

Board Meeting in Public
Tuesday, 03 February 2026

Title of Paper	Freedom to Speak Up Annual Report 2025		Agenda No.	3.4
Nature of Paper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Official <input type="checkbox"/> Official Sensitive			
Author(s)	Rachel May, Head of Freedom to Speak Up			
Lead Executive	Helen Gillan, Director of Quality and Governance			
Non-Executive Director Sponsor	Ian Murphy			
Presenter(s) at Meeting	Rachel May, Head of Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU)			
Presented for	<input type="checkbox"/> Approval <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Assurance <input type="checkbox"/> Update			
Is there a plan to communicate this to the organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yet to be determined			
Executive Summary				
<p>This report covers the period October 24 – Sept 25 providing a summary of the changes, developments, and activity relating to the Freedom to Speak Up Service.</p> <p>Significant events include plans to transfer functions of the National Guardian's Office to NHS England, the move of the FTSU service from People Directorate to Quality & Governance, and a positive independent review of the service by the GIAA.</p> <p>Case data highlights key themes and issues, including poor conduct and manager capability. There is a focus on sexual harassment and aggressive behaviours, more due to the indications of a risk-averse approach in response to complaints than the prevalence of cases. Behavioural issues are also reflected in the 2025 Our Voice staff survey. Although the data shows some improvements in scores for the speak up questions, 35% of staff indicated a lack of safety to speak up. The (AI generated) feedback summary also highlights a widespread perception across the organisation that unacceptable behaviours are not being adequately addressed.</p> <p>Overall performance of the service was positive, with Service Level Agreement standards being exceeded in all but one area. Although most managers respond quickly and positively, in some instances there is a significant delay and general lack of engagement with Guardians. More work is needed to persuade managers of the benefits to listening to and following up on the concerns of workers.</p>				
Previously Considered by				
<p>Executive Team 04/11/25 - The ET Agreed that the paper will be provided to the Board, all ET members need to be prepared to speak to this paper.</p> <p>People Committee 12/11/25 - The PC noted an action that the NHSBT Workforce Dashboard should include clearer information on sexual harassment cases, with visibility of measures and controls being implemented to address them.</p> <p>ARGC 08/01/26 – The Committee agreed that, while the policies themselves are sound, the inconsistency in their application is a significant concern. Members stressed the importance of ongoing oversight, with HR leading the work but all executives responsible for ensuring their management chains uphold expected standards. The Committee committed to monitoring progress in this area.</p>				
Recommendation				
<p>The Board is asked to support the recommendation that FTSU should collaborate with People Directorate colleagues to understand and address the issue of sexual harassment and aggressive behaviours.</p>				
Risk(s) identified (Link to Board Assurance Framework Risks)				
<p>RI-05 People 12 - Bullying and harassment incidents, leading to potential moderate work related ill health and absence from work. Potential non-compliance with legislation with the Equality Act.</p>				
Strategic Objective(s) this paper relates to:				
<input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with partners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invest in people and culture <input type="checkbox"/> Drive innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Modernise our operations <input type="checkbox"/> Grow and diversify our donor base				
Appendices:	FTSU Annual Report 2025v2.pdf			