


University Hospitals Sussex
NHS Foundation Trust

**University Hospitals Sussex NHS
Foundation Trust (UHSx)**

**Annual Report
For year 7 August 2023 to 31 March 2024**



Circulation:

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Date:

3rd May 2024

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1. Executive summary

This report presents the Freedom to Speak up (FTSU) Guardian's Annual Report for the part year period from 7th August 2023 – 31st March 2024. It provides an overview of the activity and themes in this period.

The Guardian Service Ltd (GSL) was implemented in UHSx on 7th August 2023.

Staff raised 173 concerns to the Guardian. 140 of these were closed in the period. Efforts by the trust to promote the service may have positively influenced the number of concerns.

The majority of staff asked that their concern remain confidential while about one third gave permission for their concern to be escalated. In those escalated cases there was an even split between those wishing to be named and those remaining anonymous or asking for their name to be withheld.

The 3 most common primary themes for concerns were: System & Process 62 concerns, followed by Management Issues (44) and Behavior & Relationships (26).

Numbers of concerns are only a measure of activity. The National Guardian Office (NGO) data 2022/23 indicates that Acute and Acute/Community Trusts are likely to have higher average quarterly concern numbers, as are larger Trusts (>10,000 staff) and as are Trusts with a CQC rating of Requires Improvement or Inadequate.

Staff in the Clinical Support Services and Medicine (RSCH & PRH) divisions raised most concerns and account for approximately a third of concerns raised. Surgery (RSCH & PRH) followed with 12% of concerns and Women & Children with 10% of concerns. The themes System & Process and Management Issues dominated.

By location, Royal Sussex County Hospital (RSCH) was the source of most concerns (42%) with Worthing and St Richard's following at approximately half that number each. About 60% of the Bullying & Harassment and Patient Safety concerns were reported from RSCH.

Nursing & Midwifery staff were the job group raising most concerns (34%) followed by Admin & Clerical staff (20%). These groups accounted for just over half of the Bullying & Harassment concerns. Nursing & Midwifery staff also raised just over half of Patient Safety concerns.

Most staff speaking to the Guardian did so looking for impartial support. 26% of staff spoke to the Guardian and reported that they had raised the concern before but had not been listened to, a further 2% believe they would not be listened to and 10% feared reprisal.

There were no cases of detriment reported to the Guardian as a result of speaking up to the Guardian. Some staff did refer to detriment from historic experiences of speaking up.

The Guardian has had extensive and varied interaction with Trust staff. From regular meetings with the Chief People Officer to discuss arising themes through to promoting the service to individual teams and specialist groups, walkabouts, and attendance at staff networks.

The Trust is asked to consider a number of recommendations detailed at the end of this report. These relate to FTSU training, management training, communication, pastoral support, and amends to a policy.

2. Purpose of the paper

The purpose of this first Annual Report is to supplement the monthly/cumulative numerical reports by providing insight around how the service has developed since its introduction and a summary of themes arising from the cases received by the FTSU Guardian and backup Guardian.

This report gives an overview for the part year from 7 August 2023 to 31 March 2024. It follows the National Guardian Office (NGO) guidance for content which should include Assessment of cases; Potential Patient safety or worker experience issues; Action taken to improve FTSU culture and Recommendations.

3. Background to Freedom to Speak Up

Following the Francis Inquiry¹ 2013 and 2015, the NHS launched 'Freedom to Speak Up' (FTSU). The aim of this initiative was to foster an open and responsive environment and culture throughout the NHS enabling staff to feel confident to speak up when things go or may go wrong; a key element to ensure a safe and effective working environment.

4. The Guardian Service

The Guardian Service Limited (GSL) is an independent and confidential staff liaison service. It was established in 2013 by the National NHS Patient Champion in response to The Francis Report. The Guardian Service provides staff with an independent, confidential 24/7 service to raise concerns, worries or risks in their workplace. It covers patient care and safety, whistleblowing, bullying, harassment, and work grievances. We work closely with the National Guardian Office (NGO) and attend the FTSU workshops, regional network meetings and FTSU conferences. The Guardian Service is advertised throughout the Trust as an independent organisation. This encourages staff to speak up freely and without fear of reprisal. Freedom to Speak Up is part of the well led agenda of the CQC inspection regime. The Guardian Service supports the Trust's Board to promote and comply with the NGO national reporting requirements.

The Guardian Service Ltd (GSL) was implemented in UHSx on 7th August 2023.

Communication and marketing have been achieved by meeting with senior staff members, joining team meetings, site visits, the Intranet and the distribution of flyers and posters across the organisation. All new staff will become aware of the Guardian Service when undertaking the organisational induction programme.

5. Access and Independence

Being available and responsive to staff are key factors in the operation of the service. Many staff members, when speaking to a Guardian, have emphasised that a deciding factor in their decision to speak up and contacting GSL was that the Guardian is not a UHSx employee and is external to the Trust.

6. Categorisation of Calls and Agreed Escalation Timescales

The following timescales have been agreed and form part of the Service Level Agreement.

Call Type	Description	Agreed Escalation Timescales
Red	Includes patient and staff safety, safeguarding, danger to an individual including self-harm.	Response required within 12 hours
Amber	Includes bullying, harassment, and staff safety.	Response required within 48 hours
Green	General grievances e.g. a change in work conditions.	Response required within 72 hours
White	No discernible risk to organisation.	No organisational response required

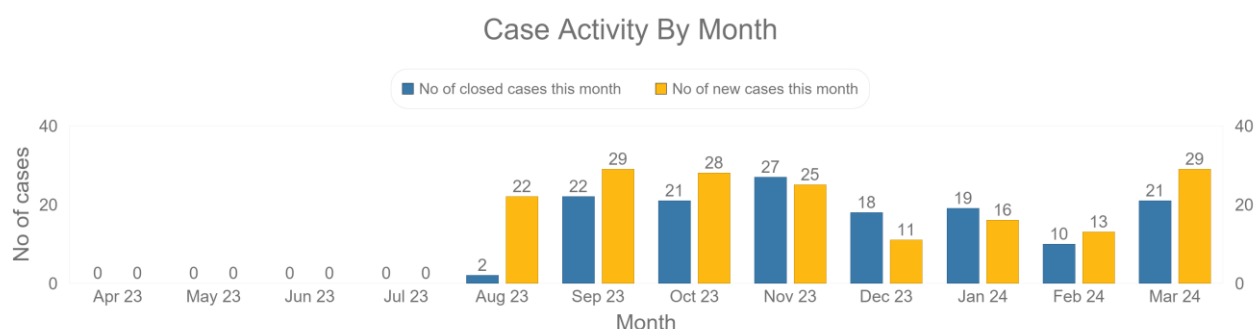
¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-the-mid-staffordshire-nhs-foundation-trust-public-inquiry>

Open cases are continually monitored, and the Guardian maintains regular contact with members of staff who have raised a concern to establish where ongoing support continues to be required. This can be via follow up phone calls and/or face to face meetings with staff who are in a situation where they feel they cannot escalate an issue for fear of reprisal. Guardians will also maintain contact until the situation is resolved or the staff member is satisfied that no further action is required. Where there is a particular complex case, setbacks, or avoidable delays in the progress of cases that have been escalated, these would be raised with David Grantham, Chief People Officer at regular monthly meetings.

Escalated cases are cases which are referred to an appropriate manager, at the request of the employee, to ensure that appropriate action can be taken. As not all employees want their manager to know they have contacted the Guardian, they either progress the matter themselves or take no further action. There are circumstances where cases are escalated later by the Guardian. A staff member may take time to consider options and decide a course of action that is right for them. The Guardian will keep a case open and continue to support staff in such cases. In a few situations contact with the Guardian is not maintained by the staff member.

7. Number of concerns raised.

The total number of cases raised to GSL in the period 7 August 2023 to 31 March 2024 is 173. The chart below shows the distribution of cases by month.



Monthly concerns remained variable from the start of the service. The service launched with significant and varied corporate promotion. The period August to November was higher than experienced in Dec, Jan and Feb. Seasonality, holiday periods and strike action may have been factors in concern numbers for December through February. Cases in March peaked again at 29 cases.

Numbers of concerns raised to the Guardian are only a measure of activity. Numbers may reflect both size and culture of the organisation. A lower number could reflect a culture where speaking up is already business as usual or a culture where staff are fearful or consider it is futile to speak up via any route. Insights may come from triangulation with other data points. Perhaps, in this first part year of GSL, the number of concerns can be considered an indication of some staff feeling comfortable with this alternative informal, independent, and impartial route for speaking up.

Initial contact with the Guardian is largely by email. In responding to a concern, the Guardian engages in emails, telephone calls (and texts) and face to face visits as follows:

Emails - 912	Telephone - 335	Face to face - 103
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Each concern has multiple contact points, hence contact points being higher than the number of concerns. As long as a case remains open the Guardian is in regular touch with the staff member until there is a resolution and the staff member is happy to close the case.

8. Confidentiality

Case management by TGSL with respect to confidentiality and escalation routes is recorded as a cumulative figure. A breakdown of the data for the period 7 August 2023 to 31 March 2024 is as follows:

Confidentiality	No. of concerns	Percentage
Keep it confidential within Guardian Service remit	119	68.79%
Permission to escalate with names	28	16.18%
Permission to escalate anonymously	12	6.94%
Permission to escalate without names	14	8.09%
Total	173	100%

On initial contact staff are informed that cases of safeguarding, staff or patient safety will be reported to the Trust. This caveat is shared at the start of a first conversation. Otherwise, the conversation may remain confidential at the staff member's discretion, although the Guardian will explore with the staff member all options for moving their concern forward in an informal way.

Most concerns raised (119 from 173) remained confidential within the Guardian Service remit. Many staff raising a concern to the Guardian are seeking a confidential, impartial, and non-judgemental party to listen and to support them in considering a variety of paths to obtaining a realistic resolution. During, or as a result of, that listening opportunity, the Guardian may question, coach, explain, or signpost for the staff member, as well as help them to achieve clarity or to reframe an issue. In many cases this results in the staff member feeling equipped to move their concern forward within the organisation and independent of the Guardian.

54 of 173 cases were escalated. Of the 54, 28 concerns were escalated with the staff members name while 26 staff withheld their name or were anonymous. Such a decision may be an indicator of fear or recrimination. When staff withhold their name from the Trust or are anonymous the Guardian explains that there may be limitations as to what the Trust can do about the concern.

Of the 54 escalated concerns 50 were responded to within the agreed timeframe, three were later due to staff leave, and a fourth was pending response due to leave. Of the 54 escalated, 12 cases remained open and 42 were closed.

9. Themes

Concerns raised are broken down into the following primary themes:

Theme	Total (Primary themes)	Ranking	Total (All themes)	Ranking
A Patient and Service User Safety / Quality	11 (6%)	5	17 (6%)	6
B Management Issue	44 (25%)	2	65 (23%)	2
C System & Process	62 (36%)	1	77 (27%)	1
D Bullying and Harassment	22 (13%)	4	33 (12%)	4
E Discrimination / Inequality	5 (3%)	6	14 (5%)	7
F Behavioural / Relationship	26 (15%)	3	49 (17%)	3
G Other (Describe)	0			
H Worker Safety or Wellbeing	3 (2%)	7	30 (10%)	5
Grand Total	173		285	

Concerns with a System & Process theme were the greatest proportion of primary concerns raised being 62 from 173 cases. This was followed by Management Issue at 44 and Behavior & Relationships at 26. System & Process concerns relate to more general grievances about, for example, pay, incorrect application of a policy, unfair recruitment process.

Patient Safety/ Quality and Worker Safety represented a smaller proportion of cases raised being 11 and 3 cases, respectively.

Where a case has other themes, these are also recorded (all themes) e.g., a primary theme of patient safety may also have aspects of system and process. The latter would be recorded as a secondary theme and counted under “all themes.” The top four “all themes” were consistent with the top 4 primary themes. Management Issues and Behavior & Relationships featured highly as additional themes under “all themes.”

Worker Safety saw an increase as a secondary theme, rising to ranking 5 (30 cases) from its ranking of 7 under primary themes. This change can largely be attributed to recognising how concerns categorised under primary themes affect the wellbeing of staff members.

A review of 2022/23 all themes data (the latest full year available) from the National Guardian Office (NGO) indicated UHSx currently has proportionately fewer patient safety/quality (6%) and worker safety (10%) concerns, with the NGO reporting 19% and 27%, respectively. The NGO also considers “other inappropriate attitudes and behaviours” which consists of Themes B, E and F and for UHSx is currently at 45% versus 30% reported by the NGO. Bullying & Harassment under all themes is reported at 22% by the NGO and 12% for UHSx.

10. Trends in Cases

Meaningful trend analysis at Trust level is currently limited by various factors including some known historic inconsistencies of reporting concern information for the Trust to the NGO; the merger in April 2021 and the more recent change in approach to provision of a full time dedicated FTSU Guardian service via the introduction of GSL.

For context, the national picture in recent years shows a trend of increased reporting. In part this could be attributable to more organisations reporting and an increase in the number of FTSU Guardians as shown in the chart below. NGO data for 23/24 will be available in the Summer.

The NGO reports cases rose by 25% in 2022/23 having been stable in the previous two years and previously risen by 26% year ended March 2021 (pandemic) and by 32% year ended March 2020.

Year	Concerns raised to FTSUG and reported to NGO	Year on Year increase	FTSUG registered with NGO
2022/23	25,382	+25%	1006
2021/22	20,362		
2020/21	20,388	+26%	>700
2019/20	16,199	+32%	555
2018/19	12,244	+73%	
2017/18	7,087		

The NGO also reports the increasing numbers of registered FTSUG on the NGO directory. This has risen from 555 in April 2020 to 1006 by March 2023.

An average number of cases per quarterly submission for NHS Trusts is reported by the NGO at 29.2, and the average for Acute and Acute & Community Trusts was higher at 32 cases.

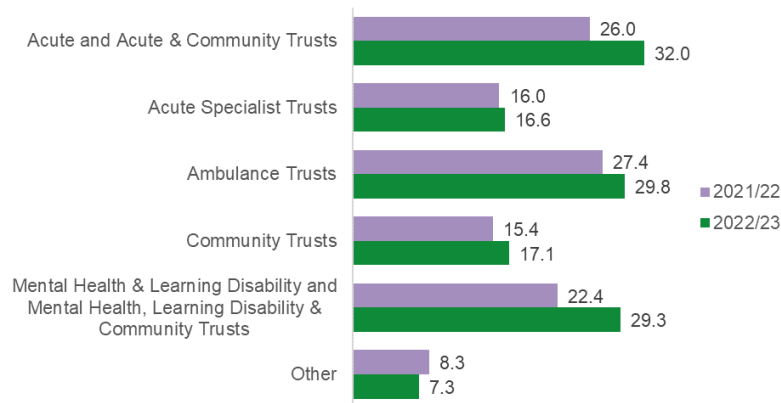


Figure 3. Average number of cases per submission by Sector

Similarly, the average number of cases per quarterly submission for large Trusts was higher at 40.2.

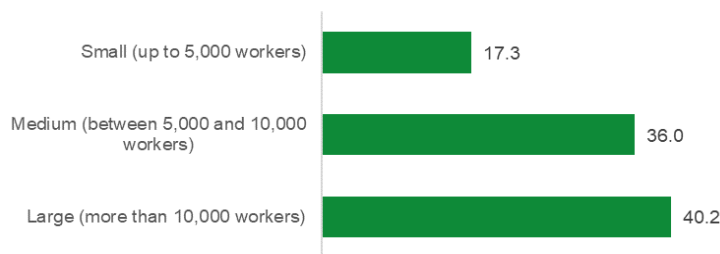


Figure 4. Average number of cases per submission by NHS Trust size (2022/23)

Since GSL took over the provision of the Guardian to UHSx only one full quarter (Q3 Oct to Dec 2023) has been reported to the NGO. This was 64 cases. Q4 will be reported at 58 cases.

Finally, the NGO analyses speaking up data for NHS and independent providers by Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating. Since 2019/20 NGO data indicates that Guardians in Trusts with a lower CQC rating received more concerns. The latest NGO full year data shows the average number of cases per quarter below.

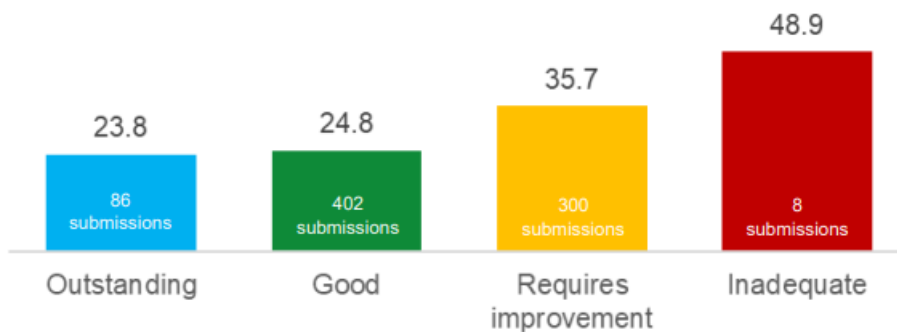


Figure 5. Average number of cases raised by NHS Trusts in 2022/23¹¹ – by latest CQC overall rating¹²

NB: National data/ charts in the section above are sourced from: *A summary of speaking up to FTSUG 1.4.22 – 31.3.23* [202223-Annual-Data-Report.pdf \(nationalguardian.org.uk\)](https://nationalguardian.org.uk/202223-Annual-Data-Report.pdf)

11. Assessment of Cases

This section provides additional insight to the primary themes.

A Patient and Service User Safety / Quality

Concerns raised 11. 9 cases were escalated, 1 of which remained open. 2 cases not escalated as the issues had already been raised and were responded to by the Trust under another process.

Some issues raised by staff under this theme include;

- Questions over competency or quality of work
- Suitability of a third party collecting a discharged vulnerable patient
- Service being fit for purpose.
- How some behaviours from mental health in-patients in a general ward impacted on others.
- Trust contingency plans for IT outage and impact on patient systems
- Discriminatory attitudes from staff possibly impacting on care.
- Staff experience as a patient
- Impact of colleagues working from home

One or more of the following actions occurred in all escalated cases: action was taken by the Trust; reviews were done; assurances given; learning identified.

There are other cases reported as differing Primary themes such as bullying, harassment, management issues and discrimination which may have an indirect/ direct impact on patient care. Any concern which presents a distraction and prevents a staff member doing their best work can have such an impact.

B Management Issue

Concerns raised 44.

Some issues raised by staff include:

- Not being open to listening when staff wish to speak up about any issue.
- Not being open to challenge.
- Management style, unprofessional behaviours.
- Competency, e.g., unable to control a professional meeting, recruitment process.
- Lacking skills/ aptitudes for management role e.g., supporting staff; empowering staff; empathy; compassion, communication.
- Understanding and knowledge around policy/ appropriate policy/ policy application e.g., re-banding; compassionate leave; change process; flexible working.
- Personal and professional relationships impact/conflict of interest at work e.g., family members, friendships.
- Failure to act on issues raised.
- Lack of communication/ information sharing.

C System Process

Concerns raised 62, the highest of all themes.

A range of issues raised under this theme included:

- How to raise a Datix.
- Poor experience of induction/ onboarding process.
- Response to issues raised re incorrect pay, sick pay, and deductions from pay.
- Re-banding not being processed correctly and resulting in delay.
- Application of policies and processes around change e.g., flexible working.
- Delays in informal and formal processes.
- Communication around delays in process.
- Lack of communication around IT connectivity.

- Availability of scrubs.

D Bullying and Harassment

Concerns raised 22. Of these, 14 instances were reported as managers towards the staff member and 8 instances from another staff member.

Examples described by staff include:

- Not being given access relevant training
- Unreasonable behaviour around recommended work adjustments
- Tone when engaging with staff.
- Intimidation
- Being isolated by colleagues
- Unnecessarily sexualised words and actions
- Unfair treatment
- Lack of consideration around shared workspace
- Intrusive, personal questions from colleague
- Contacting other Trusts seeking information about team member.
- Treated differently to other staff when raising the same questions.

E Discrimination / Inequality

Concerns raised 5.

3 cases were closed. 1 which was escalated was addressed through an ongoing formal process. A second was to move forward informally with management support and a third was reconsidering initial thoughts of formal process.

Concerns raised under this theme relate to staff reporting discrimination due to either health, disability and race or culture.

F Behavioural / Relationship

Concerns raised 26.

Examples given:

- Able to overhear one side of sensitive conversation in open plan workspace.
- Unprofessional behaviour in meeting
- Passive aggressive behaviour in shared office impacting team.
- Abusive language and poor behaviour
- Treating response from opposite sexes differently – misogyny
- Nepotism
- Colleague not pulling their weight.
- Sexist remarks, jokes and terms used.
- Gossip and verbally abusive.

H Worker Safety

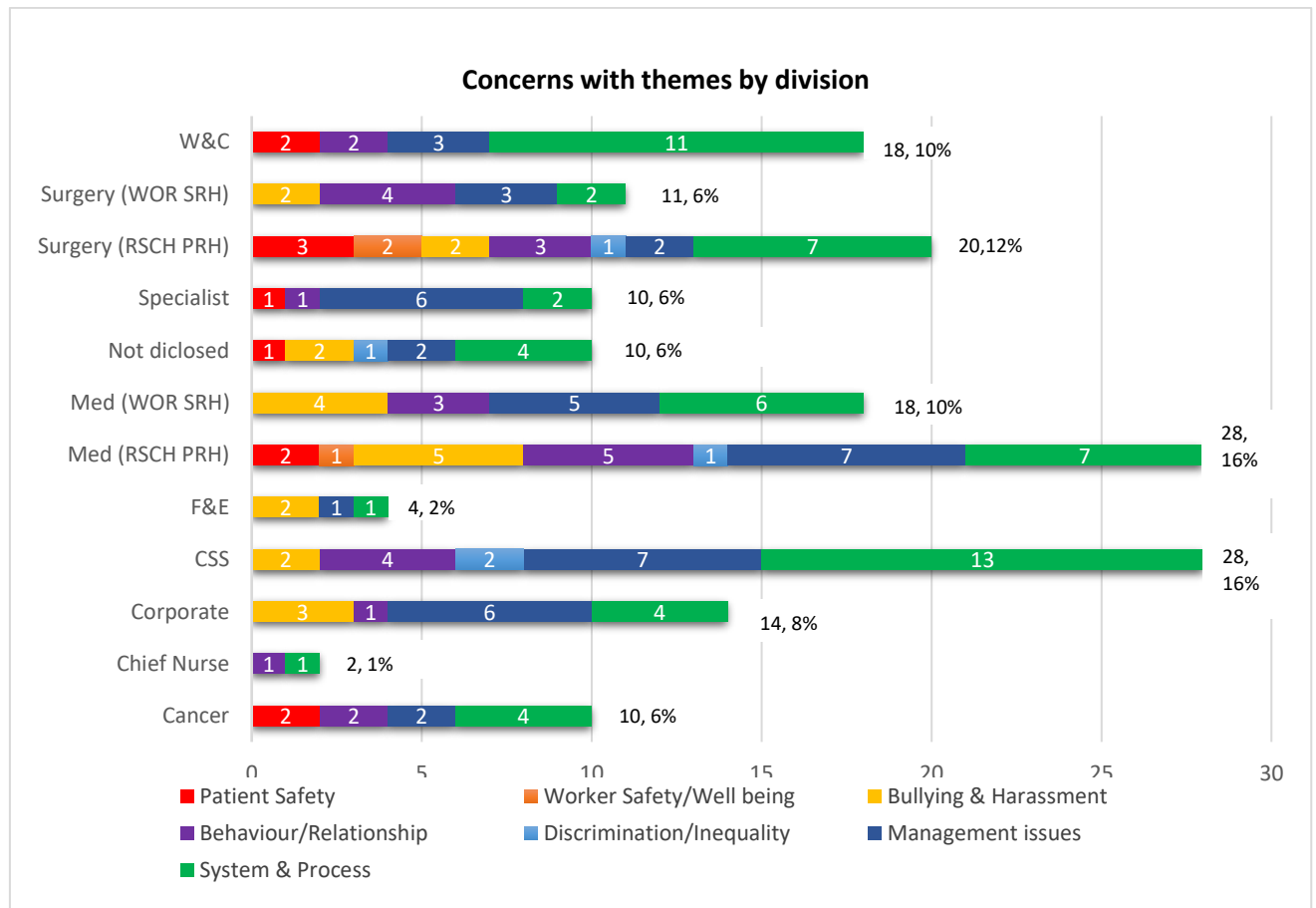
Concerns raised 3. All three concerns were escalated and were responded to the same day. Actions included a welfare check on a member of staff; re-allocation of work to relevant trained team and purchase of equipment to improve the working environment.

Many of the concerns raised under the standard primary themes also shared some other common themes that are not required to be reported but possibly provide useful insight. Of note, the themes of delay in process or communication; sickness arising from concern and staff leaving/looking to leave the Trust each

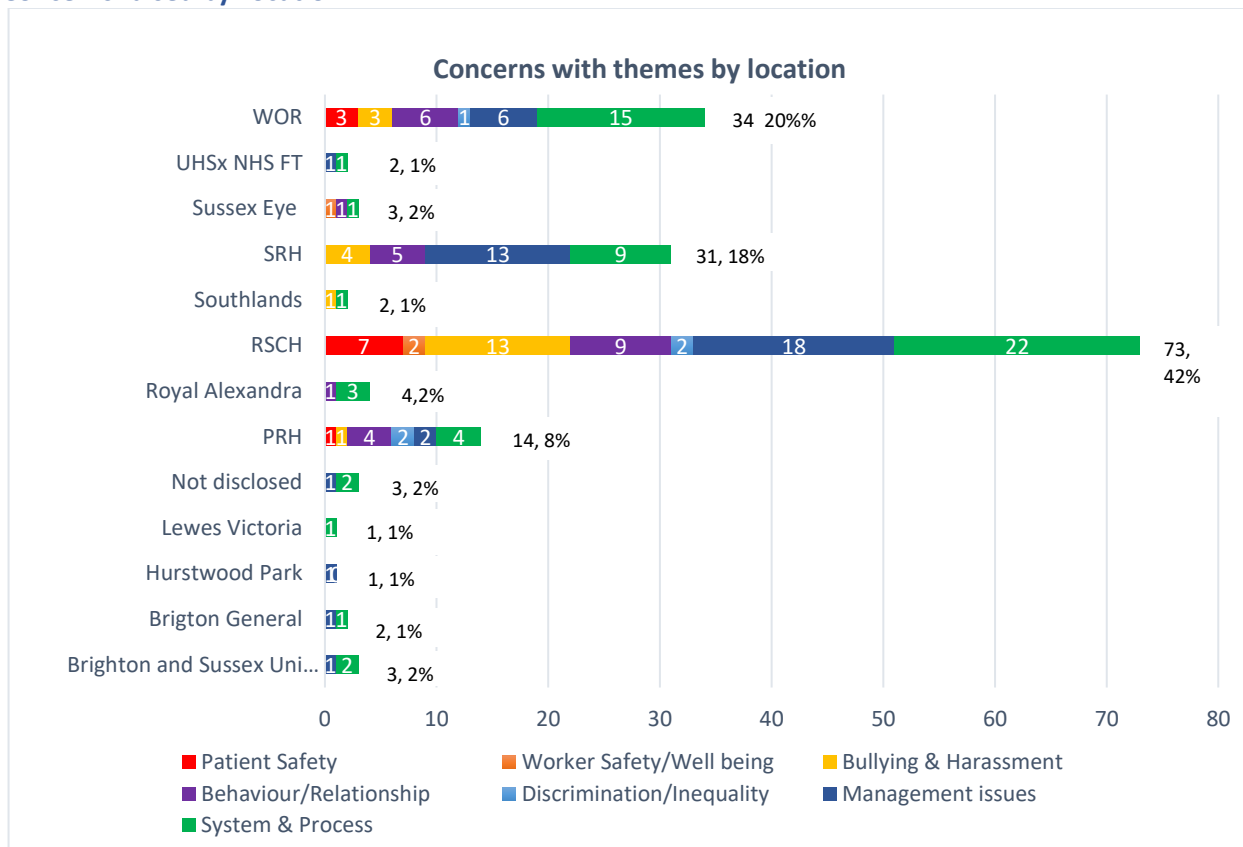
arose in over 20 cases. Other themes arising on multiple occasions though with much less frequency were errors in pay and related communication; nepotism and other relationships impacting at work; ; sexism/ sexist behaviour; issues in the recruitment process.

12. Statistical Graphs

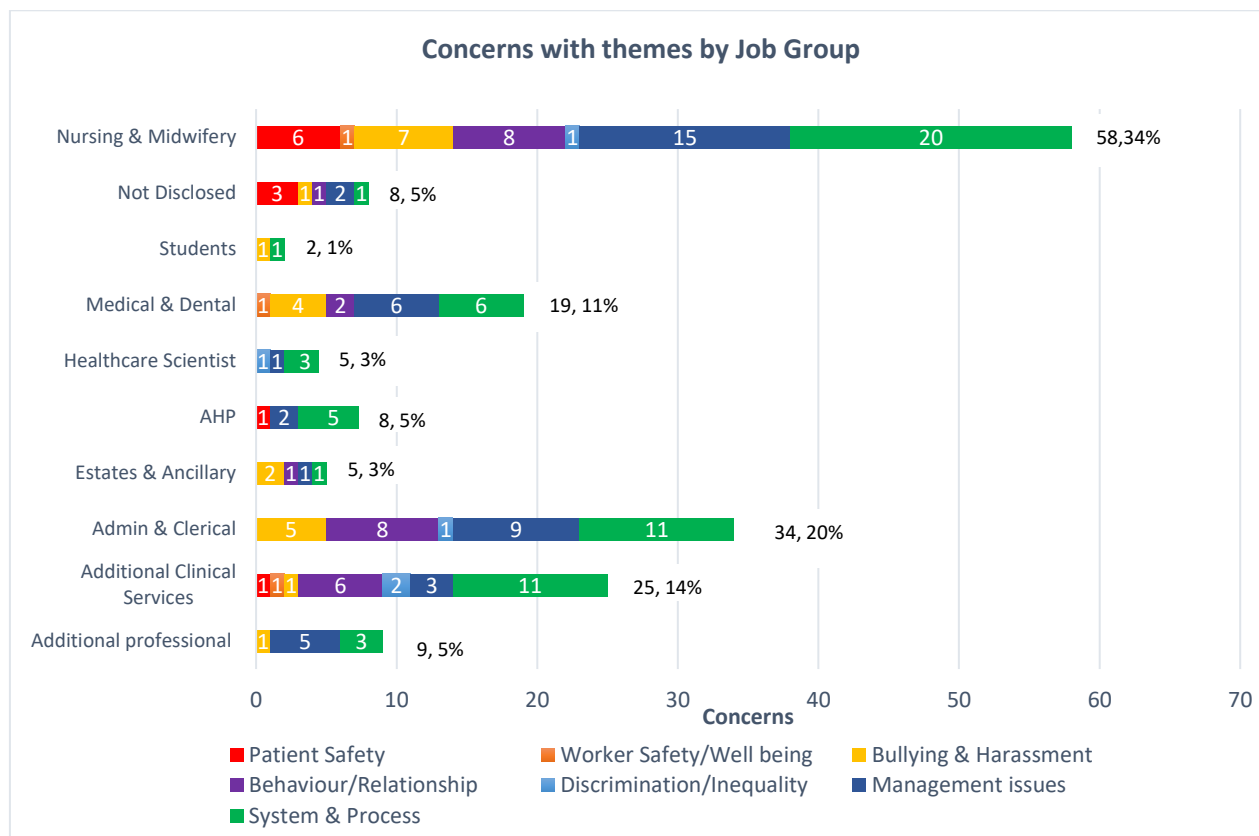
Concerns raised by Division.



Concerns raised by Location.



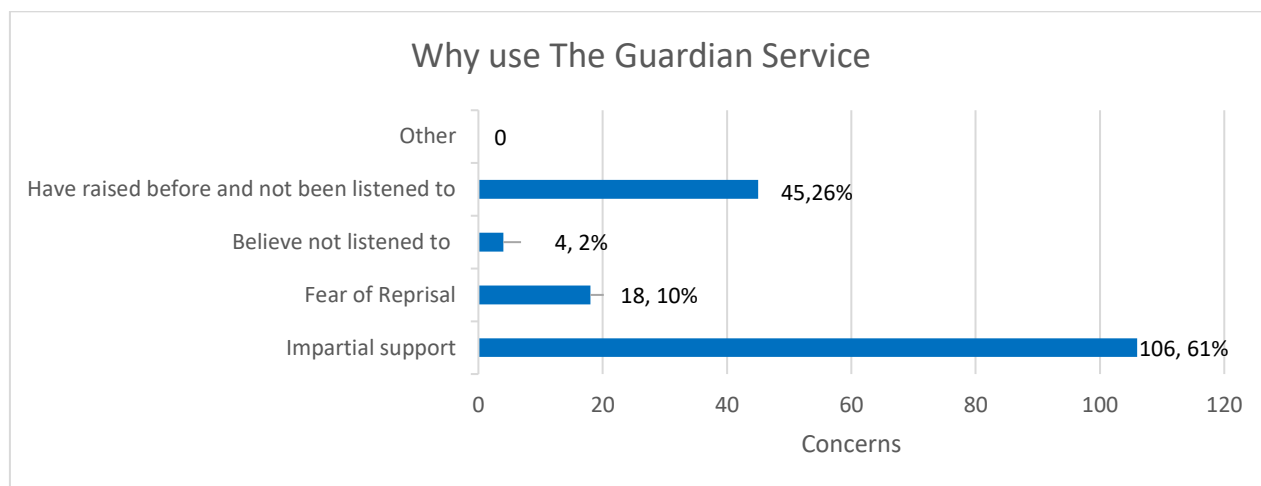
Concerns raised by Job Group



13. Why do staff use The Guardian Service?

The Guardian is one pathway available to support staff to speak up and when they are unable to do so by other routes within the Trust. The Guardian ensures that staff who do speak up are thanked, that their concern is responded to and that the staff member receives feedback on actions taken. Sometimes in other pathways aspects of that process are missing. This can be one reason staff may report to a Guardian as feeling they have not been listened to.

Staff who engage with the Guardian are routinely asked why they chose this route to raise a concern. The responses provided are in the chart below:



In this reporting period 26% of staff reported that they had raised a concern before and not been listened to. Genuine missed opportunities to engage fully and to a conclusion with a staff member may, for some staff, reinforce the futility of trying to do so in future.

14. Detriment

There were no reports of detriment arising from raising a concern with the Guardian. Staff have reported historic instances of detriment that they felt occurred as a result of speaking up in the past.

10% of UHSx staff raising a concern to the Guardian stated fear of a reprisal as a reason for using TGSL.

Staff raising concerns anonymously or looking for escalation and withholding their name may be an indicator of fear of detriment. Detriment associated with speaking up has a huge influence on FTSU culture.

Should a staff member report a detriment to the Guardian they will be supported in taking this forward to the Trust as a concern if they choose to and, in a way, they choose to.

15. Action taken to improve the Freedom to Speak Up Culture

The Guardian attends and/or presents at a variety of settings including:

- Promotion and presence at the UHSx staff conference
- Anti-discrimination Workshop participation
- Staff Disability Awareness conference presence
- Staff networks presentations and attendance including Disability; LGBTQI; Carer and BAME networks.
- Fortnightly Corporate Induction marketplace – regular presence

- Oversea Nurses and Health Care Support Workers Induction presentations
- Hospital Forum presentations
- Team briefings and training sessions such as Practice Educators; OPD Nurse Managers; Integrated Cancer Professionals; Professional Nurse Advocates; Procurement team.

The Guardian also undertakes site visits which include visiting wards, staffrooms, presence in a thoroughfare, general walkabouts. The intention is that a variety of informal opportunities to meet, see or hear the Guardian create visibility, trust, and familiarity with staff. At every opportunity promotional literature is provided to staff so they always have a contact number and email for the Guardian.

In addition, using coaching opportunities, the Guardian supports staff to raise their own concerns internally. This can be through active listening to understand and/or asking open and skilful questions while staff think through and consider what next steps are right for them.

The FTUSG also has a series of regular meetings:

- monthly with the Chief People Officer to review the activity report, case outcomes and themes arising.
- with the NED for FTSU, when exceptions and assurance are discussed.
- with the CEO to discuss quarterly activity, emerging themes, and recent learnings.
- regular review with the Trust Chair

Confidentiality is maintained, discussions do not identify any individual staff member.

There are also monthly meetings with the Associate Director, Leadership, OD & Engagement team to discuss embedding of the service, responsiveness in escalation and improving engagement. Also, with the Engagement & Wellbeing Programme Managers when relevant developments and engagement initiatives are shared. Senior colleagues from Employee Relations and Equity Diversity and Inclusion may participate in those monthly meetings from time to time.

16. Learning and Improvements

The Guardian attends:

- fortnightly “Listen and Learn” meetings with other Guardian colleagues from across England, Scotland, and Wales within GSL where complex concerns are raised and discussed, and learning is embedded via shared good practices. Reflecting on practice informs continual learning.
- Bi-monthly local ICB Guardian network meetings where pertinent developments are discussed, and good practice is also shared.
- Regional meetings (SE), workshops, events, and conferences organised by the NGO. This, in addition to the NGO Bulletins, enables Guardians to keep abreast of developments in the field which in turn support the effective handling of concerns.

The Guardian’s role is complex, and the landscape is constantly evolving. To ensure best practice, the Guardian completes annual refresher training provided by the NGO to support learning and development needs on changes.

The Guardian is a trained Mental Health First Aider. This is valuable when liaising with staff who may be experiencing poor mental health. The skills learned enable the Guardian to signpost a person to appropriate support.

The Guardian has also received training in building and maintaining resilience.

The Guardian has a minimum of two sessions per annum with a Psychotherapist, with additional sessions available should these be required.

The Guardian attends quarterly supervised meetings held by a qualified mental health first aid instructor and an ambassador for MQ: Mental Health Charity. This is part of an ongoing GSL 'Practice Enhancement Training' schedule.

17. Comments & Recommendations

- **“Speaking up” NGO training** – the recommendation is that the Trust considers embedding Speaking up further by making it **mandatory** for all staff to complete the relevant module(s) from ["Freedom to Speak Up in Healthcare"](#) - *Speak Up, Listen Up and Follow Up*, introduced by the NGO.
- **Management training** – In some departments and divisions staff responsibility may include B3 supervisors through to more senior managers. Although some toolkits do exist on the Trust intranet, it is apparent from concerns raised that sometimes supervisors and managers have little real support in, or experience of managing people successfully. Yet, many managers face complex people issues. This can lead to inaction for fear of looking stupid, wrong action and misunderstanding. It can also create a poor experience for staff and managers when dealing with speaking up matters that were intended to be business as usual. For staff, a poor experience can lead to fear and futility around speaking up again.

The recommendation is: to develop and mandate an appropriate blended learning programme for all people managers to acquire relevant knowledge, understanding and skills (and soft skills) for managing people, and that is pitched at a level relevant to the role and responsibilities so taking in to account varying abilities, experience, and learning styles.

- **Communication skills** – 26% of staff reported to the Guardian that they had raised their concern before but not been listened to. In part this recommendation sits with recommendations above but more explicitly this recommendation is about education and awareness on the how, what, when, tone, language, style of appropriate communication; how to flex and the messaging that appropriate communication sends. Also how to receive communication by active listening, what that means; listening to understand; checking understanding and evidence to staff that they have been heard. The intention being to capture and resolve issues at the earliest point, improve staff experience and reap the reward of other benefits that will ensue from good practice.
- **Communication guidelines/ expectation setting** – this recommendation relates to a broad spectrum of communication issues arising while managing concerns which adversely affected the staff experience and motivated them to speak to the Guardian. Size, geography, work volumes, new ways of working are some of the influencing factors in communication. Effective communication is essential for fostering a positive work environment and addressing staff concerns. To ensure clarity and inclusivity, the recommendation is to consider establishing comprehensive communication guidelines and expectations, which might encompass:
 - Prerequisites for Communication:**
 - Timeliness, transparency, respectfulness, professionalism, reflecting organisational values.
 - Communication Methods:**
 - Email: Define appropriateness, acknowledgment/response times, out-of-office management, and recipient selection (To and cc).
 - Phone/Teams: Determine when these mediums are preferable, especially as alternatives to email.
 - Information Sharing:**

- Specify what information can be shared, who should share it, and through which channels (e.g., email, in-person, team meetings, newsletters), including frequency expectations.

Formal and Pre-formal Processes:

- Timely and transparent communication regarding progress, delays, keeping in touch and general guidance throughout processes.
- Ongoing/ outcome communication expectations when a concern is raised through reporting platforms like Datix.

Language Inclusivity:

- Establish guidelines for when it's acceptable to use languages other than English.

Managing Missed Deadlines and Delays:

- Outline expectations for communication regarding missed deadlines, delays, or lack of progress updates.

Departmental/Divisional Hierarchy Communication:

- Define how hierarchy structure within departments/divisions should be communicated to team members.

Partner Communication:

- Consider how partners who are delivering services for staff on behalf of the Trust communicate with staff. Ensure alignment with Trust's communication standards and values.

- **Resolution Policy** – it is understood that resolution training is being designed for managers and guidance planned for staff. The recommendation is to consider amendments to the policy in respect of: defining mediation and facilitation; expectation setting about access to the informal mechanism of mediation as well as who is permitted to undertake the role of mediator, and that at the point of raising a concern managers should check staff have access to the policy and are clear about options and roles in the pathways to resolution. There is a strong sense that: the terms are used loosely and interchangeably and without really understanding what each means; that staff feel they have ease of access to mediation (because it is in the policy) when in fact criteria are applied and staff are then disappointed when mediation is refused; that “mediation” is being attempted by those without the relevant training or accreditation. In addition, the Trust may wish to consider if easier access to mediation through more internal trained mediators may be effective in addressing more quickly and informally, more of the relationship issues that arise.
- **Pastoral support** – some staff (both accused and accuser) have reported feeling forgotten and overlooked in some formal and pre-formal processes (e.g. discipline, formal resolution, investigation, or fact finding) and in particular where there is delay/ unexplained delay. The Discipline and Investigation policies acknowledge wellbeing support for staff in those processes however staff report being notified of issues without support in place and fact finding not taking place for some weeks. Equally staff raising serious issues via formal Resolution report being left without support and communication. The recommendation is to consider appropriate timely pastoral support for all sides in such processes, and to set expectations as to what that support consists of.

18. Staff Feedback

Unless the staff member is anonymous or has not maintained contact with the Guardian, each time a case is closed the staff member has an opportunity to provide anonymous feedback about their experience. As of 31 March 2024 140 of 173 cases were closed.

The results from the feedback indicate that of those that responded:

- 93% felt the concern was dealt with promptly by the Guardian.
- 96% felt the conversation was both safe and comfortable.
- 94% who had their case escalated felt they were kept informed in a timely manner.
- 82% were satisfied with the outcome.
- 84% would speak up again and 11% might speak up again.
- 96% would recommend the Guardian service to a colleague.

Some of the free text feedback from respondents is as follows:

- *Talking to the Guardian provided me with impartial advice and steps to follow to resolve my concern.*
- *I found the experience good and not as daunting and worrying as I once thought. I have already recommended the service to others.*
- *Really helpful in enabling me to raise a concern with my manager in a respectful manner.*
- *.... (the Guardian) was excellent at helping to review the situation and bring clarity. She provided very useful advice and was very supportive, whilst remaining impartial.*
- *I felt I was listened to sympathetically and given realistic expectations.*
- *By talking through my concerns with ... (the Guardian) I was able to come up with a safe and workable solution. I also felt heard and safe.*
- *The Guardian helped me to moderate my response/contact with my manager and achieve a good outcome.*
- *. (the Guardian) was so kind and caring and gave me time to speak through my concerns. She took me seriously and dealt with my concerns effectively and timely.*