

# National Guardian Freedom to Speak Up



National guidelines on Freedom to  
Speak Up training in the health sector  
in England

August 2019

## Introduction

The National Guardian's Office (NGO) was established following recommendations made in the Freedom To Speak Up Review by Sir Robert Francis QC. The NGO works to effect cultural change in the NHS so that speaking up becomes business as usual. The office leads, trains and supports a network of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians (FTSUGs) in England, conducts case reviews, and works in partnership with the wider health system to support learning and improvement.

In one of [its case reviews](#), the NGO observed that training on Freedom to Speak Up had not kept pace with developments in the field and did not fully reflect the NHS's approach to speaking up. The NGO therefore undertook to develop these national guidelines.

These guidelines are designed to improve the quality, clarity and consistency of training on speaking up across the health sector to support those commissioning and delivering training.

## Speaking up

When things go wrong we need to make sure that lessons are learnt and improvements are made. If we think something might go wrong, it's important that we feel able to speak up so that potential harm is avoided. Even when things are going well, but could be made even better, we should feel able to say something and should expect that what we say is listened to and used as an opportunity for improvement. **Speaking up is about all of these things.**

Workers may use terminology such as 'raising concerns', 'whistleblowing', 'raising a grievance', 'complaining', or 'making a suggestion for improvement'. **All of these things are speaking up.**

## Who are these guidelines for?

These guidelines are for any individual or organisation commissioning or delivering Freedom To Speak Up training in the health sector in England.

## Review

These guidelines will be reviewed annually. Any comments on these guidelines and suggestions for improvement are welcome – please submit these to [enquiries@nationalguardianoffice.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nationalguardianoffice.org.uk)

## Format

These guidelines are set out in three parts covering three broad groups of workers:

Section	Workers
<b>Core training</b>	All workers* Line and middle managers** Senior leaders***
<b>Line and middle management training</b>	Line and middle managers Senior leaders
<b>Senior Leader training</b>	Senior leaders

\*including volunteers, learners, students and those in training regardless of their terms of contract

\*\*all workers with line and middle management responsibilities

\*\*\* including executive board members (and equivalents), Non-Executive Directors, and Governors

## Note

These guidelines do NOT cover training in the requirements of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian or champion/ambassador role. Enquiries about training for the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role should be made to the National Guardian's Office, in the first instance.

Additionally, whilst we expect Freedom To Speak Up Guardians to have an interest in this training, there is no expectation for them to deliver it to all staff.

Commissioners of training should be mindful of these guidelines when commissioning other training to avoid inconsistent messages.

## Principles

Freedom to Speak Up training should follow these principles:

Principle	Comments
<b>Required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All workers should be required to complete training on speaking up.</li> <li>• It should be treated with parity to other 'mandatory' training that organisations may have (such as information management, risk management, safeguarding, values-based training packages etc).</li> </ul>
<b>Regular</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workers should repeat this training regularly enough to reinforce its key messages and to provide assurance that changes in organisational policies and procedures are properly disseminated and understood.</li> </ul>
<b>Accessible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training should be provided in a way that is accessible to all workers including, for example, contractors, part-time, night-shift and home workers.</li> <li>• It should not contain complex legalistic explanations or unnecessary detail.</li> <li>• All workers should be provided with the necessary time to complete the training.</li> </ul>
<b>Embedded</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key messages on speaking up should also be included in leadership and other training and development programmes, as appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training should use language reflective of the organisation's business, culture, and commonly used terminology. It should use accepted terminology about speaking up.</li> <li>• It should reflect local circumstances that might act as barriers to, or promoters of, speaking up.</li> <li>• It should reflect any vision and/or strategy the organisation has to develop and improve its speaking up culture.</li> <li>• It should reflect current good practice in speaking up.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitored</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The completion of training, and its quality, should be routinely monitored e.g. through participant feedback.</li> </ul>

## Methodology

The methodology that organisations employ in providing training should fit the needs of workers and reflect organisational culture and practice. Organisations may wish to consider a modular approach to enable ease of access. Based on its own experience in training Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, the NGO encourages consideration of the following:

Methodology	Comments
<b>Interactivity</b>	Training that encourages the participation of trainees (e.g. through table work or on-line exercises) helps bring key messages alive and helps trainees test their understanding.
<b>Case studies</b>	The use of relevant and realistic case studies helps illustrate how speaking up works in practice, and promotes an understanding of what it feels like to speak up, and what support and action may be needed when someone does speak up. Case studies can also help trainees understand some of the practical issues speaking up can present. Any case studies that are used need to be realistic and relevant.
<b>Role play</b>	Role play can help trainees test out the communication and other skills that are necessary when speaking up and that should be employed when supporting others to speak up.

## Learning Objectives

### At the end of the sessions:

- Workers will feel encouraged to speak up and understand how to do so.
- Managers will feel confident to respond appropriately when workers speak up, to support individuals when they speak up, and know where to go for support themselves.
- Senior leaders will feel enabled to set the tone for the speaking up culture in their organisation, have a good understanding of the wider drivers for speaking up and understand how speaking up can promote learning and improvement.



## Core training

Content / messages	Notes
<b>Speaking up is welcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking up is valuable, the information it provides is a gift, and it helps organisations learn and improve.</li> <li>• People who speak up should be thanked.</li> <li>• Effective leaders encourage speaking up.</li> </ul>
<b>What speaking up is</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking up encompasses matters that might be referred to as 'raising concerns', 'complaining', 'raising a grievance' or 'whistleblowing'. It also includes making suggestions for improvement.</li> <li>• Speaking up is for all workers. It does not include mechanisms that patients, family members or carers may use.</li> </ul>
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be an explanation of the differences between, and pros and cons associated with, 'speaking up openly', 'confidentiality', and 'anonymity'.</li> </ul>
<b>Barriers to speaking up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training should reference common barriers to speaking up (such as those caused by work pressures, limited resources, hierarchy, conflicts of loyalty etc), and, where possible, local barriers to speaking up.</li> <li>• There should be reference to vulnerable groups that may encounter particular barriers to speaking up including BAME staff, agency workers and those groups who may not have easy access to regular communication channels.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An explanation of where the local speaking up policy can be found and a summary of its key points.</li> <li>• Encouragement to give feedback on the policy, and how to do this.</li> </ul>
<b>Routes for speaking up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An explanation of the range of routes available for speaking up, including the use of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian as an alternative.</li> <li>• To include reference to external routes for speaking up (e.g. to regulators and professional bodies).</li> </ul>
<b>Sources of support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A summary of the source of support workers have when they speak up, including reference to unions, professional bodies and the "Speak Up Direct" helpline.</li> </ul>
<b>Role of FTSU Guardians and the National Guardian's Office</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To include a short explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the National Guardian's Office and Freedom To Speak Up Guardians.</li> </ul>

## Line and middle management training

To include all 'core training' and the following:

Content / messages	Notes
<b>Creating the right environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To include actions that line managers can take to encourage workers to speak up and provide an environment where discussions can take place in confidence, without distraction.</li> </ul>
<b>Supporting speaking up and listening well</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To include guidance on:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how line managers can gain an understanding of a worker's desired outcome when they speak up.</li> <li>the psychological, emotional and other support a worker may need and how this can be provided.</li> <li>the obstacles or risks a worker may perceive to speaking up – e.g. how this might relate to minority status, diversity characteristic, or being part of another 'vulnerable' group.</li> <li>the support anyone spoken up about or involved in a case may need and how this can be provided.</li> <li>discussing confidentiality and the limits of this.</li> <li>highlighting various routes by which matters might be dealt with.</li> <li>the importance of providing timely feedback and how and when to provide this.</li> <li>how line managers can respond to speaking up matters raised anonymously.</li> </ul> </li> <li>To include the opportunity for self-reflection on listening skills, behaviours and, where possible, reference to other opportunities to improve these.</li> </ul>
<b>Conflicts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of possible real or perceived conflicts when someone speaks up and how to manage these.</li> </ul>
<b>Induction and exit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasising the importance of encouraging speaking up in new starters, and the use of the exit process as an opportunity to further promote speaking up and a means of identifying areas for improvement.</li> </ul>
<b>Feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouragement to obtain regular feedback from workers on the local Freedom so Speak Up culture.</li> </ul>

## Senior leader training

To include all 'core training' and 'line management training' and the following:

Content / messages	Notes
<b>Regulation of speaking up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To include an explanation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contractual requirements and national guidance on speaking up that applies to their organisation.</li> <li>the National Guardian Office case review process.</li> <li>how CQC inspect Freedom to Speak Up as part of the 'well-led' domain.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>The benefits of speaking up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To include the benefits that speaking up can offer to patient safety and the experience of both patients and workers.</li> <li>To include a consideration of the financial and other costs and risks that speaking up can mitigate e.g. costly litigation, reputational risk, loss of skilled staff, low morale, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>The role of senior leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The role that Boards (or equivalent) and individuals at senior leadership level play in speaking up and promoting a positive speaking up culture.</li> <li>To support line managers to respond effectively and achieve positive outcomes when workers speak up to them.</li> <li>Where appropriate, to reference "Freedom to Speak Up: guidance for NHS trust and NHS foundation trust boards".</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/freedom-speak-guidance-nhs-trust-and-nhs-foundation-trust-boards/">https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/freedom-speak-guidance-nhs-trust-and-nhs-foundation-trust-boards/</a></p>
<b>Demonstrating leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To include opportunities to reflect on individual skills and behaviours related to speaking up and listening well.</li> <li>Examples of how senior leaders can model behaviours and good practice.</li> <li>Details of any initiatives that local leadership has supported to improve the organisation's speaking up culture.</li> </ul>
<b>Supporting Freedom to Speak Up Guardians</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role and how this can be supported and promoted within the organisation.</li> <li>Consideration of individual support Freedom to Speak Up Guardians may need to ensure they can fulfil their role well and learn, improve and develop.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting well-being of FTSU Guardians and others in a speaking up role, including resource requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To include an explanation of how Freedom to Speak Up culture may be measured locally, and how this can be assessed and measured regularly.</li> </ul>
<b>Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of any action that may be needed to prevent anyone who speaks up being victimised, and action that will be taken should this occur.</li> <li>Where Fit and Proper Person requirements apply, ensuring that speaking up matters are considered as part of that process.</li> <li>Awareness that, in some circumstances, the law may provide a remedy for individuals who have suffered as a result of speaking up.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How key messages on speaking up will be communicated.</li> <li>The importance of providing feedback at the individual and organisational level, including the use of the 'you said, we did' format to demonstrate listening and action.</li> <li>The importance of feedback at the organisational- and team-level and transparency of actions taken as a result of speaking up.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanisms for ensuring that the intelligence that speaking up provides can be used to learn and improve.</li> <li>Working with HR, patient safety teams (where relevant) and Freedom To Speak Up Guardians to look for trends and areas for improvement.</li> </ul>
<b>Continuous improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noting and acting on recommendations from NGO case reviews, surveys and other publications and guidance.</li> <li>Responding to themes and significant issues highlighted by speaking up.</li> <li>Taking account of best practice in speaking up developed in other sectors.</li> <li>Encouraging workers to be involved in driving improvement at organisational level.</li> </ul>