

Freedom to Speak Up Policy

July 2023

Purpose

It is important we are all able to speak up about anything that gets in the way of doing a great job. When things go wrong, we need to make sure that lessons are learnt, and things are improved. If we think something *might* go wrong, it's important that we all feel able to speak up to stop potential problems. And when things are good, but could be even better, we should feel able to say something and be confident that our suggestion will be used as an opportunity for improvement.

Overview

To develop and support our teams and culture, we have introduced 'Freedom to Speak Up Guardians'. Freedom to Speak Up Guardians support workers to speak up when they feel that they are unable to in other ways. They are here to:

- Improve the experience of all our teams
- Promote a culture of learning and improvement
- Promote a safe and inclusive environment
- Support a culture where we believe working with people with diverse interests, ideas, opinions and cultural backgrounds enriches us all, and everyone is valued for what they bring to the table

Our Freedom to Speak Up Guardians will enrich our culture by:

- Encouraging and supporting everyone in speaking up
- Addressing any barriers to speaking up
- Fostering a positive culture of speaking up
- Providing a platform to ensure that all issues raised are used as opportunities for learning and improvement

Training

To provide a supportive and enriching environment, we must understand the expectations of individuals and our Freedom to Speak Up Guardians.

To enable us to foster a culture of speaking up about matters affecting your job, all members of Scientific Group are asked to complete module one (Speak Up) of the NHS training: <https://portal.e-lfh.org.uk/Component/Details/666107>

This covers what speaking up is and why it matters. If you have any problems with accessing the site from outside the UK, please ask a Guardian or a UK-based colleague to create your account for you.

In addition, all managers should complete module two (Listen Up): <https://portal.e-lfh.org.uk/Component/Details/683992>

This module will provide guidance on how managers should respond when someone speaks up to them. It focuses on listening to concerns and understanding the barriers to speaking up.

The final module should be completed by the senior leadership team: <https://portal.e-lfh.org.uk/Component/Details/752741>

This module aims to promote a consistent and effective Freedom to Speak Up culture across the system which enables anybody to speak up and be confident they will be listened to and action will be taken.

Expectations

Individuals

Individuals must respect our Freedom to Speak Up Guardians and their roles. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance, but at times our Freedom to Speak Up Guardians may be limited in their actions if they are unable to gather a full and rounded narrative.

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are not trained in HR or legal areas. At times, situations can be contentious and Freedom to Speak Up Guardians should not be expected to provide legal advice. Freedom to Speak Up Guardians may need to raise issues or concerns with other teams, such as an HR or the Senior Leadership Team, but will only do so with the individual's permission. Raising an issue or subject with a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian does not constitute a grievance, formal or informal, and individuals should not expect Freedom to Speak Up Guardians to act on their behalf in this situation. Freedom to Speak Up Guardians can support individuals if a subject or issue is escalated within the realms of their training, as is fair to both the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and the individual.

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are voluntary and should include people from across Scientific Group. All Freedom to Speak Up Guardians will complete an internal workshop and training before commencing their supportive role.

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians:

- Will operate independently, impartially and objectively, whilst working in partnership with individuals and groups throughout the Company, including HR and the Senior Leadership Team
- Will seek guidance and support, where appropriate, from internal resources and bodies outside the Company organisation
- Are assisted by the Company to ensure that they are supported in their objectives and that their views are actively sought with regards to Freedom to Speak Up activities

When an issue is brought to a Guardian, it's possible they may realise they have a conflict of interest - e.g. if they have an interest or role in a matter that's raised, or have an affiliation or loyalty that is relevant. If this should happen, the Guardian will notify you as soon as the conflict becomes evident, and will provide the contact details of other Guardians you can approach, or discuss with the other Guardians to determine the most suitable person to continue the conversation.

Role of the Guardians

Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are responsible for taking action to promote the following outcomes:

Outcome	Detail
Individuals throughout the Company have the capability, knowledge and skills they need to speak up themselves and to support others to speak up	Everyone who works in the Company has appropriate training and easy access to the knowledge and support they need to speak up and to support others to speak up

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All individuals are encouraged to speak up	<p>All new starters are invited to join an introduction to the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians.</p> <p>Freedom to speak up messages and details of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role are regularly communicated across the organisation, including feedback on matters that colleagues are speaking up about and the action taken in response to them (being mindful of preserving confidentiality).</p>
Individuals are supported when they speak up	<p>Freedom to Speak Up Guardians provide effective and compassionate support and guidance to all colleagues, developing a network of Guardians as appropriate to need, to ensure that they have suitable reach across the Company.</p> <p>Cases are recorded with confidentiality in mind.</p> <p>Appropriate action is taken when an issue is brought to the attention of a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, with confidentiality being respected as appropriate, fair and effective investigation taking place and regular feedback on progress given.</p> <p>Individuals who have spoken up are thanked and do not suffer because of speaking up.</p>
Information provided by speaking up is used to learn and improve	<p>Information from cases raised by people speaking up, and barriers to speak up, is brought alongside other intelligence on staff experience and used to inform Company learning and development.</p>

How someone might speak up

Openly

This is when you know the person's identity and they are happy for anyone else involved to know too. This will make it easier for others to ask them for any further information they need to help resolve the issue. It will also help the Company take action to support them further if they need to.

Confidentially

Speaking up confidentially is when the person reveals their identity to you on the condition that it will not be shared without their consent. It is important to understand that confidentiality can be preserved except where it is required to be disclosed by law. In some cases, for example, where the person has already shared information or where the facts of the case enable others to identify them, maintaining confidentiality may be impossible. However, this should be discussed with them. There are a range of means that can be considered to ensure that their identity is protected, even when further action is needed, such as an investigation into the matter they have raised.

Anonymously

When someone speaks up anonymously, they do not want to share their identity with anyone. This can make it difficult for others to ask for further information about the matter and may make taking action to resolve the issue more complex. It also means that they might not be able to access any extra support they might need. However, any matter spoken up about anonymously should still be considered and treated in the same way as any other matter spoken up about, as far as possible.

If you want to speak up anonymously, please use our anonymous feedback form [here](#).

Other information

Freedom to Speak up Guardians are independent and impartial but work proactively to support you and Scientific Group to tackle barriers to speaking up. We value your and their contribution.

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