Trust Policy and Procedure
Freedom to Speak Up Policy

Policy Summary
This policy and procedure replaces the 'Raising a matter of Concern Policy (Whistleblowing)' has been reviewed and updated following the Freedom to Speak Up report published by Sir Robert Francis in 2015. The content and format of this document is in line with the principles outlined in the national integrated whistleblowing policy published by NHS England and NHS Improvement in 2016 and updated to incorporate the NHS England and National Guardian recommendations in 2023.

Document Detail	
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Document name	Freedom to Speak Up Policy
Version	1.3
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Owner	Chief People Officer (Executive Lead for Freedom to Speak Up)
Author	Lead Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
Approved by, date	Trust Management Executive 21 November 2023 People, Culture & Education Committee 6 December 2023 Staffside Executive Committee October 2023
Superseded documents	Raising a Matter of Concern Policy (Whistleblowing) 2.6
Related documents	Trust Safeguarding Policy, Counter Fraud Policy, Grievance policy, Disciplinary Policy, Procedure and Rules, Health & Safety Policy, Trust Values, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013
Keywords	Concern, Whistleblowing
Relevant external law, regulation, standards	This Policy defines a corporate standard and procedure for implementation and monitoring of the Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998) Trust-wide, and takes account of the PAS 1998:2008 Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice (2008) Standards for Better Health, NMC, GMC
Supporting references	N/A

Change History		
Date	Change details, since approval	Approved by
March 2026	Update to protected disclosure information, email or intranet links and remove reference to Speak Up Champions	
April 2026	Update legislation on Protected Disclosure	

If you would like a Braille or large print copy of this procedure, or need to have it translated into

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another language, please contact the Workforce Directorate, and it will be arranged.

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Speak up - we will listen

We welcome speaking up and we will listen. By speaking up at work you will be playing a vital role in helping us to keep improving our services for all patients and the working environment for our staff.

This policy is for all our workers. The NHS People Promise commits to ensuring that "we each have a voice that counts, that we feel safe and confident to speak up, and take the time to really listen to understand the hopes and fears that lie beyond the words".

We want to hear about any concerns which you have, whether or not you may have some doubts about them and whichever part of the organisation you work in. We know some groups in our workforce feel they are seldom heard or are reluctant to speak up. You could be an agency worker, bank worker, locum or student. We also know that workers with disabilities, or from a minority ethnic background (global majority) or the LGBTQI+ community may experience barriers to speak up. **This policy is for all workers (including volunteers) and we want to hear all our workers' concerns and we will listen to them.**

This policy will answer the questions you may have about raising concerns and includes:

1. What can I speak up about?
2. How do I feel safe to speaking up?
3. Who can speak up?
4. Who can I speak up to?
5. How should I speak up?
6. What support is available?
7. What will we do?
8. What Guidance is there for line managers, lead clinicians and tutors?
9. What about protected disclosures?

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1. What can I speak up about?

When we use the terms 'speaking up', 'raising a matter of concern', or 'whistleblowing', we are referring to the same kinds of things. You can speak up about anything that gets in the way of patient care or affects your working life. That could be something which doesn't feel right to you and examples might include:

- Unsafe patient care
- Concern about a possible cover-up of patient harm
- Lack of or poor response to a reported patient safety incident
- Lack or poor response to previously raised concerns about behaviours
- Unsafe working conditions
- Inadequate induction or training for staff
- Suspicions of fraud (which can also be reported to our counter fraud team) http://gti/services/finance/counter_fraud/suspectingfraud.aspx
- A bullying culture

Speaking up is about all of these things.

Speaking up, therefore, captures a range of issues, some of which may be appropriate for other existing processes (for example, HR or patient safety, and full details of all relevant policies are on our intranet.

Remember that if you are a healthcare professional you may have a professional duty to report a concern. If in doubt, please raise it. As an organisation, we will listen and work with you to identify the most appropriate way of responding to the issue you raise.

2. How do I feel safe Speaking Up?

Your speaking up to us is a gift because it helps us identify opportunities for improvement that we might not otherwise know about.

We will not tolerate anyone being prevented or deterred from speaking up or being mistreated, for example, bullied or victimised, because they have spoken up.

We hope you will feel comfortable raising your concern openly, but will understand if you want to raise it confidentially, that is, you are only willing for your identity to be known to the person you report your concern to, and no-one else. We will keep your identity confidential if that is your wish, unless we are required to disclose it by law (for example, to the police if a criminal act is suspected).

You can reach the guardians by email to gstt.speakup@nhs.net; this mailbox is monitored (Mon -Fri 9-5) and accessible to the lead guardian and deputy guardians only. If you would prefer to contact a single guardian only, the email addresses and telephone numbers are listed on the intranet.

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You may choose not to disclose your identity and send your concerns from an anonymised email address, the Guardians will respond to that email address.

If you think that your confidentiality has been breached, you should contact the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians (by email at gstt.speakup@nhs.net) or any member of the Trust's Board of directors. The Chair's office can be contacted on 020 7188 1112.

If you fear what might happen to you if you speak up, or think you have been victimised, bullied or disadvantaged in any way as a result of speaking up about your concern, you should contact the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians. Alternatively, if you belong to a trade union or professional body you may wish to contact them for support.

3. Who can speak up?

Anyone who works, or volunteers, in the Trust, and this encompasses all healthcare professionals, including those in pharmacy, optometry and dentistry, non-clinical workers, receptionists, directors, managers, contractors, volunteers, students, trainees, junior doctors, locum, bank and agency workers, and former workers.

4. Who can I speak up to?

Speaking up internally

Most speaking up happens through conversations with supervisors, line managers and tutors where challenges are raised and resolved quickly. We strive for a culture where that is normal, everyday practice and encourage you to explore this option – it may well be the easiest and simplest way of resolving matters.

However, you have other options in terms of who you can speak up to depending on what feels most appropriate to you. You can find all the details of how to speak up on the intranet. Please use any of the following:

- **Confidential email**

You can email gstt.speakup@nhs.net in complete confidence. You will receive a response within 48 hours and advice on what to do next from the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians (see below). If you would prefer to contact a single guardian only, the email addresses and telephone numbers are listed on the intranet.

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- **Freedom to Speak Up Guardians**

The Trust has appointed a Lead Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and two Deputy Freedom to Freedom to Speak up Guardians as well as part-time Guardians, who act independently and impartially to provide advice to staff at any stage of raising a concern. The Guardians have all completed the guardian training and are registered with the National Guardian's Office. They have access to anyone in the organisation, including the Chairman, Chief

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Executive and Board of Directors and, if necessary, can take an issue outside of the organisation for example to the CQC, NHS England or the National Guardian's office.

- **Senior manager or director** with responsibility for the subject matter you are speaking up about.

- **Our patient safety or clinical governance teams** (where concerns relate to patient safety or wider quality matters) can be contacted by email: gstt.patientsafetyteam@nhs.net.

- **Our Employee Relations Team**

You can reach the Employee Relations Team by raising a transaction on the People Hub

- **Our Local Counter Fraud Team (where concerns relate to fraud)**

Details of who to contact are on the Trust intranet

- **Staffside** Detail of how to contact staffside are on GTi

Speaking up externally

If, for whatever reason, you cannot or do not want to talk to anyone at the Trust, then you can speak up externally to:

- **External helpline provided by Vivup 0800 023 9324**

The helpline is provided as part of the Trust's Employee Assistance Programme. When calling, make sure you ask for the speaking up service so that you are directed to the correct person.

- **Trade Union or professional body**

If you are a member of a trade union you can find your contact details are on GTi

Alternatively, you can contact your professional body, if you belong to one, for advice.

- **Care Quality Commission** (CQC) for quality and safety concerns about the services it regulates – you can find out more about how the CQC handles concerns at

  https://www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us/report-concern/report-concern-if-you-are-member-staff

- **NHS England** at https://www.england.nhs.uk/

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NHS England may decide to investigate your concern themselves, ask us or another appropriate organisation to investigate (usually with their oversight) and/or use the information you provide to inform their oversight of the relevant organisations involved. The precise action NHS England take will depend on the nature of your concern and how it relates to their various statutory roles.

Please note that neither the Care Quality Commission nor NHS England can get involved in individual employment matters, such as a concern from an individual about feeling bullied.

- **NHS Counter Fraud Agency** https://reportfraud.cfa.nhs.uk/ for concerns about fraud and corruption, using their online reporting form or calling their Freephone line **0800 028 4060**

- **Public Concern at Work**, an independent charity providing legal advice 020 7404 6609

If you would like to speak up about the conduct of a member of staff, you can do this by contacting the relevant professional body, such as the General Medical Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health & Care Professions Council, General Dental Council, General Optical Council or General Pharmaceutical Council.

Appendix B contains information about making a 'protected disclosure'.

5. How should I speak up?

Confidentiality
The most important aspect of your speaking up is the information you can provide, not your identity.

You have a choice about how you speak up.

- **Openly:** you are happy that the person you speak up to knows your identity and that they can share this with anyone else involved in responding.
- **Confidentially:** you are happy to reveal your identity to the person you choose to speak up to on the condition that they will not share this without your consent.
- **Anonymously:** you do not want to reveal your identity to anyone. This can make it difficult for others to ask you for further information about the matter and may make it more complicated to act to resolve the issue. It also means that you might not be able to access any extra support you need and receive any feedback on the outcome.

In all circumstances, please be ready to explain as fully as you can the information and circumstances that prompted you to speak up.

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- **What happens when I speak up?** This is set out in Appendix A

6. What support is available?

You can find out about the local support available to you on our ***Showing We Care*** GTi pages http://gti/benefits/benefits.aspx.

We also have the following local staff networks which can also be a valuable source of support:

- **Multicultural Staff Network**
- **Staff Disability and Long-Term Health Conditions Forum**
- **LGBT Staff Network**
- **Inclusion Agents**
- **Staff Wellbeing Champion Network**

You can access a range of health and wellbeing support via NHS England:

- **Supporting our NHS People:** https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/
- **NHS England's Speak Up Support Scheme:** https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/freedom-to-speak-up/speaking-up-support-scheme/

You can contact the following organisations:

- **Speak Up Direct** provides free, independent, confidential advice on the speaking up process: https://speakup.direct/
- The charity **Protect** provides confidential and legal advice on speaking up: https://protect-advice.org.uk/
- The **Trades Union Congress** provides information on how to join a trade union: https://www.tuc.org.uk/joinunion
- **The Law Society** may be able to point you to other sources of advice and support: https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/public/for-public-visitors/
- **The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS**) gives advice and assistance, including on early conciliation regarding employment disputes: https://www.acas.org.uk/

7. What will we do?

The matter you are speaking up about may be best considered under a specific existing policy/ process; for example, our process for dealing with bullying and harassment. If so, we will discuss

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that with you. If you speak up about something that does not fall into an HR or patient safety incident process, this policy ensures that the matter is still addressed.

Resolution and Investigation

We support our managers and supervisors to listen to the issue you raise and take action to resolve it wherever possible. In most cases, it's important that this opportunity is fully explored, which may be with facilitated conversations and/or mediation.

Where an investigation is needed, this will be objective and conducted by someone who is suitably independent (this might be someone from outside the Trust or from a different part of the Trust) and trained in investigations. It will reach a conclusion within a reasonable timescale (which we will notify you of), and a report will be produced that identifies any issues to prevent problems recurring. The Freedom to Speak up Guardian will oversee the investigation to ensure it is conducted fairly.

Any employment issues that have implications for you/ your capability or conduct identified during the investigation will be considered separately.

Communicating with you

We will treat you with respect at all times and will thank you for speaking up. We will discuss the issues with you to ensure we understand exactly what you are worried about. If we decide to investigate, we will tell you how long we expect the investigation to take and agree with you how to keep you up to date with its progress. Wherever possible, we will share the full investigation report with you (while respecting the confidentiality of others) and recognising that some matters may be strictly confidential; as such it may be that we cannot even share the outcome with you. We will however provide feedback to let you know your concerns have been addressed.

How we learn from your speaking up

We want speaking up to improve the services we provide for patients and the environment our staff work in. Where it identifies improvements that can be made, we will ensure necessary changes are made, and are working effectively. Lessons will be shared with teams across the Trust, or more widely, as appropriate.

Review

We will seek feedback from workers about their experience of speaking up. We will review the effectiveness of this policy and our local process, with the outcome published and changes made as appropriate.

Senior leaders' oversight

A thematic overview of the feedback received by the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians is included in the Trust Board reports.

8. What guidance is there for supervisors and line managers?

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This is set out in Appendix B.

9. Monitoring compliance with this Policy

The Trust's Freedom to speak up guardians are responsible for keeping records of concerns raised and outcomes in line with guidance provided by the National Guardians Office. They are responsible for escalating urgent safety concerns to the Trust Executive Team where appropriate and report formally to the trust board on a regular basis.

The Trust board has the overarching responsibility of ensuring this policy is adhered to and used to promote an open and honest culture of raising concerns.

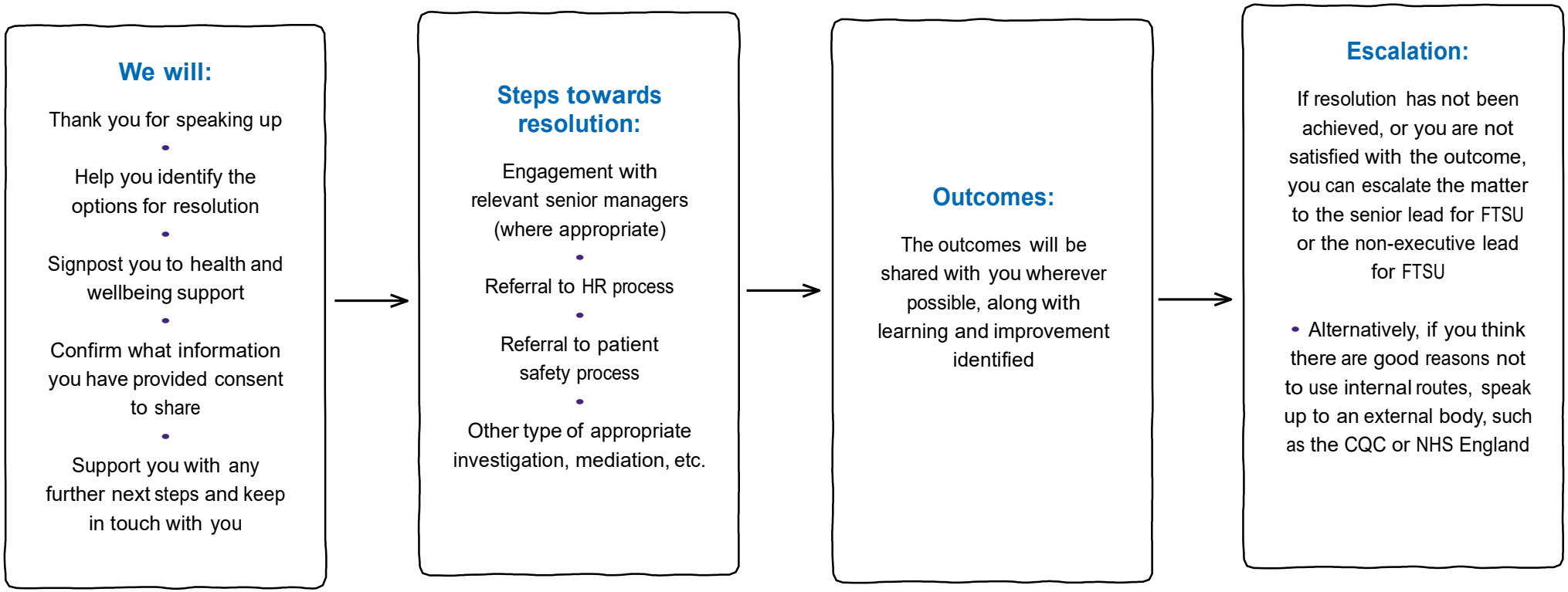
10. Making a protected disclosure

A protected disclosure is defined in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. This legislation allows certain categories of worker to lodge a claim for compensation with an employment tribunal if they suffer as a result of speaking up. The legislation is complex and to qualify for protection under it, very specific criteria must be met in relation to who is speaking up, about what and to whom. Types of protected disclosure include a criminal offence, danger to health and safety or the environment, and sexual harassment. To help you consider whether you might meet these criteria, please seek independent advice from **Protect** (https://protect-advice.org.uk) or a legal representative.

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Appendix A

What will happen when I speak up?



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Appendix B

Guidance for line managers

The effective handling of concerns is an integral and important part of your role. Please familiarise yourself with the Trust's policies and procedures outlined in this document. Your response at an early stage of a concern being raised could stop things escalating.

To support you the Trust has appointed a Lead Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, two Deputy Guardians and part-time Guardians. You can find details on the intranet.

The Guardians acts independently and impartially to provide advice to managers and staff at any stage of a concern.

The Guardians have access to anyone in the organisation, including the Chief Executive and Board of Directors and, if necessary, they can go outside the organisation.

You can contact the Guardians by emailing gstt.speakup@nhs.net or phoning the guardians, see contact details on the intranet.

Please alert one a Guardian as soon as possible if an individual comes to you with a concern that will require investigation or referral to someone else, or if you receive anonymous information. This will ensure a timely response, avoid duplication, and help prevent important information getting lost.

These points are intended to offer some helpful prompts:

- Always offer individuals a scheduled conversation in a private environment or, if they prefer, on the phone. Let them know they can bring someone with them for support if they want – a colleague or union representative, for example.

- Thank the individual for raising the matter with you and commit to taking their concerns seriously. Recognise this may be a troubling time for them and offer reassurance.

- If the individual has requested confidentiality, this must be respected (unless disclosure is required by law). The same degree of confidentiality should be offered to other individuals implicated in issues being raised.

- Listen carefully to the issues being raised and decide whether or not they should be handled under this policy – see **What can I speak up about?** above. Seek advice from HR or the Guardian if you are unsure whether the issue is better dealt with as, for example, a grievance, employment matter, or disagreement between individuals.

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- Focus on the issues being raised: avoid jumping to conclusions or making any pre-judgments about the individual raising the concern. Even if you have some personal reservations about the individual, it doesn't mean that the points they are raising on this occasion are invalid.

- Emphasise that it is the Trust's position to support and protect those who genuinely raise concerns, even if their belief proves to be mistaken. Give a clear indication of expected timescales and outline what further advice and support is available to them, or steps they can take if they still have concerns – see **Who can I speak up to?** above.

- Be clear about what the individual should do if he/she feels victimised or bullied by colleagues or peers as a direct result of them raising a concern, offering support and reassurance.

- Ensure you make clear notes of all discussions and retain them securely to maintain confidentiality.

- If the matter raised is relatively straightforward, act swiftly to resolve it and note any lessons for the future and for other parts of the Trust. Feed back to and thank the individual.

- **If the issue requires investigation or referral to another team or part of the Trust, please alert the Freedom to Speak Up office as soon as possible (see above). You will be supported and advised on how to proceed.**

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