

National Guardian
Freedom to Speak Up

Next Steps: Priorities 2020-2021

30TH APRIL 2020

BACKGROUND

The National Guardian's Office (NGO) has been operational for four years. During this time:

- The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian network has grown well-beyond initial expectations
- Freedom to Speak Up Guardians have become established in a diverse range of organisations
- The number of cases guardians are dealing with has steadily grown
- The case review process has evolved and a wide range of case reviews have been carried out
- Our understanding of Freedom to Speak Up and the impact of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian network has increased
- The profile of Freedom to Speak Up and its importance in creating cultures that support the safety of patients and welfare of workers has grown
- Freedom to Speak Up has started to become embedded in the support and regulation offered to trusts and other providers

Alongside this, the expectations that Freedom to Speak Up Guardians and others have of the NGO have also become greater. The funding and staffing of the office have increased to support the NGO's response to these expectations around primary care and integration. The NGO now receives a budget of £1.66m/annum. Staffing levels at the time of writing are 17 members of staff, including the National Guardian.

In line with its expectations of others, the NGO has consistently sought feedback on its performance. A summary of the feedback on the NGO received from Freedom to Speak Up Guardians as part of the latest survey of the guardian network can be found in the **Annex** to this document.

Broadly, this feedback can be grouped in two ways:

1. Suggestions for improvement in how the NGO functions and, in particular, supports Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, including:
 - Improving the response to queries from Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, and providing more specific support where we can
 - The provision of more training
 - The production of further guidance on Freedom to Speak Up, making this more applicable beyond trusts
 - Increasing the NGO's presence at regional meetings, and doing more to support networking.
2. Suggestions for longer term changes, including on the nature and function of the office, including:

- the development of mechanisms to increase the NGO's abilities to drive the consistency and quality of Freedom to Speak Up, particularly where this falls below expectations

To support the NGO's response to this feedback, and help move the office into a position where it can support a longer-term strategy on Freedom to Speak Up, a number of other changes in the office's approach are needed, including;

- An enhanced capacity and capability to develop a more data-driven approach. This will facilitate a broader understanding of enablers and barriers to speaking up
- More partnership working with regulators and other bodies in the health system to enable them to role-model good speaking up practice and promote alignment of drivers that incentivise, monitor, regulate and support Freedom to Speak Up

The following pages set out the NGO's response to this feedback in the coming year.

Responding to Feedback

Action: Improve the office's offer of support and guidance

Guardians would like more timely and clearer responses when they contact the office. This is at a time when the number of enquiries received by the office is growing, and the guardian network itself is growing and diversifying. More guardians are also asking for 'surgery' slots so they can receive more detailed 1-2-1 support when they are working with particularly complex cases.

In addition, as the guardian role matures, there are increasing requests for further guidance about the implementation of the role and more detailed information on the NGO's expectations.

Next steps:

- The NGO will take over front-line call handling from the CQC's National Call Service Centre.
- More NGO staff will be available for 1-2-1 'surgery' slots.
- More guidance notes will be produced, and the guidance that the NGO expects Freedom to Speak Up Guardians to follow will be made clearer on our website and in our bulletins.
- The NGO website will be reviewed and a programme put in place to enhance the amount and accessibility of the information it contains

Action: Further enable existing guardians to support each other

The established regional networks have provided much valued local support for guardians. However, the numbers of guardians are growing. Many guardians tell us that they are still unaware of local networks, and there is a misconception that regional networks are for trusts only. In some cases guardians rarely attend meetings and do not tap into, or contribute to, the offer of local support.

The regional networks are chaired and supported locally, but the NGO receives feedback that chairs want more support from the office. Some organisations also want more opportunities to build relationships with others who provide similar services.

Next steps:

- The NGO will work with existing network chairs to ensure that network meetings are as accessible and widely promoted as possible
- The existing arrangements for chairing regional network meetings will be refreshed, with an updated set of expectations and firmer offer of support
- Wherever possible, the NGO attend regional network meetings

- More networking opportunities will be created for a range of organisations including: national bodies, hospices, and Trusts providing primary care services.

Action: Take positive action to support guardians in trusts with less positive speaking up cultures

Speaking up is still in its formative stage, and we have focussed on learning from the best and sharing good practice where we have found it. However, indicators of speaking up culture are emerging.

Guardians in more challenged organisations are faced with the task of supporting leaders and workers whilst often feeling less supported themselves. We want to do more to identify and support guardians in those more challenged organisations.

Next steps:

- Using an established data set (see below), the NGO will begin to develop a programme to identify the most challenged organisations in relation to Freedom to Speak Up and work with those organisations to develop and deliver improvement support activities.

Action: Improve our understanding of the impact of the guardian role, and Freedom to Speak Up culture in the NHS

The data collection process and guardian survey continue to provide valuable insight into speaking up cultures and the implementation of the guardian role.

The Freedom to Speak Up Index has provided a further vehicle to look at speaking up in trusts, and work with the NHS Model Hospital team is beginning to enable data to be published and used to drive change.

Next steps:

- Working with NHS E/I the NGO will develop a common data set that reflects Freedom to Speak Up in trusts in the round.
- This common data set will be made available on the NHS Model Hospital, for use by all trusts.
- The Freedom to Speak Up index will be used again as an indicator of Freedom to Speak Up in trusts, and work will be carried out to broaden its constituent data set to be more reflective of all aspects of Freedom to Speak Up.

Action: Develop governance arrangements and explore further the office's standing and role in the wider system

The office's current governance arrangements are based on an early assessment of requirements at the time that the office was in 'set-up' mode. As the office's size, role and profile is growing these need to be reviewed and more actively managed. This will put the NGO in a stronger position to give the firmer direction that Freedom to

Speak Up guardians are seeking, and to take action where expectations are not met.

Next steps:

- The NGO will continue to engage with the organisations that fund it through its Partnership Working Group and Accountability and Liaison Board.
- Working with DHSC and its funding partners, the NGO will investigate opportunities that will enable it to give stronger direction to providers and the healthcare system as a whole.

Action: Increase reach into the primary care landscape

Regional Liaison Leads will continue to develop their understanding of their local health landscape, deliver on Regional Integration Plans, identify and work with vanguard organisations, and promote speaking up at the regional level.

The office's expanding scope brings with it a wider range of stakeholders and the need to actively manage relationships with key stakeholders.

Next steps:

- Regional Integration Plans, setting out how the NGO will support primary care organisations and integration at the local level will be published for the North-East and Yorkshire; North-West; and South-West regions.
- Primary care 'vanguards' will continue to be sought and supported, so that a range of practical models of Freedom to Speak Up covering primary care organisations can be established.
- The NGO will review its stakeholder base and reach out further to representatives in primary care.
- Guidance, training and other sources of support developed by the NGO will be reframed so that they are applicable to as wide a range of organisations as possible.

Action: Join-up cross system drivers for improving freedom to speak up culture

The principles of speaking up and the guardian role are becoming more established and can be universally applied across the health landscape.

However, the drivers for implementing speaking up arrangements vary, are not coordinated. There are incentives that result in speaking up arrangements being implemented inconsistently and poorly.

As practical implementation strategies in primary care and as part of wider integration initiatives are being explored (see above workstream), the NGO needs to work with CQC and NHS E/I to rationalise and develop effective means of inspection, support and guidance for providers.

Next steps:

- The NGO will work in partnership with CQC, NHS E/I, DHSC and others to begin to map the drivers for Freedom to Speak Up in the health and care system.
- This will inform later work to ensure that these drivers are aligned and effective in producing improvements in Freedom to Speak Up culture.

Annex

FREEDOM TO SPEAK UP GUARDIANS SURVEY 2019: FEEDBACK ON THE NATIONAL GUARDIAN'S OFFICE

As in previous years, we asked respondents to the survey to rate the support that they felt the office gave:

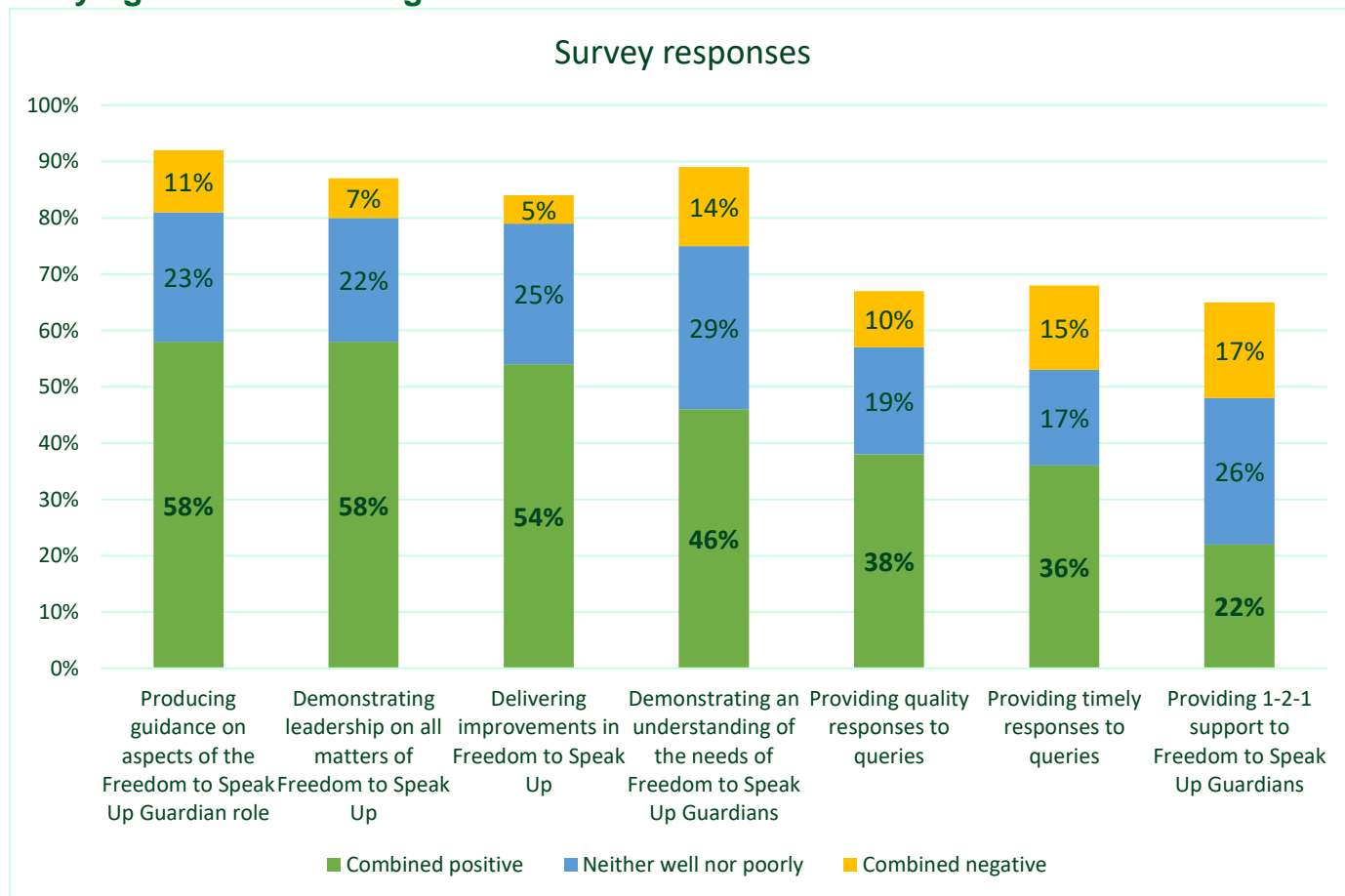
On a scale of 0 – 10 where 0 is ‘not at all supported’ and 10 is ‘fully supported’ please indicate your response to the following statement: I am sufficiently supported by the National Guardian’s Office

The average score this year was **6.5**. Last year the average score was **7.1**.

This indicates a dip in perceptions of the support that the office provides.

However, this year, we asked for more detailed feedback about a wide range of the office’s functions so we can understand better the factors that underly this score:

How well or poorly do you think the National Guardian’s Office is carrying out the following functions?¹



¹ For full break down of responses, see below

Responses were most positive about some of the broader, national leadership functions that the NGO has, such as providing an overview of Freedom to Speak Up developments and championing the Freedom to Speak Up guardian role.

In contrast, some of the office's more day-to-day functions were considered to be being performed less well, including responding to queries and providing 1-2-1 support to Freedom to Speak Up guardians.

We asked for comments on what further support respondents would like, and these picked up on the themes indicated above:

What further support from the National Guardian's Office would you find helpful?

There were five main themes to the feedback received from this question.

The most common subject mentioned was **training**. Comments indicated a strong desire for more training for Freedom to Speak Up guardians and for this training to be more widely available, more detailed, and to cover some of the more practical aspects of the role such as listening skills and having difficult conversations. Alongside this there were many requests to increase training opportunities and to produce more detailed **guidance**. In particular, there were a number of comments about producing guidance that is more applicable outside of NHS trusts.

- *"The Guardian's training needs improvements - more step by step support for example what to do when a staff member approaches with concerns"*
- *"More best practice guidance, whilst I understand that recommendations are to be implemented by individual trusts in a way which meets their individual needs, it is useful to know what good looks like."*
- *"I don't believe staff are trained in being a Freedom to Speak Up. The 1 day national training does NOT support you to deliver the actual role / prepare you for the emotions you may need to manage with those raising concerns and your own. I don't believe the Freedom to Speak Up provide enough guidance / support on 'how to' do the key actions required for the role."*
- *"Ongoing training and development. Sharing learning and case reviews."*
- *"I [would] really appreciate the NGO considering the impact of the Freedom to Speak Up guardian role in small non-NHS establishments"*
- *"Very little support or understanding for independent providers who have different cultures and structures"*

The NGO's **response to enquiries** was another common theme to feedback. By far the most common area commented on was response times, but the need for clearer and more definitive responses was also commented on.

- *"This is a new role for the NHS and therefore we are often in uncharted territory therefore I think we need advice and support in a more timely manner"*
- *"... when I contact NGO I hardly ever get any definite answers."*

- *“As an experienced Freedom to Speak Up guardian when I contact the NGO, rarely, I really do want to have some support and a call back - it is usually quite urgent and more than a week to wait for the response is a long time ...”*
- *“It's been a challenge getting timely responses from the NGO ... but when I have spoken to the central team they have been helpful”*

Requests for more **communication and engagement** were made. Generally, it was felt that the NGO being present more regularly at regional meetings would be helpful and there were requests for more and clearer communication, including the provision of promotional and campaign material.

- *“ ... need to be much more proactive in producing practical support and materials ...”*
- *“I would find it helpful to have staff from the national guardian office attend the regional networks for a Q and A session.”*

The final theme to feedback was one of **direction and power**. With strong feelings being expressed that the NGO should have a more directive approach, and more power to influence how the Freedom to Speak Up guardian role is implemented and supported.

- *“To have some teeth / powers where there is poor feedback from Freedom to Speak Up Guardian.”*
- *“Would like you to mandate that Freedom to Speak Up guardians must have well being support and regular 1:1s with NGO ...”*
- *“holding organisations to account for delivery of the role”*
- *“More ownership and less reliance on ‘it's a Trust responsibility’ ... when there is clearly a need to address the issue nationally ...”*

How well or poorly do you think the National Guardian's Office is carrying out the following functions?

Function	Very well	Well	Combined positive	Neither well nor poorly	Poorly	Very poorly	Don't know
Providing an overview of Freedom to Speak Up matters, developments and news	28%	54%	82%	12%	2%	0%	4%
Championing the Freedom to Speak Up and the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role	29%	52%	81%	12%	2%	0%	5%
Providing opportunities for sharing learning and networking	16%	45%	61%	27%	6%	2%	4%
Living the Freedom to Speak Up values	16%	44%	60%	17%	1%	2%	19%
Carrying out case reviews	15%	45%	60%	16%	3%	0%	22%
Championing individuals who speak up	14%	46%	60%	22%	2%	<0.5%	16%
Providing communications material on Freedom to Speak Up	13%	47%	60%	23%	11%	1%	6%
Providing training for Freedom to Speak Up Guardians	17%	42%	59%	26%	9%	2%	5%
Developing campaigns and other opportunities to promote Freedom to Speak Up	15%	44%	59%	25%	8%	<0.5%	7%
Producing guidance on aspects of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian role	14%	44%	58%	23%	9%	2%	8%
Demonstrating leadership on all matters of Freedom to Speak Up	13%	45%	58%	22%	4%	3%	13%
Delivering improvements in Freedom to Speak Up	11%	43%	54%	25%	3%	2%	16%
Demonstrating an understanding of the needs of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians	11%	35%	46%	29%	11%	3%	11%
Providing quality responses to queries	8%	30%	38%	19%	8%	2%	33%
Providing timely responses to queries	8%	28%	36%	17%	10%	5%	32%
Providing 1-2-1 support to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians	5%	17%	22%	26%	10%	7%	36%