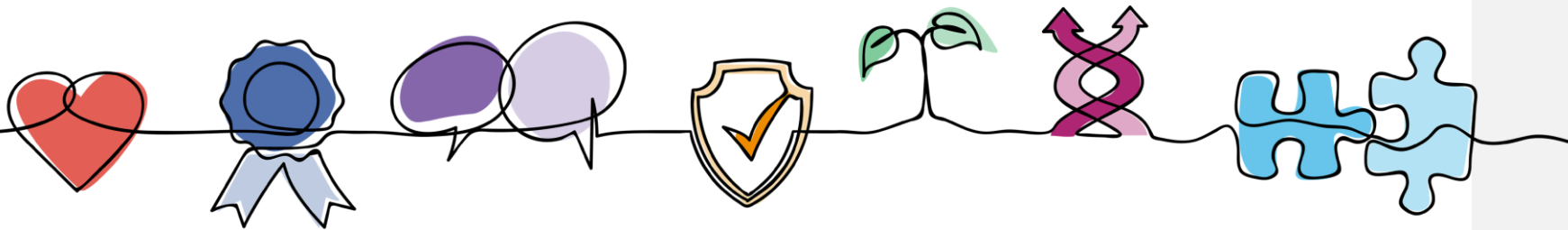


Freedom to Speak up

A reflection and planning tool



Introduction

The senior lead for FTSU in the organisation should take responsibility for completing this reflection tool, at least every 2 years.

This improvement tool is designed to help you identify strengths in yourself, your leadership team and your organisation – and any gaps that need work. It should be used alongside Freedom to speak up: [A guide for leaders in the NHS and organisations delivering NHS services](#), which provides full information about the areas addressed in the statements, as well as recommendations for further reading.

Completing this improvement tool will demonstrate to your senior leadership team, your board or any oversight organisation the progress you have made developing your Freedom to Speak Up arrangements.

You may find that not every section in this tool is relevant to your organisation at this time. For this reason, the tool is provided in Word format to allow you to adapt it to your current needs, retaining the elements that are most useful to you.

If you have any questions about how to use the tool, please contact the national FTSU Team using england.fts-u-enquiries@nhs.net

The self-reflection tool is set out in three stages, set out below.

Stage 1

This section sets out statements for reflection under the eight principles outlined in the guide. They are designed for people in your organisation's board, senior leadership team or – in the case of some primary care organisations – the owner.

You may want to review your position against each of the principles or you may prefer to focus on one or two.

Stage 2

This stage involves summarising the high-level actions you will take over the next 6–24 months to develop your Freedom to Speak Up arrangements. This will help the guardian and the senior lead for Freedom to Speak Up carry out more detailed planning.

Stage 3

Summarise the high-level actions you need to take to share and promote your strengths. This will enable others in your organisation and the wider system to learn from you.

Stage 1: Review your Freedom to Speak Up arrangements against the guide

What to do

- Using the scoring below, mark the statements to indicate the current situation.

1 = significant concern or risk which requires addressing within weeks

2 = concern or risk which warrants discussion to evaluate and consider options

3 = generally applying this well, but aware of room for improvement or gaps in knowledge/approach

4 = an evidenced strength (e.g., through data, feedback) and a strength to build on

5 = confident that we are operating at best practice regionally or nationally (e.g., peers come to use for advice)

- Summarise evidence to support your score.
- Enter any high-level actions for improvement (you will bring these together in Stage 2).
- Make a note of any areas you score 5s in and how you can promote this good practice (you will bring these together in Stage 3).

Principle 1: Value speaking up

For a speaking-up culture to develop across the organisation, a commitment to speaking up must come from the top.

Statements for the senior lead responsible for Freedom to Speak Up to reflect on	Score 1–5 or yes/no
I am knowledgeable about Freedom to Speak Up	4
I have led a review of our speaking-up arrangements at least every two years	No
I am assured that our guardian(s) was recruited through fair and open competition	Yes
I am assured that our guardian(s) has sufficient ringfenced time to fulfil all aspects of the guardian job description	No
I am regularly briefed by our guardian(s)	Yes
I provide effective support to our guardian(s)	Yes
Enter summarised commentary to support your score. No review led yet; ring fenced time has not been taken into account in the role as yet.	
High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)	
1. Ensure a review of speaking up arrangements is organised within 8 months.	
2. Investigate job planning and time requirements.	

Statements for the non-executive director lead responsible for Freedom to Speak Up to reflect on	Score 1–5 or yes/no
I am knowledgeable about Freedom to Speak Up	
I am confident that the board displays behaviours that help, rather than hinder, speaking up	
I effectively monitor progress in board-level engagement with the speaking-up agenda	
I challenge the board to develop and improve its speaking-up arrangements	
I am confident that our guardian(s) is recruited through an open selection process	
I am assured that our guardian(s) has sufficient ringfenced time to fulfil all aspects of the guardian job description	
I am involved in overseeing investigations that relate to the board	
I provide effective support to our guardian(s)	
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p>	
<p>High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)</p>	
1	
2	

Principle 2: Role-model speaking up and set a healthy Freedom to Speak up culture

Role-modelling by leaders is essential to set the cultural tone of the organisation.

Statements for senior leaders	Score 1–5 or yes/no
The whole leadership team has bought into Freedom to Speak Up	Yes
We regularly and clearly articulate our vision for speaking up	Yes
We can evidence how we demonstrate that we welcome speaking up	No
We can evidence how we have communicated that we will not accept detriment	No
We are confident that we have clear processes for identifying and addressing detriment	No
We can evidence feedback from staff that shows we are role-modelling the behaviours that encourage people to speak up	No
We regular discuss speaking-up matters in detail	Yes
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>Need to look at ways to help explain detriment and what we will do to not accept this. The staff survey has been completed this year for the first time and currently the results of that are embargoed.</p>	
<p>High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1 ,2 and 3)</p>	
<p>1. Need to have clear processes for identifying and addressing detriment.</p>	
<p>2. Need to evidence how we demonstrate that we welcome speaking up.</p>	

Statements for the person responsible for organisational development	Score 1–5 or yes/no
I am knowledgeable about Freedom to Speak Up	4
We have included creating a speaking-up culture (separate from the Freedom to Speak Up guardian process) in our wider culture improvement plans	Yes
We have adapted our organisational culture so that it becomes a just and learning culture for our workers	No
We support our guardian(s) to make effective links with our staff networks	Yes
We use Freedom to Speak Up intelligence and data to influence our speaking-up culture	No
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>We do not have a specific identified individual with responsibility for organisation development linked to FTSU and instead this is consumed in a number of different roles. There is a plan and a JD for Freedom to Speak Up Champions in the ICB however due to organisations change we have not been in a position to advertise or recruit to these. There is likely to be some element of targeted recruitment to ensure that underrepresented groups and minority populations are well represented in the FTSU areas.</p>	
High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)	
1 Identify FTSU links to specific OD work	
2 Promotion of the role of Freedom to Speak Up Champions once recruited	

Statements about how much time the guardian(s) has to carry out their role	Score 1–5 or yes/no
We have considered all relevant intelligence and data when making our decision about the amount of ringfenced time our guardian(s) has, so that they are able to follow the National Guardian’s Office guidance and universal job description and to attend network events	No
We have reviewed the ringfenced time our Guardian has in light of any significant events	No
The whole senior team or board has been in discussions about the amount of ringfenced time needed for our guardian(s)	No
We are confident that we have appropriate financial investment in place for the speaking-up programme and for recruiting guardians	No
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>This has been flagged at Board and in other meetings that we do not have ringfenced time for those involved in the FTSU work and also that we do not have a ringfenced budget should there need to be investigations funded. This is a greater concern as we assume responsibility for primary care FTSU into 2026.</p>	
<p>High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)</p>	
1 At strategic plan for how we allow for ringfenced time in a pressured organisation	
2	

Principle 3: Make sure workers know how to speak up and feel safe and encouraged to do so

Regular, clear and inspiring communication is an essential part of making a speaking-up culture a reality.

Statements about your speaking-up policy	Score 1–5 or yes/no
Our organisation's speaking-up policy reflects the 2022 update	Yes
We can evidence that our staff know how to find the speaking-up policy	Yes
Enter summarised evidence to support your score. Staff have found and utilised the policy. It is also part of the induction programme and was referenced in the staff survey. We could always do more.	
High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)	
1 Once FTSU champions are recruited there needs to be a comms campaign around the role, the policy and the support of the Board	
2	

Statements about how speaking up is promoted	Score 1–5 or yes/no
We have used clear and effective communications to publicise our guardian(s)	Yes
We have an annual plan to raise the profile of Freedom to Speak Up	No
We tell positive stories about speaking up and the changes it can bring	No
We measure the effectiveness of our communications strategy for Freedom to Speak Up	No
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>We have publicised our Guardian through communications and through the induction training however there has not been an opportunity yet to do more to raise the profile due to competing pressures and organisational changes.</p>	
High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)	
1 Defined communications strategy once the FTSU champions have been recruited	
2	

Principle 4: When someone speaks up, thank them, listen and follow up

Speaking up is not easy, so when someone does speak up, they must feel appreciated, heard and involved.

Statements about training	Score 1–5 or yes/no*
We have mandated the National Guardian's Office and Health Education England training	No
Freedom to Speak Up features in the corporate induction as well as local team-based inductions	Yes
Our HR and OD teams measure the impact of speaking-up training	No
Enter summarised evidence to support your score. Freedom to Speak Up has been incorporated into the induction for approximately 18 months now however there needs to be concentrated effort into developing the training and measurement of impact.	
High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)	
1 Task the OD&T group with identifying the programmes of training and how they can be added to the list of organisational training	
2	

Statements about support for managers within teams or directorates	Score 1–5 or yes/no
We support our managers to understand that speaking up is a valuable learning opportunity and not something to be feared	No
All managers and senior leaders have received training on Freedom to Speak Up	No
We have enabled managers to respond to speaking-up matters in a timely way	No
We are confident that our managers are learning from speaking up and adapting their environments to ensure a safe speaking-up culture	No
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>There is little training which is required of senior leaders and managers only, generally managers will undertake the same training as all staff. This needs to be considered within the work of the OD team looking at the leadership programme for the ICB.</p> <p>Due to many of the ICB FTSU queries relating to other organisations it is often difficult to progress these in a timely fashion where the ICB cannot control the actions of other organisations. This requires a culture shift and hopefully the work to develop the network of Guardians may support this.</p>	
<p>High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)</p>	
<p>1 Develop the network of Guardians</p>	
<p>2 Request the OD team consider this as part of the leadership programmes.</p>	

Principle 5: Use speaking up as an opportunity to learn and improve

The ultimate aim of speaking up is to improve patient safety and the working environment for all NHS workers.

Statements about triangulation	Score 1–5 or yes/no
We have supported our guardian(s) to effectively identify potential areas of concern and to follow up on them	Yes
We use triangulated data to inform our overall cultural and safety improvement programmes	Yes
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>Where concerns that are specifically related to safety and quality are raised these are taken into relevant Quality and Safety processes to ensure continued development of the actions.</p>	
High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)	
1	
2	

Statements about learning for improvement	Score 1–5 or yes/no
We regularly identify good practice from others – for example, through self-assessment or gap analysis	Yes
We use this information to add to our Freedom to Speak Up improvement plan	No
We share the good practice we have generated both internally and externally to enable others to learn	No
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>The ICB recognise that there remains a significant amount of work to do to ensure that the FTSU process is well understood in the organisation and so that other staff can support the process. As the cases have developed they have identified areas of policy amendment and change that are required across the organisation and the limitations and possibilities of the ICB involvement. The ICB has also recognised that it needs to develop a questionnaire for completion by those raising concerns to formally record any feedback provided however it is observed from provider organisations that those who have sent such a questionnaire to anyone raising concerns have a very low return rate and do not therefore capture data such as the ethnicity or protected characteristics of those raising concerns.</p> <p>The addition of the FTSU champions who will be closer to directorates and teams and the regular network meetings with partners will be a good way to obtain other evidence of good practice and produce an improvement plan. The FTSU Guardian has also forged links with neighbouring ICBs and will utilise that route to identify opportunities to improve practice too.</p>	
<p>High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)</p>	
1	
2	

Principle 6: Support guardians to fulfil their role in a way that meets workers' needs and National Guardian's Office requirements

Statements about how our guardian(s) was appointed	Score 1–5 or yes/no
Our guardian(s) was appointed in a fair and transparent way	Yes
Our guardian(s) has been trained and registered with the National Guardian Office	Yes
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>The guardian was appointed as part of the recruitment to the Executive team, it was part of the role of the Executive Director of Clinical and Care professionals which was overseen by NHSE and Gatenby Sanderson. The Executive Director role profile included the FTSU elements however there was no separate recruitment specifically for the FTSU guardian. That said there will be a fair and transparent recruitment exercise for the FTSU champions within the organisation.</p>	
High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)	
1 Work with HR to develop the FTSU Guardian JD in readiness for if there is a need to recruit in the future	
2	

Statements about the way we support our guardian(s)	Score 1–5 or yes/no
Our guardian(s) has performance and development objectives in place	No
Our guardian(s) receives sufficient one-to-one support from the senior lead and other relevant executives or senior leaders	3
Our guardian(s) has access to a confidential source of emotional support or supervision	Yes
There is an effective plan in place to cover the guardian's absence	Yes
Our guardian(s) provides data quarterly to the National Guardian's Office	Yes
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>In the event that the guardian is absent the Executive Director of Nursing would currently perform the functions of that role however the ICB is developing plans to train nominated individuals to act in the FTSU Guardian's absence.</p> <p>The FTSU has performance and development objectives in place however these do not solely relate to the role of FTSU Guardian. The FTSU Guardian largely has the support of executive colleagues and senior leaders.</p> <p>The FTSU Guardian receives some emotional support and supervision from peers in other ICBs and the National Guardian's office.</p>	
<p>High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)</p>	
<p>1 Specific objectives will be added into the FTSU Guardian and the Deputy Director of Legal and Regulatory Functions appraisal/PDRs related to the FTSU roles and publicity around the role of the Guardian and speaking up.</p>	
<p>2</p>	

Statements about our speaking up process	Score 1–5 or yes/no
Our speaking-up case-handling procedures are documented	Yes
We have engaged with managers and other key stakeholders on the role they play in handling speaking-up cases	No
We are assured that confidentiality is maintained effectively	Yes
We ensure that speaking-up cases are progressed in a timely manner within the teams or directorates we are responsible for	Yes
We are confident that if people speak up within the teams or directorates we are responsible for, they will have a consistently positive experience	No
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>The processes are documented within the policy including processes to maintain confidentiality and manage conflict.</p>	
<p>High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)</p>	
<p>1 Undertake a workshop within the SLT to highlight the role of the Guardian and the benefits of the speaking up processes.</p>	

2

Principle 7: Identify and tackle barriers to speaking up

However strong an organisation's speaking-up culture, there will always be some barriers to speaking up, whether organisation wide or in small pockets. Finding and addressing them is an ongoing process.

Statements about barriers	Score 1–5 or yes/no
We have identified the barriers that exist for people in our organisation	Yes
We know who isn't speaking up and why	No
We are confident that our Freedom to Speak Up champions are clear on their role	No
We have evaluated the impact of actions taken to reduce barriers?	No
Enter summarised evidence to support your score. There remains a view that whistleblowing and speaking up within the organisation carry a risk of being penalised as a result. There also persists a general misunderstanding about what amounts to speaking up versus grievance regarding employment. The triage has assisted with this understanding however it is clear that the issue remains.	

High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)
1 Ensure that SLT are aware of the difference between grievance and freedom to speak up
2

Commented [C1]: Could we ask the National Guardian's office to come and do a session at Board?

Statements about detriment	Score 1–5 or yes/no
We have carried out work to understand what detriment for speaking up looks and feels like	No
We monitor whether workers feel they have suffered detriment after they have spoken up	Yes
We are confident that we have a robust process in place for looking into instances where a worker has felt they have suffered detriment	Yes
Our non-executive director for Freedom to Speak Up is involved in overseeing how allegations of detriment are reviewed	Yes
Enter summarised evidence to support your score.	
<p>Many of the allegations which come to the ICB are from those not employed by the ICB and relate to concerns about other organisations. We therefore ask the individual what they have suffered as a detriment which is most commonly demotion or moving to a different role which they directly attribute to speaking up, or feeling isolated and having to leave their employment as a result. In one case there was a suggestion that not only had that person been forced out of the organisation but the organisation was also contacting prospective employers telling them not to employ that individual. Whilst we could find no evidence to support that, the fact that the individual felt that was the case was a detriment as a direct consequence of speak up.</p>	

These matters where identified are reported to the Board and also to the non-executive director for Freedom to Speak Up in regular informal catch ups between the FTSU Guardian and the Deputy Director of Legal and Regulatory functions.

High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)

1

2

Principle 8: Continually improve our speaking up culture

Building a speaking-up culture requires continuous improvement. Two key documents will help you plan and assess your progress: the improvement strategy and the improvement and delivery plan.

Statements about your speaking-up strategy	Score 1–5 or yes/no
We can evidence that we have a comprehensive and up-to-date strategy to improve the speaking-up culture	No
We are confident that the Freedom to Speak Up improvement strategy fits with our organisation's overall cultural improvement strategy and that it supports the delivery of related strategies	N/A
We routinely evaluate the Freedom To Speak Up strategy, using a range of qualitative and quantitative measures, and provide updates to our organisation	N/A
Our improvement plan is up to date and on track	N/A
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>We do not currently have a Freedom to Speak up strategy. This is something that we will need to explore once the champions are appointed to support the work.</p>	
High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)	
1 Appoint FTSU champions	
2 Prepare and socialise the strategy	

Statements about evaluating speaking-up arrangements	Score 1–5 or yes/no
We have a plan in place to measure whether there is an improvement in how safe and confident people feel to speak up	No
Our plan follows a recognised ‘plan, do, study, act’ or other quality improvement approach	N/A
Our speaking-up arrangements have been evaluated within the last two years	Yes
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>Our arrangements are evaluated through regular Board reporting and we will ensure that this document is now utilised at least twice a year to ensure that there is action taken to demonstrate continuous quality improvement.</p>	
High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)	
1 Schedule reviewing this document and the action plan	
2	

Statements about assurance	Score 1–5 or yes/no
We have supported our guardian(s) to structure their report in a way that provides us with the assurance we need	Yes
We have we evaluated the content of our guardian report against the suggestions in the guide	Yes
Our guardian(s) provides us with a report in person at least twice a year	Yes
We receive a variety of assurance that relates to speaking up	Yes
We seek and receive assurance from the relevant executives/senior leaders that speaking up results in learning and improvement	Yes
<p>Enter summarised evidence to support your score.</p> <p>The Board regularly ask for updates related to Freedom to Speak Up as does the Quality Committee. The papers submitted focus on themes and trends and whether the cases received are being managed in accordance with the policy. This document will go to Board for the first time in February 2025 and thereafter twice a year for assurance.</p>	
<p>High-level actions needed to bring about improvement (focus on scores 1, 2 and 3)</p>	
1 Schedule the review of the action plan and documentation in line with Board timetables.	
2	

Stage 2: Summarise your high-level development actions for the next 6 – 24 months

Development areas to address in the next 6–12 months	Target date	Action owner
1 Recruit Freedom to Speak Up Champions	1 April 2025	Gemma Mazingham
2 Develop the ICB strategy for Freedom to Speak Up	1 June 2025	Abigail Combes
3 Ensure speaking up actions appear in the PDR/appraisals of those staff supporting the function	1 June 2025	Nigel Wells
4 Present at SLT the foundations for what good looks like in the FTSU capacity (consider asking the National Guardian's office to support)	1 June 2025	Nigel Wells
5 Develop the staff training offer with the Champions	1 September 2025	Nigel Wells, Abigail Combes, Gemma Mazingham, Neil Robson
6 Schedule the review of this document at 6 monthly intervals and report to Board	1 June 2025	Abigail Combes, Louise Corson
7 Identify and train deputies for the Guardian	1 September 2025	Nigel Wells
8		

Development areas to address in the next 12–24 months	Target date	Action owner
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

Stage 3: Summary of areas of strength to share and promote

High-level actions needed to share and promote areas of strength (focus on scores 4 and 5)	Target date	Action owner
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		