 55 in 2019/20 and 56 in 2020/21.

FTSU Guardian		
Number of case studies completed and shared	Three case studies completed and shared with FTSU advocate network. Two shared with the National Guardian's Office.	Case studies focused on different types of concerns raised – the impact of the introduction of shielding guidance; the lack of clarity around a Covid-19 policy; lack of learning and training opportunities for student nurses. A fourth case study has been drafted which focuses on poor behaviours in a team.
Response to question in annual 'snapshot' survey relating to confidence in Speaking Up	Around 80 per cent of respondents felt that they work in an environment that supports speaking up either completely or to some extent.	Confidence building links with training and development of managers to respond positively to concerns/ideas/issues when raised; and faster resolution of issues. Case studies to be shared more widely, alongside advocate stories of local improvements in speaking up.
Timelines for cases	112 opened in year 92 closed 3 concerns remain open which predate 1 April 2020.	Support for investment in faster resolution of concerns via access to facilitation/mediation or investigation.
Feedback from those who have raised concerns (i.e. whether they would speak up again)	10 feedback forms returned from individuals who raised concerns and whose concerns were closed in the year.	Improve ease of providing feedback (currently via return of a Word document) with investment in suitable electronic platform.
<b>Supporting leaders and managers</b>		
Take up of management (behaviours) training by division	No corporate management or leadership training took place in year due to the impact of Covid-19.	Recommendation in the report to support investment in corporate management and development training for new and existing managers at all levels and from all backgrounds and experiences to understand their roles and responsibilities as managers
Prevalence of 'hot spot' areas identified through Happy App data and annual Staff Survey	10 hot spot areas (areas in the Trust where data from partners suggests there are issues) identified and shared with speaking up summit partners who met on two occasions.	Recommendation in the report for summit partners to build a coordinated approach to raising concerns across multiple channels, and use the combined resources to identify and support 'hot spot' areas. Regular meetings every nine weeks now in place to track progress.

## Appendix 2: Examples of content from Speak Up month 2020



### V is for 100 Voices

By [nhs.uk/guardianoffice](#) Posted October 20, 2020 in [Speak Up Month](#)

At the beginning of Speak Up Month, we published the [Annual Data Report](#), which provides insights into the trends and themes of matters which are being brought to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians.

People often ask us about what sits behind the numbers, and our '100 voices' publication details some of the powerful evocative stories which are the real-life experiences of NHS workers.

Eric Sanders, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian at University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust shares this story to add to our 100 Voices collection.

### Changing policy in a fast moving environment

A member of staff was concerned about continuing to work in a public facing environment as the coronavirus outbreak intensified at the end of March 2020. She had serious underlying health conditions, which she had discussed with her line manager. The member of staff had received an email from the consultant managing her health, which described her as a vulnerable person who should be shielding.



Trust guidance at the time stated that without the official NHS England notification the member of staff had to remain in the work place, though an assessment of the working environment would be carried out to mitigate the risk. The individual approached the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian through one of the speaking up staff advocates to query the guidance and to see whether it could be looked at.

The Guardian approached the HR Business Partners in the first instance to find that the guidance was in the process of being updated. The update included clarification that a GP 'fit note', alongside NHS England notification, would also provide sufficient evidence for shielding.

With the Guardian relaying messages to protect confidentiality, the member of staff contacted her GP surgery only to find out that the surgery was no longer issuing fit notes. She was informed by the surgery that the advice from her consultant was sufficient instruction to shield for 12 weeks. With this new information passed back to the HR Business Partners, they reviewed the guidance again. The HR Business Partners changed the guidance to consider and review any 'fit note' provided and confirmed it was sufficient evidence for the need to shield for 12 weeks. They spoke to the line manager to notify them of the change.

The member of staff was contacted by her line manager the same day and was sent home to self isolate for 12 weeks.

This member of staff used the Freedom to Speak Up route because they were confused about the application of the Trust guidance at this moment in time. We were able to connect the member of staff to the right people to review this issue and get it resolved."

**Bristol Royal Hospital for Children**  
1h · 

October is 'Speak Up Month'. University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust (UHBW) have been shining a spotlight on what speaking up is for staff and why it's important. This year, we're raising awareness of speaking up through an 'Alphabet of Speak Up'. There are 26 letters of the alphabet and 26 days to explore what Freedom to Speak Up means – the issues, the people, the values and the challenges.

This is Kane, our assistant general manager of children's specialised services and 'freedom to speak up advocate'. He is sharing what it means to him and explains more about 'I for integrity':


"Integrity is essential in the roles we play within UHBW. Our level of integrity comes from the heart and ensures our beliefs and ethics are shown through our actions."

He further added:

"As one of a number of advocates, raising awareness for advocacy across the Trust is vital to ensure those that have concerns know where to turn. As a manager in particular, I am not there only to support those that I manage but anyone who needs it."

Staff can find out more about speaking up, our advocates and the Alphabet of Speak Up' on the Connect pages and on UHBW's Twitter.

[#FreedomToSpeakUp](#) [#SpeakUpMonth](#)

**I for integrity**

- Integrity is essential in the roles we play within UHBW. Our level of integrity comes from the heart and ensures our beliefs and ethics are shown through our actions.

Kane Sullivan, UHBW Freedom to Speak Up advocate

**SPEAK UP MONTH 2020**[#TeamUHBW](#)[#SpeakUpABC](#)

**University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust**  
23 October at 15:31 · 

As part of Speak Up month 2020, radiographers Donna Whyte and Louise Smith talk about the letter 'R' for resilience, its links to wellbeing and to empowering people to speak up, which is gradually changing the culture of their department.

"Our work is fast paced and quite demanding and there can be little time between patients to digest what you've just experienced, which can impact on your emotional wellbeing," says Louise. "Building resilience helps keep us safe."

Both are pleased to see a greater focus on wellbeing support from the Trust since the start of the pandemic – but are also addressing wellbeing at a local level.

Louise says: "If you're having a bad day then we want you to feel ok to talk about it. It's not about looking for sympathy or being treated differently but acknowledging that it's ok to not be ok – and normalising that."

Donna and Louise say everyone in the radiotherapy department is working hard to promote a culture where people can speak openly and share their experiences.

"We have started to bring about positive changes with an ideas tree," said Donna, "Anyone can raise anything that might help resolve an issue at work. Many are about imaginative ways to tackle small things – and the tree allows us all to have a voice."

Another idea the department is working on is a 'positivi-tree', based in the staff area, for people to leave positive comments hanging as leaves for individuals to take when they feel they need a boost. Louise added: "When people are encouraged to openly raise issues and offer suggestions to tackle them – and feedback is given on these ideas – then we feel more valued in our roles, and this builds further resilience."

[#SpeakUpABC](#) [#TeamUHBW](#)

**R for resilience**

- Having a sense of resilience and positive wellbeing enables a person to approach other people and situations with confidence and optimism, which is especially important when empowering people to 'speak up'.

Donna Whyte and Louise Smith, UHBW radiographers

**SPEAK UP MONTH 2020**[#TeamUHBW](#)[#SpeakUpABC](#)

23 3 shares

**University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS FT**  @uhbwNHS · 1h · 

Meet Shona Smith, one of our Freedom to Speak Up advocates at Weston General Hospital.

Shona has shared this poem 'F is for fairness' for the [#SpeakUpABC](#)

Head over to our Facebook page to read more about her role: [facebook.com/uhbwNHS/photos...](https://facebook.com/uhbwNHS/photos...)

**F for fairness**

- Being fair means honest and just
- Keeping a confidence, gaining trust
- Do not favour or discriminate
- Never patronise or humiliate
- Hearing someone share what's up
- Fairness gives you Freedom to Speak Up

Shona Smith, UHBW Freedom to Speak Up advocate

**SPEAK UP MONTH 2020**[#TeamUHBW](#)[#SpeakUpABC](#)

3 shares

Poem written by Freedom to Speak Up advocate Tina Nolan for Speak Up month 2020  
– as part of the Speak Up ABC campaign

**‘Y’ For ‘you’**

The letter ‘Y’ is my first choice  
The reasons very clear  
It means so many different things  
Which are explained right here

Its ‘shape’ is so symbolic  
Two small arms reaching out  
Its ‘sound’ invites an answer (Why)  
When we are speaking out

The word ‘you’ speaks to everyone  
It reaches out to all  
It suggests empowerment to me  
Speak up before you fall

‘Y’ stretches out its tiny hands  
For someone to take hold  
The advocates are here for you  
So welcome to the fold

‘You’ means, him, her, them and us  
We as one unite  
Together we can bring forth change  
And overcome our fright

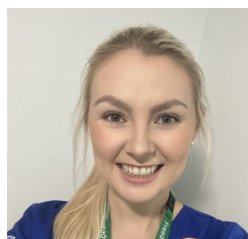
So think about this tiny word  
Take courage in its merit  
Bad practice/spite can be stamped out  
We all take turns to share it

We represent the letter ‘Y’  
Its stature and its sound  
A natural question – reaching out  
Always someone around

The alphabet provides the words  
So helpful and so clear  
Let’s make a start by using it  
Right now and every year



# Creating a positive speaking up culture for staff wellbeing



***Jordyn Read** is a Specialist Cystic Fibrosis Dietician, Freedom to Speak Up and Wellbeing advocate. Here Jordyn describes why she took on the two advocate roles and how she is helping to support her department to improve its culture.*

To find out more contact [jordyn.read@uhbw.nhs.uk](mailto:jordyn.read@uhbw.nhs.uk) or call 0117 34 27360

## Why did you decide to become a Freedom to Speak Up advocate?

I initially heard about Freedom to Speak Up and the advocate role at a divisional staff forum meeting. Because of my role as a Staff Forum representative, some individuals had already mentioned situations when they felt unable to speak up – for a number of reasons – including lack of confidence or concerns that this may impact on their position or future prospects. I wanted to learn how to best support them. I felt that becoming an advocate would be beneficial for my department to help raise awareness of the support out there. It was also a good fit with the wellbeing advocate role.

## How have you raised awareness of your advocate roles within the department?

I started by putting up Freedom to Speak Up posters in the office (and on the backs of toilet cubicle doors where people can read information without fear of being judged), creating a Speaking Up and Wellbeing display in the corridor, and adding the FTSU and Wellbeing advocate banners to my emails. I also discussed these roles in our department meetings and sent out emails highlighting FTSU and wellbeing support which helped to get people talking about it in the office. It was really useful to have our department lead on board for support.

## What changes have you made to help improve wellbeing and your speaking up culture?

Before introducing any new ideas to the whole team, I discussed a few options with a fellow colleague and advocate which was really helpful to gain more support and also to get feedback on what might or might not work. In the last few months we've launched:



**1. The Positive Peacock box** – staff anonymously post notes of appreciation or ideas and suggestions into this eye catching box. The notes of appreciation are read out every week at the team meeting – this has really helped to positively boost morale, celebrate and recognise success, and make people feel even more valued. The ideas and suggestions have allowed

staff to feel more able to speak up and make suggestions for improvements or changes. There is a feedback loop whereby every idea is discussed no matter how big or small, then logged and monitored.



**2. Seasonal challenges** – we held a Christmas quiz and bauble-making competition across all therapies teams, which helped to bring everyone together and provided some positivity. Emailing to advertise the challenges was also a great way to get my name out there. Lots of people got involved in this which was lovely! Managers also provided prizes which showed their support too. It was great to get people talking and break down barriers between bands, teams and professions – which is so important for speaking up.

**3. Wellbeing activities outside of work** – we set up a quiz group meeting via Zoom every month; a craft group meeting via Zoom with everyone making the same craft together; and a breakfast club – a socially distanced breakfast catch up on non-work related topics. While not everyone took part in the activities, most people found something they wanted to get involved in – and it helped break down barriers between different bands and teams. One tip would be to make sure you delegate activities to other team members who are keen to help organise so you don't get overwhelmed!

**4. Freedom to Speak Up and Wellbeing folder** – I created a speaking up and wellbeing folder on our department shared drive for staff to have easy access to the most up-to-date information. I try to run through both Speaking Up and Wellbeing material with all new starters, which means new staff are well informed of support that is out there and we make the most of their potential ideas, suggestions and feedback. I have found more and more people feel able to come and speak to me about any concerns they have and I have been able to signpost them to useful resources/ next steps that are easy to access.

*“By creating small actions and changes, I have been able to slowly chip away at less positive behaviours rather than trying to change everything, which would have felt like an unachievable task.”*

*Changing culture is definitely something that takes time – however I think we have achieved a lot in the last year, despite the pressures of Covid-19. I hope some of my changes can be adapted for your places of work.*

*If you want to make a change, the key is to make it as specific to your area as possible and try to get feedback from colleagues on what they want to see and what they feel will work for them.”*

**For more information please contact:**

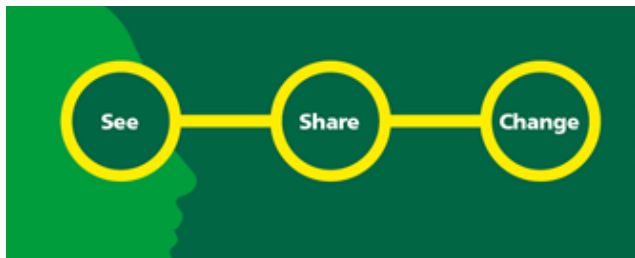
**Jordyn Read**

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0117 34 27360



If you are interested in finding out more about the Freedom to Speak Up advocate role please email [raisingconcerns@uhbw.nhs.uk](mailto:raisingconcerns@uhbw.nhs.uk)  
For more information about the Wellbeing advocate role please email [wellbeing@uhbw.nhs.uk](mailto:wellbeing@uhbw.nhs.uk)



# Speaking Up at UHBW

## Ensuring safe clinical practice in a pandemic

As the coronavirus pandemic took hold a number of significant changes were made to the way in which our hospitals are run – to ensure the safety of both our patients and staff.

A concern was raised by a clinical member of staff about the theatres where endoscopy procedures are carried out – specifically the length of time the room should be left before it could be safely cleaned following each procedure. The concern was that staff were being told they could clean the rooms almost straight after the procedure had finished, despite the procedure involving a degree of aerosol generation. There was confusion because protocols in other Trusts were different and rooms were being left much longer before being cleaned.

This concern was raised with the individual's line manager, but they only received verbal reassurance about the process and were not given, and could not find, anything written down that outlined the Trust's approach.

The individual approached the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian in confidence. The Guardian then spoke to the divisional director to ask them to explore the issue.

The findings revealed that endoscopy procedures are carried out in two different locations – an operating theatre and an endoscopy room. The rooms have different air handling and this means that the turnaround time is different based on the time it takes for air turnover. In conducting a review the matron recognised that the guidance in place was complicated and wordy and could be better communicated. The guidance was reviewed and changed to ensure it referred to the Infection Control guidance which had been received – significantly, signage was placed on the doors to each of the rooms to communicate visibly and clearly the appropriate turnaround times.

In this case, the individual was concerned for the health and wellbeing of their colleagues and patients and the risk of contracting COVID-19. While there was a standard operating procedure in place, it was confusing and the key information about downtime was not simply conveyed. By speaking up the individual was able to get clear guidance in place and ensure they and colleagues were following the right process.

Eric Sanders, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian