Support to staff raising concerns

Our Trust will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of a worker who has raised a concern; workers in this situation have legal rights with regards to this. If you feel you are being subjected to this treatment as a result of raising your concern, you should inform the manager dealing with your concern or the FTSUG. They will take the appropriate action, including using the Resolution or Dignity and Respect policies and our Trust’s disciplinary procedures where applicable, to remedy the situation. Please also see the Wellbeing zone on the intranet for further support to staff such as the Insight counselling service.

Monitoring progress

The FTSUG will stay in touch with you at appropriate intervals to monitor progress or share updates, as relevant.

Feedback to staff raising concerns

In the spirit of openness and transparency, which characterises an effective speaking up culture, staff raising concerns will be updated on outcomes. However, where patient confidentiality or our Trust’s employment obligations to its staff are concerned, it will not always be possible to give full feedback on the actions being taken. When the concern is closed, feedback on the process and support given to staff will be requested to maximise learning and inform future practice.

Further information

Our Trust’s Speak up Safely (Whistleblowing) policy provides further information on the process and support available to you, including external bodies.

For help, support and advice, contact Liz:
tel: 07557 287749
e-mail: freedomtospeakup@nsft.nhs.uk
or call the confidential whistleblowing line: 01603 421583 and leave a message.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

NSFT PALS provides confidential advice, information and support, helping you to answer any questions you have about our services or about any health matters.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or a different language, please contact PALS and we will do our best to help.

Email: PALS@nsft.nhs.uk
Call PALS Freephone: 0800 279 7257

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust values and celebrates the diversity of all the communities we serve. We are fully committed to ensuring that all people have equality of opportunity to access our service, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership or social and economic status.

Liz Keay is your Freedom to Speak Up Guardian

We want to have a culture of raising and reporting concerns

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The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian is a role which has been developed nationally following recommendations from the Francis Report. Every NHS organisation is required to appoint an FTSU Guardian to be an independent point of contact for those wishing to raise concerns.

What do they do?

- **Clarify** ➔ what the issue is
- **Explore** ➔ what happened and who was involved
- **Options** ➔ what should happen next
- **Actions** ➔ depending on issue, support, signposting, further exploration

What does this involve?

- Provide immediate support and signposting for staff members raising concerns, determining the best course of action and advising the staff member of their options
- Start the facilitation of discussions between staff and management as appropriate
- Act as the interface between employees and other areas of our Trust in cases where employees wish to remain anonymous
- Be a link to Staff Side colleagues in order to gain support and improve resolution results
- To keep a record of concerns raised and feedback as appropriate
- Further develop a culture of openness and freedom for staff to raise concerns to their managers that will be explored and resolved and lessons shared

Guidance for staff raising concerns

1. **Role of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian (FTSUG)**

   This is an independent, impartial role in the organisation with direct access to the Board of Directors and supported by the National Guardian Office. The role was created primarily as additional support to staff who have concerns and to promote a more effective speaking up organisational culture.

   Speaking to the guardian is a first step in discussing a concern you have. The discussion can be by telephone, email or face-to-face meeting. The guardian can help you express your concern, review what you have already done, explore options, agree an action plan and ensure you are receiving the appropriate support.

   There are clear boundaries to the role of the guardian, that is not to replace or undermine existing support mechanisms (for example, trade unions, professional bodies, line managers, human resources). Therefore it is not the role of the guardian to become involved in investigations or representation of staff; however, the guardian does need to ensure that the appropriate actions are being taken.

2. **Status of discussions**

   It is hoped that staff will feel comfortable to raise your concern openly. Any information provided to the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian will remain confidential, unless agreed otherwise or in situations where confidentiality cannot be kept; for example, patient care and safety, criminal activity, safeguarding, health and safety. At the end of the discussion, the FTSUG will summarise agreed actions and clarify which other persons are to be involved and how much information they should be given.

3. **Information governance**

   The FTSUG will log the concern raised in a confidential database. The information captured includes: category of concern, job role, key dates, desired outcome, actions agreed, feedback and learning. This record of concerns is confidential to the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and the Head of patient safety and safeguarding. The record is used for reporting purposes: to the Quality Governance Committee twice-yearly and to the National Guardian office. No individual is identified in any report made.

4. **Is there a difference between raising a concern and whistleblowing?**

   Our Trust's Speak Out Safely (whistleblowing) policy covers the widest range of concerns, some of which will be directed to other Trust policies and procedures; for example, grievance, dignity and respect in the workplace and fraud. You will hear a number of phrases in relation to this area: speaking up, raising concerns, whistleblowing. We want to make it as easy as possible for staff to raise concerns (when the normal line manager / support arrangements are not working). A discussion in the first instance with the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role will help assess how best to do this.

   It will be usual to involve HR management where a situation relates to people issues. Equally, if the concern can be shared with line management, experience shows that this will help to achieve an effective resolution. Furthermore, wherever possible and in the most appropriate way, any staff member (who is the subject of a concern) will be advised of the concern and its content. How this will be done will be fully discussed.

   It is not easy to give a precise definition of the difference between a concern and a whistleblowing case. Essentially, our Trust's overriding principle is that it welcomes staff raising concerns in a culture of openness and dialogue. The same legal protection will be given to all workers who raise a concern which falls within the Public Interest Disclosure Act guidelines.