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University
Hospitals Sussex
NHS Foundation Trust

Raising Concerns Toolkit



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Introduction

Raising a concern is not always easy but it is the right thing to do. You may feel worried, and we understand this. But please don't be put off. Ensuring that all our staff have a voice that counts is really important to us. We want our staff to feel valued and respected at work and your views are welcomed in order to deliver the best possible care. To do that we need to provide the best possible working environment, one where speaking up is not only welcomed, but valued as an opportunity to learn and improve. Our senior leaders and entire Board are committed to an open and honest culture. We will look into what you say and you will always have access to the support you need.

- This toolkit is a guide to help staff at UH Sussex to raise a concern. It includes a pathway map to help you identify the most appropriate route to take (see pgs. 7/8).
- Speaking up encompasses matters often referred to as raising concerns, making suggestions for improvement, whistleblowing and protected or qualifying disclosures where there is risk to others. This will involve bringing it/concerns to the attention of a manager and following the appropriate UH Sussex process in accordance with the Trust's Raising Concerns / Freedom to Speak up policy.
- If you are making a complaint about how you personally have been treated at work (such as conditions of employment), in these circumstances you would follow UH Sussex Resolution policy (formerly known as grievance).

We each have a voice that counts.



Why raise a concern?

There are a number of reasons why you should raise concerns. It is important to safeguard yourself and others and is vital in informing and driving improvement.



Duty of Care

- All staff at UH Sussex have a duty to raise concerns.
- Staff are the eyes and ears of our organisation. Your views, improvement ideas and concerns can act as a valuable warning system. Raising a concern early can prevent minor issues becoming serious ones.
- For registered members of staff this also forms part of your professional code of conduct. Failing to report concerns may put your registration at risk.



Psychological Safety

- Focus should be on system learning, not individual blame and you should feel safe when raising a concern.
- New ideas should be welcomed and built upon not picked apart and ridiculed. You should never be made to feel embarrassed or punished by offering a different point of view.
- Leaders at UH Sussex will take seriously any instances of staff being bullied, discriminated against, harassed or victimised for speaking.



It promotes learning

- At UH Sussex we recognise that an open culture, which encourages learning and improvement, leads to safer care and treatment and improved patient experience.
- You should be confident that doing the right thing like reporting incidents, near misses and concerns, being candid about mistakes, talking openly about errors and sharing improvements are all welcomed and encouraged.



It promotes wellbeing

- The health, safety and wellbeing of those around you, including yourself must be a priority and any delay in reporting your concerns could have a negative impact for those people.
- It is important to remember that it is in everyone's best interest to identify when something isn't right, learn from this and make improvements. Ultimately it benefits patient experience, staff satisfaction & performance.

Types of concerns

If your concern poses an immediate risk of harm / to the health and safety of staff and/or patient safety, raise this immediately verbally to the person identified as 'in charge'.

Patient safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unsafe patient care or dignity being compromised.• Increased workloads / inability to meet the care of patients in your caseload.• Unsafe staffing (reduced or insufficient staff numbers and/or skill mix).• Inadequate response to a reported patient safety incident.• A breach of code of conduct.• Safeguarding concerns (dealt with under UH Sussex Safeguarding Procedures).
Working environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unsafe working conditions.• Infection control.• Danger or risk to health and safety e.g. where H&S rules or guidelines have been broken.
Team / My job	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of support.• Inadequate induction or training for staff.• Flexibility.
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental health, stress and anxiety.• Burnout.• Physical Health.• Financial wellbeing.• Issues relating to the health of a colleague, which may affect their ability to practise safely.
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bullying towards patients or colleagues, or a bullying culture.• Violence and aggression.• Line manager or colleague behaviour e.g. unprofessional attitudes or behaviour.• Discrimination / harassment or hate crime.• Suspicions of criminal activity such as fraud.

How do I report a concern?

Decide on how to raise

- Check the pathway map (pgs. 7/8) to help identify the most appropriate route and who you should raise your concern with.
- Think about raising the concern internally in the first instance – there is the added advantage of the organisation being able to act quickly on your concerns compared to an external body.
- It's not your job to investigate. It is more important to raise your concerns as soon as possible so any action can be taken quickly.

Keep to the facts

- Give accurate detail about the issue you're concerned with. Make sure you are raising facts, not just an allegation, opinion or hearsay.
- Give details including the time, date, where and who was involved or witnessed.
- If there is a specific policy/guidance not being adhered to, state this.

Stay neutral

- Even if you are upset, it is important that you are clear about the concerns you have and what impact, or possible impact, they will have.

Keep a record

- Keep a clear written record of your concern.
- You may have put your concern in writing or raised it verbally, but it's important you make a dated record of what you said.
- Note down key details of what happened, where, when and who was involved.

Escalate if unresolved

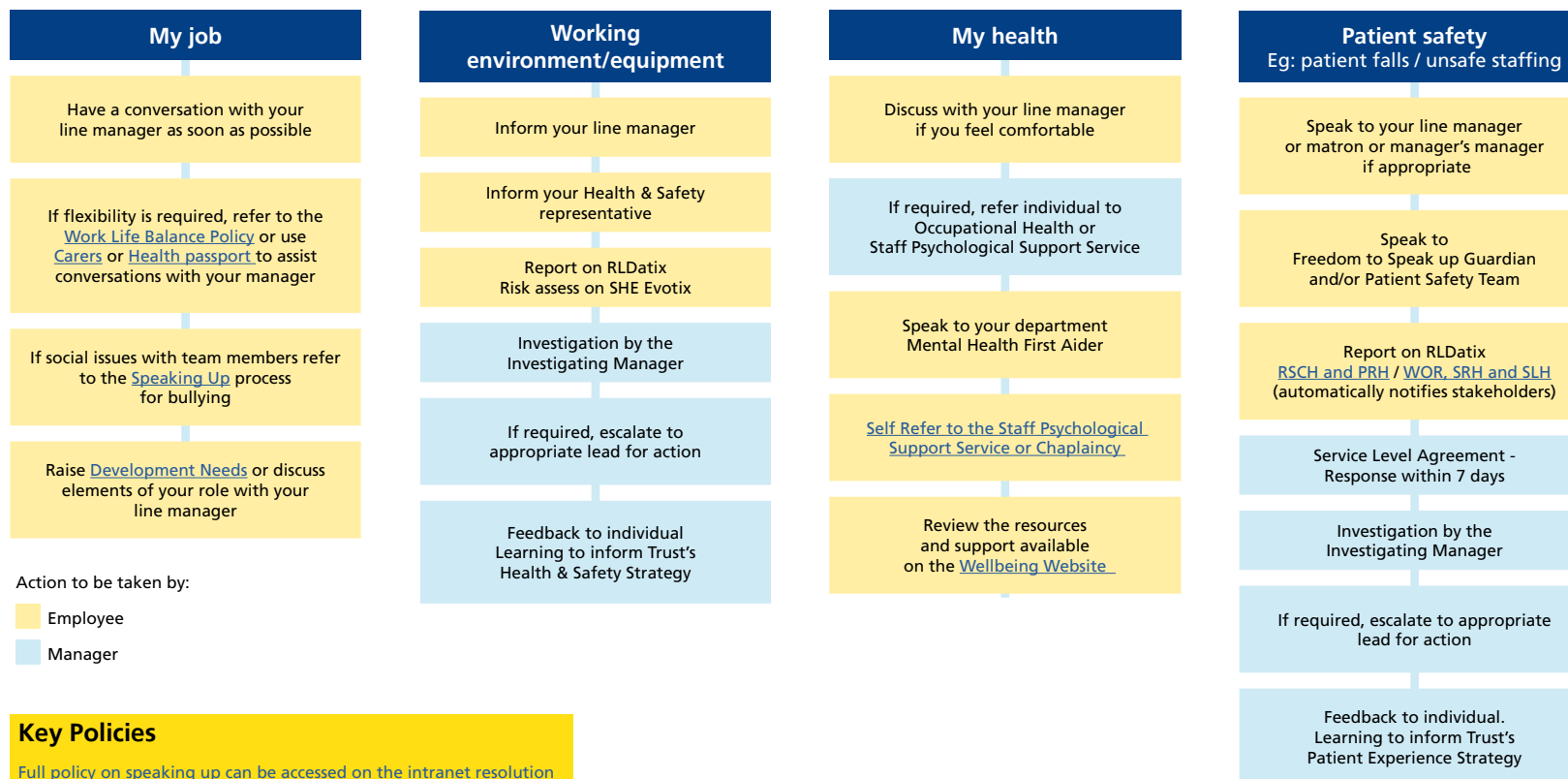
- If the issues cannot be resolved locally and continue to pose a risk, escalate your concerns immediately.
- This could be to your manager's manager or another senior manager, matron or Divisional Director of Operations (see pg. 9).
- Alternatively you could contact the Trust's Freedom to Speak up Guardian (see pg. 9).

How should a concern be dealt with? (see route map below)

Route Map - Raising Concerns/Speaking Up Pathways I want to raise a concern about my role, my health or patient safety



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Key Policies

Full policy on speaking up can be accessed on the intranet resolution [Work/life balance](#)
[Health Wellbeing at work](#)
[Investigation](#)
[Equality, diversity and inclusion \(including hate crime\)](#)
[Fraud concerns](#)

Remember...

The Freedom To Speak Up Guardian (contact@theguardianservice.co.uk) and/or Staffside representatives can provide additional support, guidance and signposting.

How should a concern be dealt with? (see route map below)

Route Map - Raising Concerns/Speaking Up Pathways I want to raise a concern about behaviour of others



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What if I don't feel able to raise a concern through the pathways identified in the route map?

If raising a concern with your line manager (or lead clinician or tutor) does not resolve matters, or you do not feel able to raise it with them, you can raise with:

- A senior manager (e.g. Matron, Head of Department or Divisional Director).

Alternatively, you can contact one of the following people:

- **Freedom to Speak Up Guardian** – this is an important role identified in the Freedom to Speak up review to act as an independent and impartial source of advice to staff at any stage of raising a concern, with access to anyone in the Trust, including the chief executive, or if necessary outside the organisation. Our Guardian is Trish Marks. If you need to contact Trish for help, support or guidance either email contact@theguardianservice.co.uk or call via the dedicated freephone number available 24/7 - **0333 577 5199**. Our [full policy on speaking up can be accessed on the intranet](#).
- **Counter Fraud** – click [here](#) for further information
- If you still remain concerned after you have raised your concern, we can put you in touch with the executive director/non-executive director.
- If you have raised your concern internally and have exhausted all other routes first or feel it hasn't been dealt with properly, you may want to get help from outside or an external body (e.g. CQC or whistleblowing hotline).



Where can I get some external advice?

If you want some confidential advice, external to the organisation before you raise your concern, or at any stage during the process you can access via:

Your Professional Body or Trade Union

They play a vital role in offering local support and guidance to staff who have concerns about any part of their work, including fears about patient care. They can also raise matters formally with the Trust on your behalf and can access other forums within the Trust.

Protect

The independent whistleblowing charity (formerly Public Concern at Work) – offers confidential advice to employees who witness wrongdoing or malpractice in the workplace and who aren't sure whether or how to raise your concern.

Click on the [link](#) for further information.

They also provide specific information for Healthcare staff [here.](#)

Speak Up Direct

Speak Up Direct offers free, independent, confidential advice on the speaking up process.

Telephone: **08000 724 725**

Website: speakup.direct



Can I raise a concern confidentiality?

We hope you feel comfortable raising your concern openly and would recommend you give your name. This makes it easier for a concern to be investigated and the best way for you to be protected under the law.

However, we recognise that there may be circumstances where you would like to keep your identity confidential. This means that while you are willing for your identity to be known to the person you report your concern to, you do not want anyone else to know your identity.

We will keep your identity confidential where possible if that is what you want. We will ensure this is discussed with you and any limitations to this highlighted. You should understand that there may be practical or legal limits to this confidentiality where the concern can't be dealt with without revealing your identity, or that others may guess who has raised the concern. It may be required to be disclosed by law to the police or, if it involves poor behaviours, disclosure may be needed as per the Trust's Resolution policy.

If you raise your concern anonymously (where no one knows who you are), it will be much more difficult for the matter to be investigated as follow-up questions cannot be asked which, in turn, affects public safety and we would be unable to give you feedback on the outcome. Finally, you will not be able to use the legal protection for Whistleblowers, the Public Interest Disclosure Act, as the protection is based on an ability to demonstrate you have blown the whistle – if the recipient of the concerns doesn't know who you are then this becomes impossible to establish.



What to expect when you raise a concern

You will be fully supported when you raise a concern, especially as this is a duty you are expected to fulfil.

If you raise a concern you should expect to:

Feel listened to and have your concerns taken seriously.

Be dealt with in an open and transparent manner.

Be treated fairly.

No judgements should be made.

Have access to incident reporting mechanisms such as Datix.

Receive timely & constructive feedback, including actions taken to resolve your concerns.

The person you have spoken to should:

Tell you what they are going to do.

Discuss confidentiality and maintain
(as far as reasonably possible/ explain any limits to this).

Thank you for speaking up and listen carefully.

Advise you what UH Sussex policy the concern falls under.

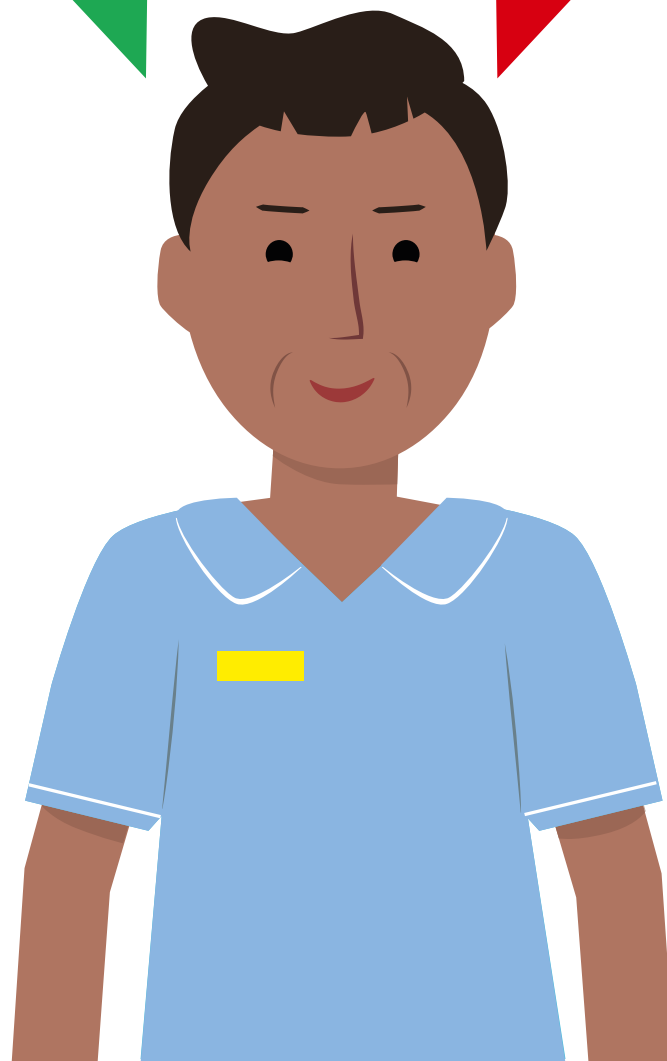
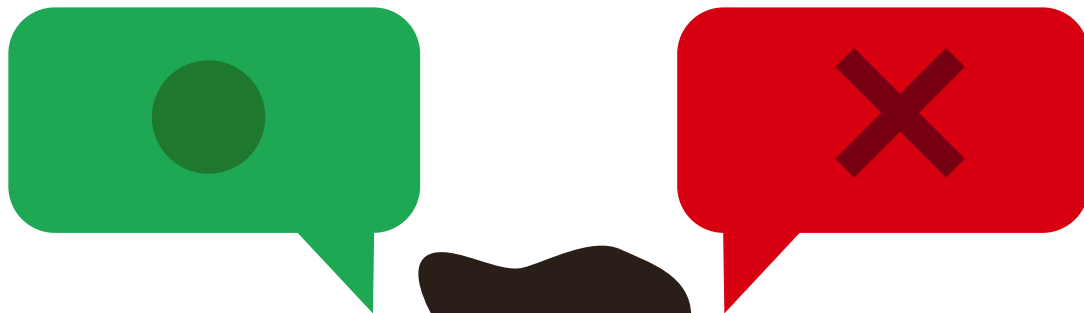
Explain what advice and support is available to you.

Advise you if your concerns need to be investigated.



What if I'm wrong?

It is often better to raise a concern that you're not sure about, rather than to not raise it at all. The law which protects whistleblowers also doesn't require that you are correct in all circumstances, only that you have a 'reasonable belief'.



Examples of where speaking up has made a difference

Listening events held in response to concerns regarding racist behaviour

- Concerns were raised to the Freedom to Speak up (FTSU) Guardian regarding racist behaviour within a hospital department.
- Listening events were set up with staff facilitated by the FTSU Guardian and Human Resources.
- Feedback from these events have been collated anonymously and a document presented to the executive and divisional teams.
- Proposals to act have been developed and these are being shared with the department.

Concern raised regarding a disciplinary panel being biased and unfair

- Concerns were raised by an individual regarding the independence of a disciplinary panel i.e. concern that there would not be a fair hearing as panel members had connections with the department they worked in.
- The panel as a result was changed to ensure the members were completely independent and free from any potential bias.

Mr. Kalidasan, Paediatric Surgeon and former DME at Brighton

- Mr. Kalidasan tells of his time in Theatre with junior medical staff and how right from the outset he encourages them to speak up and to say something if they spot something that isn't quite right.
- Mr. Kalidasan says "it is so important for leaders to hear from staff, to give them permission to speak up and ensure they are supported to do that".
- He also emphasises the importance of listening without feeling personally attacked.

Support

Support can be accessed via:

Human Resources Department

You can contact the Employee Relations team on uhsussex.employee.relations@nhs.net or ext. 67611, 85722 or 32605.

Staff Psychological Support Service

We offer free confidential, one-to-one Counselling, Psychotherapy, EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation & Reprocessing) and CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) to staff.

Our dedicated team work face-to-face across Brighton, Princess Royal, St Richards and Worthing sites, and provide therapy over Microsoft Teams and telephone.

For self-help guides, leaflets & worksheets please access: [Mental wellbeing support for staff](#) If you have been experiencing anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, grief, trauma, or other distressing life events, please self-refer to the service.

Alternatively, contact:

Worthing, St Richards, Southlands Hospitals: **01243 788122 ext. 31624**

Royal Sussex County, Brighton General, Princess Royal Hospitals: **01273 696555 ext. 63692**

Email: uhsussex.staffpsychologicalsupport@nhs.net

ViVUP Employee Assistance programme

The Vivup team are there to listen and support with all personal issues from day-to-day challenges at home, to mounting pressures in the workplace.

This is a 24/7 counselling and online support service where staff can access up to six sessions including the provision of online CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) workbooks and additional support.

To access the service call **0330 380 0658** or go online:

[Access for staff at Worthing, St Richard's, Southlands Hospital.](#)

[Access for staff at Royal Sussex County, Brighton General, Princess Royal Hospitals.](#)

