

# Freedom to Speak Up policy for General Practice & Providers



**Coventry and  
Warwickshire  
Training Hub**

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## Equality and Health Inequalities Statement

Promoting equality and addressing health inequalities are at the heart of NHS England's values. Throughout the development of the policies and processes cited in this document, we have:

- Given due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic (as cited under the Equality Act 2010) and those who do not share it;
- Given regard to the need to reduce inequalities between patients in access to, and outcomes from healthcare services and to ensure services are provided in an integrated way where this might reduce health inequalities.

# Speak Up

## 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 patients and the working environment for our staff.

**This policy is for all colleagues** working in General Practice, Federations, Alliances and Coventry and Warwickshire Training Hub. This encompasses any healthcare professionals, our new multi-disciplinary team, non-clinical, administrative and clerical, clinical directors, managers, students, trainees, locum, bank and agency staff.

The [NHS People Promise](#) commits to ensuring that “we each have a voice that counts, that we all feel safe and confident to speak up, and take the time to really listen to understand the hopes and fears that lie behind the words”.

### We want to hear about any concerns you have.

We ask all our colleagues to complete the [online training](#) on freedom to speak up. The training is divided into three parts - Speak Up: Core training is for all colleagues, helping learners understand how to speak up and what to expect when they do.

Listen Up: Training for all line and middle managers, focusing more on listening up and the barriers in the way of speaking up.

Follow Up: Training aimed at all senior leaders to help them understand their role in setting the tone for a good speaking up culture.

## This policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure all matters raised are captured and considered appropriately. This policy is to help normalise speaking up for the benefit of patients and colleagues.



## What can I speak up about?

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; for example, a way of working or a process that isn't being followed, you feel you are being discriminated against or you feel the behaviours of others is affecting your wellbeing or that of your colleagues or patients.

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/quality). That's fine, as we will listen and work with you to identify the most appropriate way of responding to the issue you raise.

# Speak Up

## Who can I speak up to?

Most speaking up happens through conversations with supervisors and line managers 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 and depending on the size of the organisation you work in (some of the options set out below will only be available in larger organisations).

- Senior manager with responsibility for the subject matter you are speaking up about
- Your Health and Wellbeing Champion(s), details can be found [here](#)
- Your Local Medical Council ([LMC](#))
- Your HR team
- The senior lead responsible for Freedom to Speak Up for the Integrated Care System (ICS) - [Theresa Nelson](#) - she provides senior support for our speaking-up guardian and is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of our FTSU arrangements.
- Professional bodies for a clinical matter

## Your Freedom to Speak Up Guardian

Your Freedom to Speak Up Guardian is **Dr Mai Elftise**, who can support you to speak up if you feel unable to do so by other routes.

You can contact her via [pcftsu.guardian@nhs.net](mailto:pcftsu.guardian@nhs.net). The guardian will ensure that people who speak up are thanked for doing so, that the issues they raise are responded to, and that the person speaking up receives feedback on the actions taken.

You can find out more about the guardian role [here](#).



# How?

## How should I speak up?

You can speak up to any of the people or organisations listed on pages 2 and 3, by phone or in writing (including email).

### 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.

# Advice and Support

You can find out about the local support available to you below:

You can access a range of health and wellbeing support via Coventry & Warwickshire Training Hub and NHS England:

- [Health & Wellbeing: Support for all roles](#) - Coventry & Warwickshire Training Hub
- [Support available for our NHS people](#)
- [Looking after you: confidential coaching and support](#) for the primary care workforce.

NHS England has a [Speak Up Support Scheme](#) that you can apply to for support.

You can also contact the following organisations:

- [Speak Up Direct](#) provides free, independent, confidential advice on the speaking up process.
- The charity [Protect](#) provides confidential and legal advice on speaking up.
- The [Trades Union Congress](#) provides information on how to join a trade union.
- [The Law Society](#) may be able to point you to other sources of advice and support.
- [The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service](#) gives advice and assistance, including on early conciliation regarding employment disputes.

# Next Steps

## What will we do?

The matter you are speaking up about may be best considered under a specific existing policy/process; for example, patient safety, equality and diversity etc. if so, we will discuss that with you. If you speak up about something that does not fall into an existing process, this policy ensures that the matter is still addressed.

What you can expect to happen after speaking up is shown in Appendix A.

## Resolution and investigation

We support managers/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 outside your organisation or from a different part of the organisation) 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.

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).

## 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 organisation, or more widely, as appropriate.

## Review

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

## Senior Leaders' Oversight

Coventry and Warwickshire Training Hub Board, LMC and Primary Care Collaborative will receive a report at least bi-annually providing a thematic overview of speaking up by staff to our FTSU guardian(s).

# Appendix A

## What will happen when I speak up?

### We will:

- Take your concern seriously
- Thank you for speaking up
- Help you identify the options for resolution
- Signpost you to health and wellbeing support
- Confirm what information you have provided and clarify matters of confidentiality, what information will be shared and with whom
- Support you with any further next steps and keep in touch with you

### Steps towards resolution

- Engagement with relevant senior managers (where appropriate)
- Referral to HR process
- Referral to patient safety process
- Other types of appropriate investigation, mediation, etc.

### Outcomes

The outcomes will be shared with you wherever possible, along with learning and improvement identified

### Escalation

If resolution has not been achieved, or you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can escalate the matter to the senior lead for FTSU - [Theresa Nelson](#)

Alternatively, for a clinical matter you have the option to speak up to professional bodies.

w: [www.cwtraininghub.co.uk](http://www.cwtraininghub.co.uk)  
e: [cw.traininghub@nhs.net](mailto:cw.traininghub@nhs.net)

