

Board of Directors

(Freedom to Speak Up Report)

Action requested/recommendation

The Board is asked to read the report and discuss the content and recommendations.

Summary

This is the initial report of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian which outlines the implementation of the role and the initial impact that it has had within the organisation.

Strategic Aims

1. Improve quality and safety
2. Create a culture of continuous improvement
3. Develop and enable strong partnerships
4. Improve our facilities and protect the environment

Implications for equality and diversity

The Trust has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. In relation to the issues set out in this paper, consideration has been given to the impact that the recommendations might have on these requirements and on the nine protected groups identified by the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, gender and sexual orientation).

Reference to CQC outcomes

Progress of report:	Initial Report on Freedom to Speak Up
Risk:	No Risk
Resource implications:	Implications for the FTSU Guardian
Owner:	David Evans, Chief Executive
Author :	Kirsty Dickson, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
Date of paper:	17 March 2017
Version number	V1

Board of Directors

Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Report March 2017

1. Introduction and Background

The appointment of a National Guardian for speaking up freely and safely, and Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Guardians in NHS trusts were recommended by Sir Robert Francis, following his review and subsequent report into the failings in Mid-Staffordshire. In July 2015, the Secretary of State confirmed the steps needed to be taken to develop a culture of safety, and supported Sir Roberts's recommendations. The NHS contract 2016/17 specifies that NHS trusts should have nominated a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian by 1 October 2016.

The priorities of the National Guardian include establishing and supporting strong regional networks of FTSU guardians, highlighting NHS organisations who are successful in creating the right environment for staff to speak up safely and share this best practice across the NHS, independently review cases where NHS organisations may have failed to follow good practice and working with statutory bodies to take action where needed.

FTSU guardians have a key role in helping to raise the profile of raising concerns in their organisation and provide confidential advice and support to staff in relation to concerns they have about patient safety and/or the way their concern has been handled. Guardians do not get involved in investigations or complaints, but help to facilitate the raising concerns process where needed, ensuring organisational policies are followed correctly.

This is the first FTSU report to the Board and will outline the progress made in implementing the role since October 2016, the impact the role is making within the organisation and will include some recommendations.

2. Freedom to Speak Up

Implementing the Role

The role has been well received and well supported within the organisation. Creating a comprehensive, non-exhaustive induction process with support from many individuals has enabled the FTSU Guardian within this Trust to be nominated by the National Office for Freedom to Speak Up to share own induction following a visit from their Engagement Manager.

Engagement with staff, volunteers and other contracted workers has challenges, especially for an organisation employing 9066 permanent/fixed term staff, 1286 bank staff and many volunteers, providing services across a large geographical area, over 150 sites accessed by Northumbria staff. To date this has been partly achieved by the FTSU guardian attending team meetings, roadshows (own and mentioned at Chief Executive's), intranet site, pop up adverts, press release and being accessible and visible within staff canteens, walk-about on-sites.

By being available and responsive to staff are key successes to the role, meaning the role is flexible and agile as opposed to being office based. People raising concerns are always given a choice about where and when they wish to meet. It is important to maintain both the independence and confidentiality integral within the role requirement

Freedom To Speak Up Roadshow	
North Tyneside General Hospital, Canteen Wed 1 March 2017 - 12.00-1.30pm	Conversation with staff. (Number of people)
Out Patients	1
Domestic	3
Health & Well-being	1
Patient Experience	1
Administration	5
Medical Student	1
Junior Doctor	3
Estates	2
Library	1
Clinical Coding	1
Nursing	1
Health Care Assistant	1
Total	21

Collaborative working on the Datix system has allowed the FTSU Guardian to access all concerns raised and run reports as required. A system has been created by addition of a 'drop-down box' to give the person completing the Datix the information about FTSU guardian access. Concerns raised involving safety issues are highlighted by staff handling incident reporting and feedback is managed by two-way process. As it is important to provide feedback in a timely manner to the individual raising a concern, work is continually on-going in this area to look at implementing a system that provides regular monitoring of concerns raised and feedback given.

A communication/marketing strategy was launched in December where the role of FTSU Guardian was introduced via Staff Bulletin. Links have been established with Learning and Development to work together to introduce the role at Trust Induction and Trust Leadership Programs. Presentations have been carried out by FTSU guardian at Trust Board Development, Clinical Policy Group and an introduction by FTSU guardian and National Office Engagement Manager at Executive Management Team meetings. Director of Nursing has extended an invitation for the FTSU guardian to present/attend Nursing Conferences in June 2017. Several introductions have taken place within Corporate and Community Business team meetings. One-to-one meetings with Directors, Board and Managers have been integral within FTSU guardian induction process.

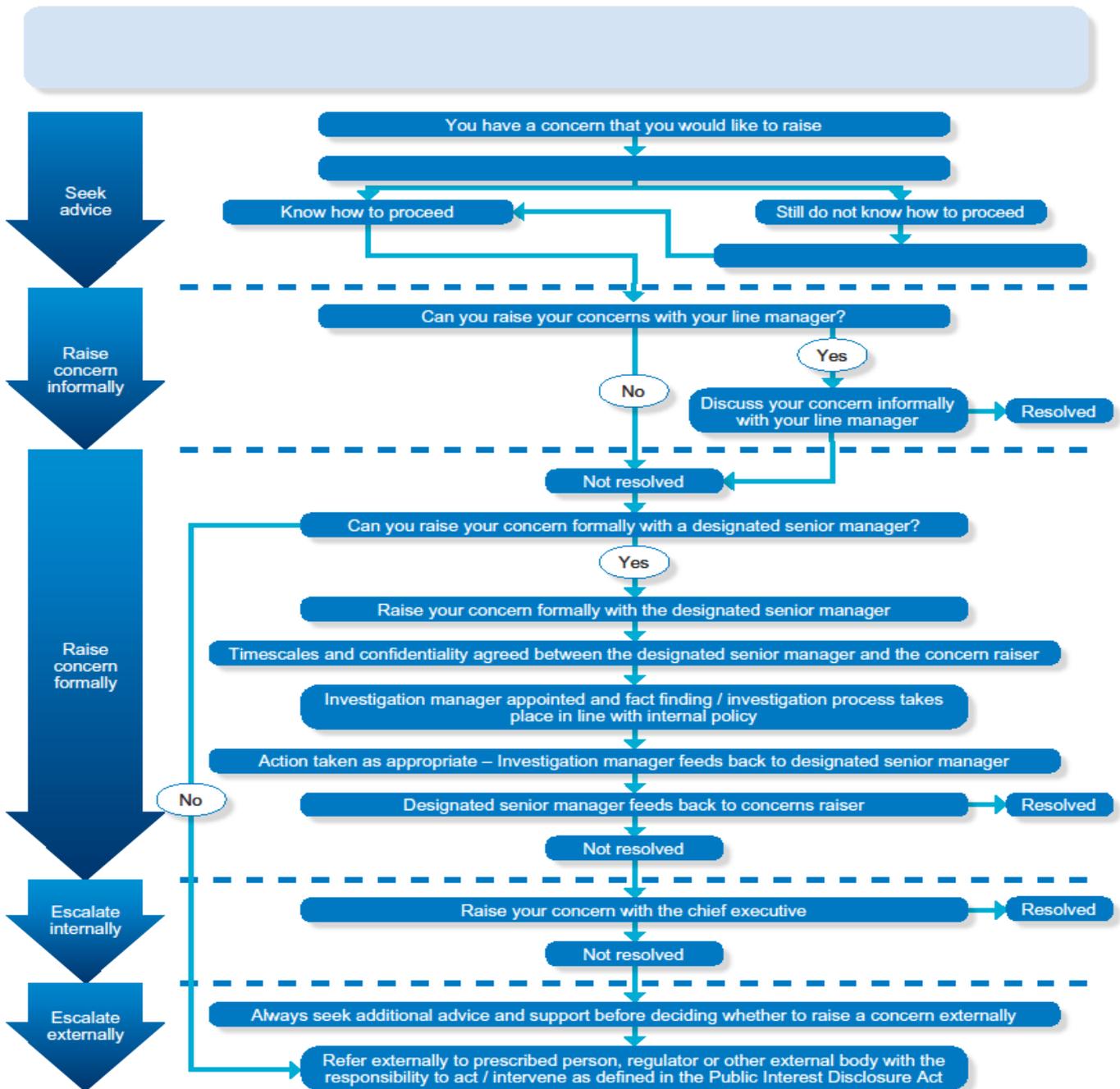
Updating the Whistleblowing Policy

NHS England has set minimum standards for whistle-blowing/raising concerns and the expectation of the National Guardian is that these are incorporated into trusts own local policies. As a result, the policy has been updated and re-named incorporating raising concerns, and has been submitted at Sub-policy group before ratification process.

Care has been taken not to undermine existing processes, but to complement and enhance them. Everyone should feel that they can have a difficult conversation, if required, in order to speak up so that the best care can be provided for our patients. A key component of the policy is to be clear about how the organisation learns from concerns that have been raised, ensuring awareness of the process (flowchart updated) and ensuring that staff will receive feedback in a timely manner.

Model process flowchart for raising concerns

Place logo



Raising a public interest (whistleblowing) concern.
 A public interest concern may include where:

- someone's health and / or safety has been put in danger because of an action or inaction;
- damage has been caused to the environment;
- a criminal offence has been committed;
- an employer fails to obey the law (such as not having appropriate insurance);
- a malpractice or wrong-doing has been covered up.

Boxes marked with * are editable.

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Networking

There is a requirement and expectation of the FTSU Guardian to attend national and regional events and training to promote standardized approaches to the role, to share and learn from peers and to set up a 'buddying' system. The FTSU Guardian has attended the national training programme at Leeds, the launch of National Guardian, Dr Henrietta Hughes with Sir Robert Francis and the first national conference at Westminster.

The national office requirements will involve performance data collection from FTSU Guardians which will be published nationally. The NHS staff survey results specifically around raising concerns will be used as a benchmark for improvement and CQC will include questions for the FTSU guardian.

Concerns Raised : October 2016 – March 2017

From October 2016 until Mid-March 2017 there have been 44 individual concerns (speak ups) raised to the FTSU Guardian, with recognition that not all of these concerns have been classified as 'whistle-blowing'. 11 concerns raised did not meet the criteria required, however these concerns were received with an open-mind, listened to with empathy and taken seriously, feedback given and appropriately sign-posted onto other services within the trust.

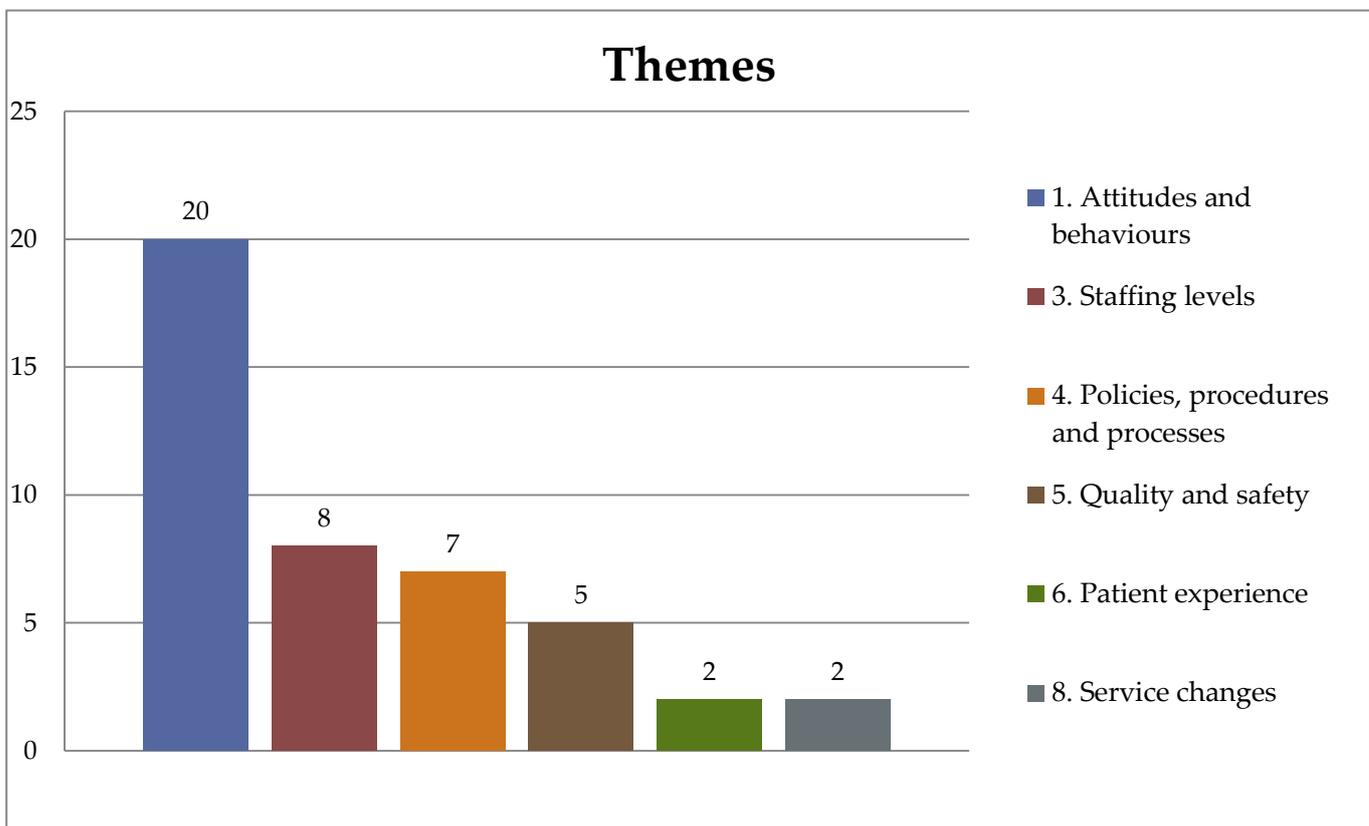
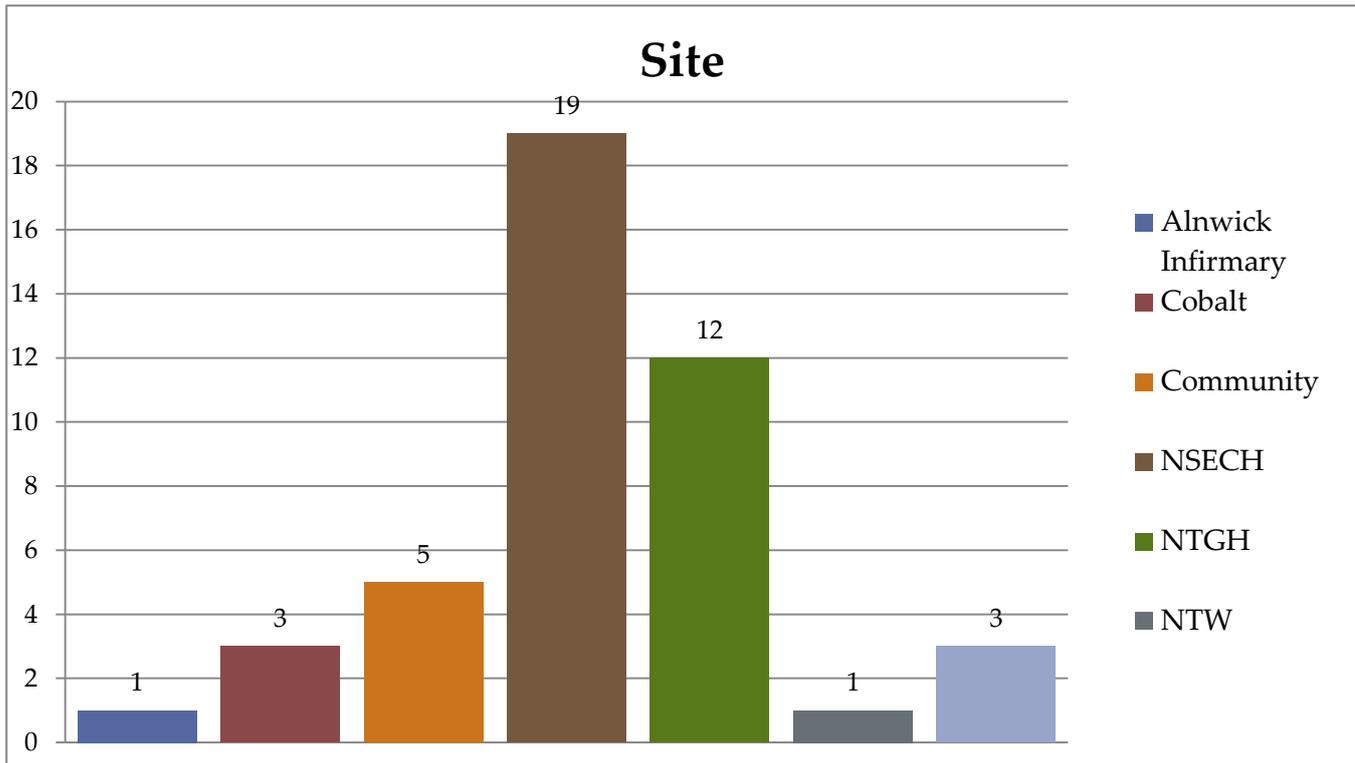
Examples of other services involved	
Occupational Health	Counselling and Well-being
Human Resources	Direction about policies and processes
Learning and Development	Access coaching
Macmillan Support Services	Benefits advice & bereavement support
Line Managers	Support & Guidance

Due to newness of the role it is understandable that people will raise concerns which may carry importance to themselves, however with various degrees of significance to the criteria of the FTSU Guardian role. The criteria used for collecting data and themes are taken from the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Other Trusts are having similar experiences as the role becomes embedded.

Issues raised frequently from across all sites, particularly NTGH regarding parking for staff may not fit the criteria directly, however has demonstrated the level of stress caused for staff, ultimately impacting on staff morale and patients care. Staff expressed the safety aspects with safe working hours, where it has been reported that staff are coming to work an hour early to get parked. Reports of staff feeling unsafe walking to car at end of shifts or community staff accessing car regularly throughout an out of hours shift.

Learning from Sir Robert Francis report the FTSU guardian role has maintained communication between departments, sharing knowledge of concerns raised and provided facilitation to tackle challenges, promoting a positive culture throughout the organisation. As Sir Robert's report findings were that institutionalised culture ascribed more weight to positive information about the service than to information capable of implying cause for concern demonstrates the requirement of proactive management and training for contributors to those providing healthcare and leadership. Staff should feel valued to enable those to value others, which can only outcomes, improving sickness levels.

Total Estimated cost of sickness 12 Month Analysis = £9,604,294.95



Dept/Site	Alnwick Infirmary	Cobalt	Community	NSECH	NTGH	NTW	Wansbeck	Grand Total
Accident & Emergency				1	1			2
Admin/Outpatient					1			1
Administration		1						1
Ambulatory Care/Surgical Unit					1			1
Bowel Cancer Screening Programme				1				1
Catering				4				4
Childrens Unit				2				2
Conference Centre				1				1
District Nursing			4					4
Domestic				2			1	3
Estates		1		1				2
Facilities				2			1	3
Hospital Liaison Team					1			1
Internal Audit						1		1
Maternity				1				1
Orthopaedic Surgeon					1			1
Paediatrics					1			1
Palliative Care Team			1					1
Patient Experience					3			3
Patient Services		1						1
Radiology				1			1	2
Stroke				1				1
Trauma & Orthopaed				1				1
Ward 1	1							1
Ward 18					1			1
Ward 20					1			1
Ward 22 Stroke					1			1
Ward 6				1				1
Grand Total	1	3	5	19	12	1	3	44

3. Next Steps

- Extension of secondment of FTSU role allowing a proactive and reactive approach.
- Continue working with Learning & Development to include FTSU role within Induction process for all new staff.
- Liaise with Health and Well-being to develop 'champions' for Freedom to Speak Up.
- Continue to work with Communications to inform them of National and Local initiatives, promoting FTSU role frequently.
- Introduce a manager toolkit for raising concerns.
- On-going support and advice offered to all staff raising concerns.
- Annual reports to Board.

4. Conclusion

Having an open reporting culture is key to the delivery of safe and compassionate care. For it to be effective, the raising of concerns (often referred to as whistleblowing) should be embraced as a normal part of employment practice where workers feel confident and safe to speak up without any fear of repercussion or reprisal.

Raising concerns can save lives, jobs, money and the reputation of professionals and organisations. It is a valuable early alert system, which when communicated and dealt with properly, contributes towards quality care and compassion along with staff and patient well-being.

5. Recommendation

1. The Board are asked to read and note the report and consider how often that they require updates.
2. The Board are asked to consider how the organisation can develop a system of feedback/communication on lessons learnt from concerns raised or reported incidents.
3. To foster/maintain a common culture of openness and transparency with a proper degree of accountability, responsibility and for senior managers and leaders to protect the interests of patients.
4. Commitment from The Board to communicate and engage effectively.

Author	Kirsty Dickson, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
Owner	David Evans, Chief Executive
Date	March 2017