

Highest numbers of speaking up cases raised with Freedom to Speak Up guardians recorded

Thursday 18 July, 2024

Over 30,000 cases have been brought to Freedom to Speak Up guardians throughout 2023/24

The National Guardian's Office today (18 July 2024) publishes the latest annual speaking up data report, which summarises the themes and learning from the speaking up data shared by Freedom to Speak Up guardians.

The number of cases brought to them last year was the highest ever recorded, a 27.6% increase on the previous year.

The report is published as the National Guardian announces her updated strategy to support cultural change in healthcare to improve worker experience and patient safety.

There are now over 1,200 Freedom to Speak Up guardians supporting healthcare workers to speak up about anything which has an impact on their ability to do their job if they do not feel able to by other means. Freedom to Speak Up guardians have handled over 130,000 cases since the National Guardian's Office first started collecting data in 2017.

Nearly two in every five cases (38.5%) involved an element of inappropriate behaviours and attitudes. This matters because we know that working environments effect quality and safety, impacting on staffing, retention, and ways of working.

Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark, National Guardian for the NHS, said, *"More and more people are coming to their Freedom to Speak Up guardians. This is credit to the efforts made by guardians to foster trust and break down barriers to speaking up within their organisations."*

"Culture is a patient safety issue. Every interaction - whether patient, family member, colleague or consultant - makes a difference to lives and outcomes."

The National Guardian's refreshed vision for the work of the National Guardian's Office is to improve workplace cultures, ensuring workers are confident to speak up, by providing expert support, guidance and challenge.

Since the role of Freedom to Speak Up Guardian was established in 2016, significant achievements have driven cultural change in organisations making it safer to speak up in the healthcare sector in England. However, there remains a lack of consistency in support for listening to workers' voices, which is hampering further progress.

Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark, National Guardian for the NHS, said, *"We know it can take courage to speak up. These case numbers represent 30,000 opportunities for learning and improvement for the benefit of patients and colleagues, yet too many voices still go unheard."*

"Our strategic vision is to move the dial on Freedom to Speak Up. Of course workers should be safe to speak up – safety is the bare minimum - what we are aiming to achieve over the next few years is confidence. This comes when workers feel not only encouraged to raise matters, but that actions will be taken when they do."

For more information or interviews contact: comms@nationalguardianoffice.org.uk

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