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University
Hospitals Sussex
NHS Foundation Trust



Responding to Concerns Toolkit



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Introduction

Raising a concern is not always easy but it is the right thing to do. We want all our workers (permanent employees, agency staff, students and volunteers) at UH Sussex to feel valued and respected at work and to know that their views are welcomed. By meeting their needs, we also enable them 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 staff are proactively encouraged to provide feedback and/or raise concerns as well as valued as an opportunity to learn and improve. We as leaders, supported by the entire Board are committed to an open and honest culture and we commit to taking the time to look into what staff say and give them the support they need to feel confident and safe to raise concerns.

- This toolkit is a guide to help colleagues at UH Sussex to respond to concerns. How a concern is dealt with will depend on the type of concern. A pathway document is included on pgs. 7/8 which helps identify the most appropriate route to take.
- Speaking up encompasses matters often referred to as raising concerns, making suggestions for improvement, whistleblowing and protected or qualifying disclosures. This will involve a worker bringing it to the attention of you as a manager and following the appropriate UH Sussex process in accordance with the Trust's Raising Concerns / Freedom to Speak up policy.
- If staff make a complaint about how they are personally 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 speaking up matters

Staff voice counts

Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone benefits, building a more open culture. Behaviours that are responsive to feedback from workers plays a critical role in our effectiveness.• A culture in which leadership encourages workers to highlight issues, challenge the status quo or question the norm, as well as encourage learning & improvement, ultimately leads to safer care & treatment and improved patient experience.
Early warning signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People are the eyes and ears of UHSussex. Their views, improvement ideas & concerns can act as a valuable early warning system that a policy or decision is not playing out as anticipated or could be improved.
Staff satisfaction and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A speaking-up culture benefits staff satisfaction & performance. When people feel their opinions matter & are valued and acted on, they become more committed, improving performance & job satisfaction/retention as well as staff wellbeing.• In turn, this will improve our People Breakthrough Objective (A Voice That Counts), staff engagement & staff survey scores.
Employee relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When people feel that speaking up about poor behaviour is welcomed and encouraged, and that it will be addressed at an early stage, organisations become less entrenched in formal employee relations process (e.g. grievances, disciplinaries etc). These can be costly and damage relationships.
Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People's voice play a vital role in informing & driving improvement to continuously improve quality of care.• Speaking up is not always easy, especially where leaders do not welcome challenge or change.• Adopting a person-centred speaking up approach will support people to speak up and protect them in doing so.

Principles for leaders and managers

1. Value speaking up
2. Role-model speaking up and set a healthy Freedom to Speak up culture
3. Make sure staff know how to speak up and feel safe and encouraged to do so
4. When someone speaks up, thank them, listen and follow up
5. Use speaking up as an opportunity to learn and improve
6. Identify and tackle barriers to speaking up



Types of concerns

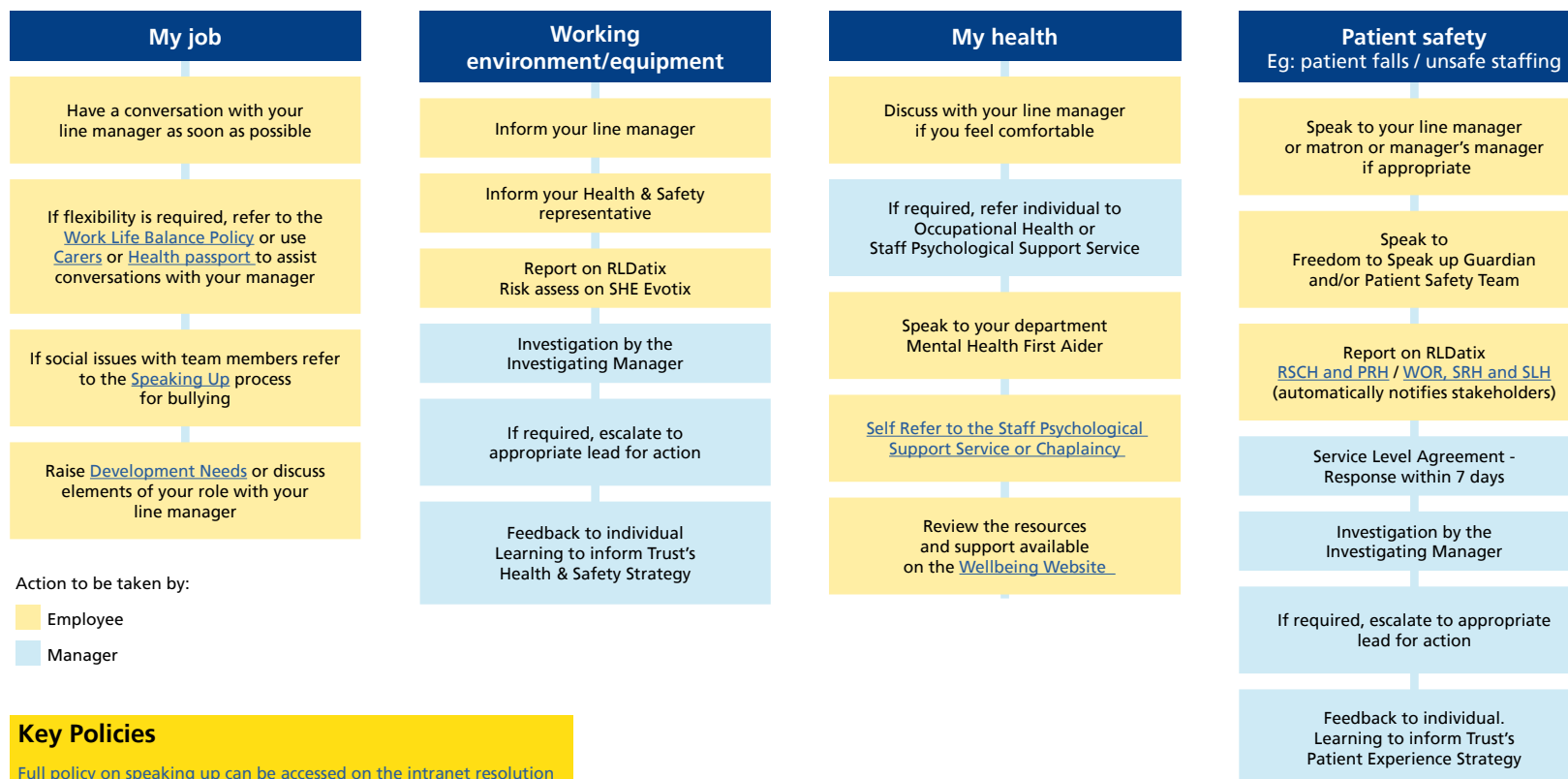
Patient safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unsafe patient care or dignity being compromised.• Increased workloads / inability to meet the care of patients in your caseload.• Unsafe staffing (reduced or insufficient staff numbers and/or skill mix).• Inadequate response to a reported patient safety 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 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...

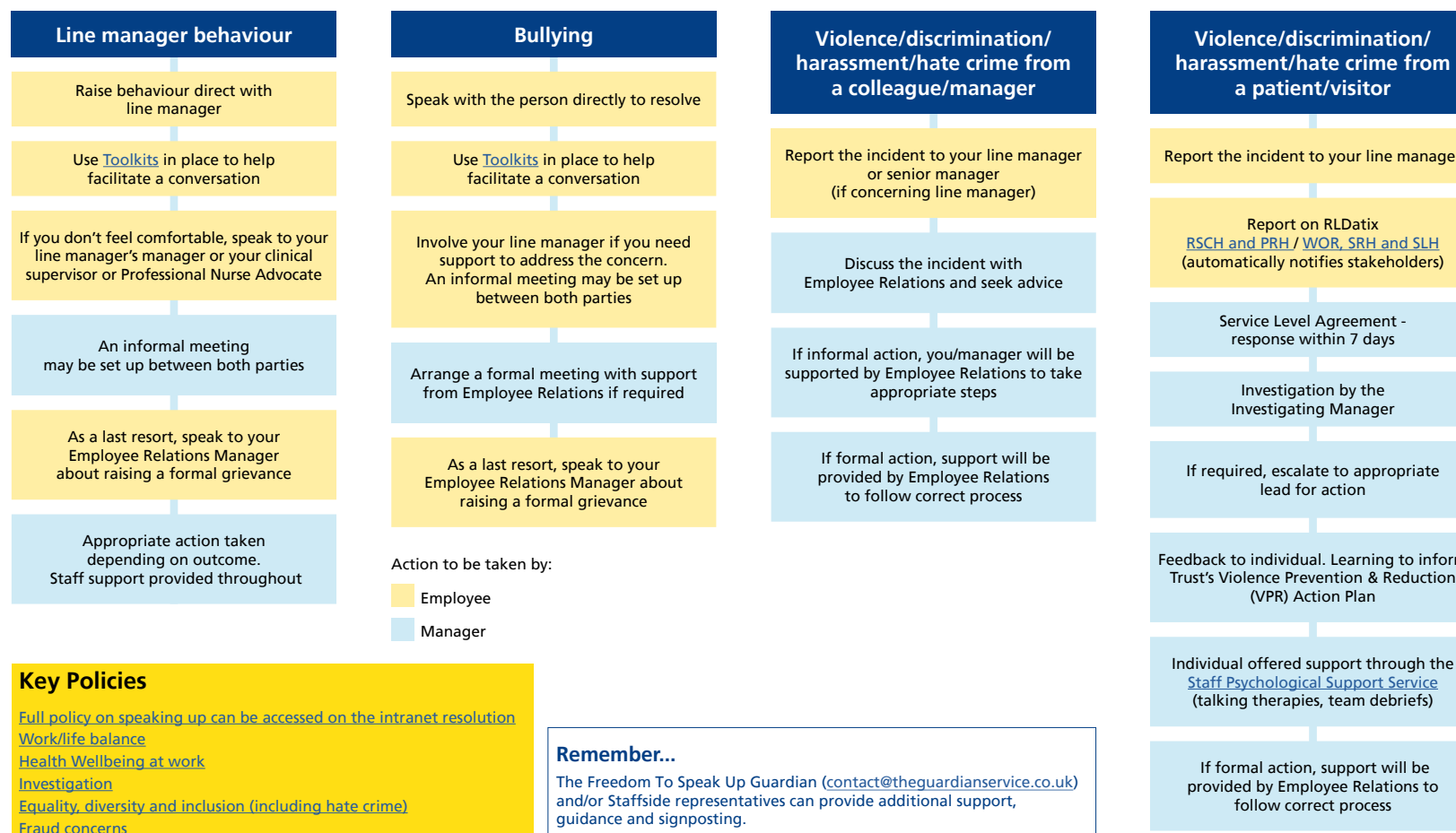
The Freedom To Speak Up Guardian (contact@theguardianservice.co.uk) and/or Staffside representatives can provide additional support, guidance and signposting.

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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Role-model speaking up

Leadership has the biggest impact on how staff behave – and actions speak louder than words. Staff take their cues on how to behave from the behaviour, decisions and communication style of their leadership. So as a leader, it is essential that you embody the culture and behaviours you want to see.

- To meet the challenges that face health and care, staff need to be curious, innovative and challenge when they think something is not right. For this to happen, you need to demonstrate that you welcome people speaking up about ideas, issues, problems, challenges, opportunities and innovations.
- Leaders should not only welcome feedback but pro-actively encourage staff to provide feedback and/or raise concerns. This should be encouraged at huddles, team meetings etc.
- You also need to show that everyone's voice matters. This involves identifying the barriers to speaking up that staff encounter and working with them to overcome them. Finally you need to show that you value what you are told, by thanking people and sharing updates on the actions you have taken.



Speaking up behaviours for leaders: do's and don'ts

DO...

- Ask staff for their opinions and make it part of the day-to-day job – talk to them about their fears and ask what would help them to speak up.
- Speak up yourself and role model those positive behaviours.
- Measure the impact of change.
- Show how you value speaking up as an opportunity to improve.
- Tell stories about the change that has occurred from speaking up stories.
- Encourage others to speak up and constructively challenge one another.
- Acknowledge that people face barriers to speaking up, understand where they exist, who they affect and develop actions to reduce them.
- Be visible and approachable and welcome approaches from workers.
- Listen with gratitude and respond with curiosity rather than defensiveness.
- When someone speaks up, take time to listen well, thank them, act, follow up providing feedback and ask for feedback yourself.
- Take a 'learn, not blame' approach to dealing with issues and be willing to embrace new ways of working.
- Publicly acknowledge mistakes.
- Offer further support through avenues outlined on pg. 18.



Speaking up behaviours for leaders: do's and don'ts

DON'T...

- Seek out those who have spoken up.
- Blame people for things that have gone wrong; instead learn how to improve processes or behaviour.
- Focus on the person who has spoken up; focus on the issue.
- Warn people against speaking up 'outside' the organisation.
- Take a narrow approach to looking into speaking-up matters. Instead, try to get as much learning as possible.
- Be defensive and immediately start explaining away rather than listening and acknowledging a person's experience.
- Be too busy to listen.
- Talk about how to 'limit the damage' of speaking up. Instead, acknowledge mistakes and embrace the opportunity to learn and improve.



Reflecting on leadership behaviour

Given the significant impact of leaders' behaviour, it is vital that you and your senior colleagues reflect on your ability to shape culture and, specifically, whether your behaviour encourages or inhibits speaking up.

Ask colleagues to be critical of your behaviour. Receiving this feedback can be difficult – especially if it is critical – but it offers invaluable opportunities to reflect, learn & develop, so must always be welcomed.



Confidentiality

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

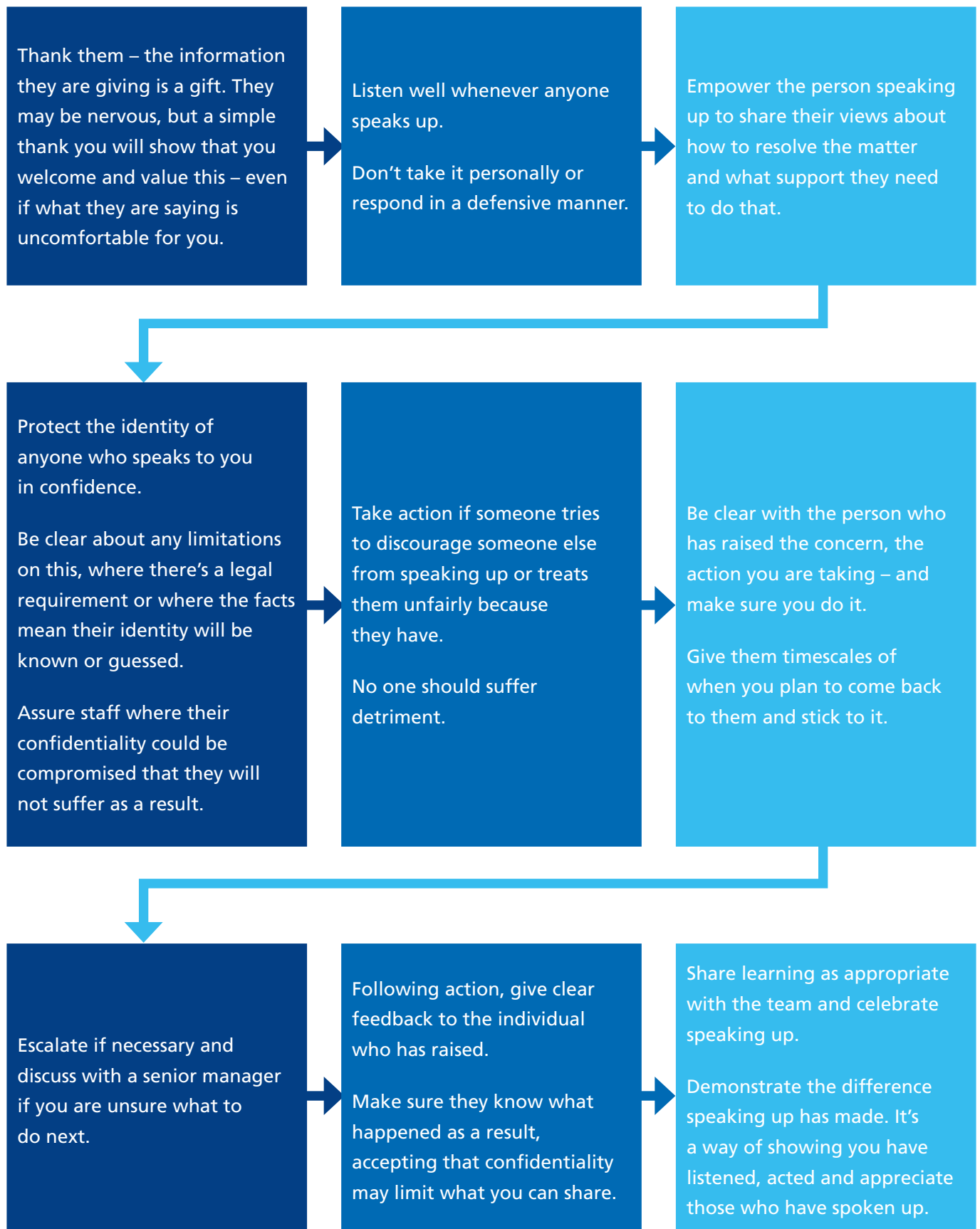
However, we recognise that there may be circumstances where staff would like to keep their identity confidential. This means that while they are willing for their identity to be known to the person they report their concern to, they do not want anyone else to know their identity.

We will keep their identity confidential where possible if that is what they want. We will ensure this is discussed with them and any limitations to this highlighted. It is important that the member of staff understands that there may be practical or legal limits to this confidentiality where the concern can't be dealt with without revealing their 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 a member of staff raises a concern anonymously, it will be much more difficult for the matter to be investigated, which, in turn, affects public safety and we would be unable to give them feedback on the outcome.



What to do when a member of staff raises a concern



Tackling barriers to speaking up

However strong an organisation's speaking-up culture, there will always be some barriers to speaking up. Finding and addressing them is an ongoing process.

Identify barriers to speaking up

Barriers are likely to shift over time, depending on how safe and confident staff feel at work (their internal, psychological wellbeing) and on external factors, such as changes in others' behaviour, financial security, difficulties at home or colleagues gossiping.

It is vital that leaders have an understanding of their workforce and empathy for those who are least heard (this may include minority ethnic groups, those living with disabilities, staff on lower pay bands etc).

Examples of barriers to speaking up

- It feels risky to challenge the status quo.
- Perceptions that nothing will happen as a result.
- Fear of being viewed as a troublemaker.
- Fear of judgement about raising a matter.
- Fear of reprisals from colleagues, peers, managers.
- Fear of impact on career.
- Fear of jeopardising employment or residency status.
- Language and cultural barriers.
- Lack of confidence in the process.
- Lack of trust in the Freedom To Speak Up (FTSU) guardian.
- Lack of confidence the senior team will take the concern seriously.
- Lack of positive experience about the benefits of speaking up.
- Lack of time or not knowing how to speak up.
- No response from the senior team after speaking up before.
- Dissatisfaction with the investigation into, or response to, a previous speaking-up matter.
- Communications about speaking up being delivered in a narrow or formulaic way.

Further resources

The Freedom to Speak Up in Healthcare in England programme offer some free e-learning modules. You will need to register for an e-lfh account.

Click here to access: [Freedom to Speak Up - elearning for healthcare \(e-lfh.org.uk\)](https://www.e-lfh.org.uk)

This training is for everyone wherever they work in healthcare and explains in a clear and consistent way what speaking up is and its importance in creating an environment in which people are supported to deliver their best. It will help you understand the vital role you can play and the support available to encourage a healthy speaking up culture for the benefit of patients and workers.

The training is divided into three parts:

Speak Up

Core training is for all workers including volunteers, students and those in training, regardless of their contract terms and covers what speaking up is and why it matters. It will help learners understand how to speak up and what to expect when they do.

Listen Up

This training for all line and middle managers and is focussed more on listening up and the barriers that can get in the way of speaking up.

Follow Up

This training is aimed at all senior leaders including executive board members (and equivalents), Non-Executive Directors, and Governors to help them understand their role in setting the tone for a good speaking up culture and how speaking up can promote organisational learning and improvement.



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.](#)

