



Freedom to Speak Up Policy (Whistleblowing)

Document Control

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Approved by	Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
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Change History

Date	Change	Approved by/Comments
April 2026	Updated on LAS Policy template Version 4.1: Added sexual harassment as a protected disclosure (Worker Protection Act 2023); added new Prevention of Sexual Harassment section including proactive employer duty effective October 2026; updated Protected Disclosure definition	Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
	Version 4 reflects National Policy	Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
24/03/2021	Contact details updated	Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
31/03/2022	Contact details updates 4.12 Advocates name replaced to Ambassadors	Freedom to Speak Up Guardian

This document will be reviewed within three years, or sooner should the need arise.

Version 4.

1. Introduction – Policy Objectives

- 1.1. We welcome speaking up and we listen. By speaking up at work, you play a vital role in helping us continuously improve our services for patients and create safe, supportive working environments for our staff.

This policy applies to all workers, and we want to hear all workers' concerns. Speaking up may relate to a wide range of issues, including patient safety, the working environment, discriminatory practices, and any behaviours or matters that affect the wellbeing of colleagues or patients.

The London Ambulance Service NHS Trust (LAS) recognises the importance of encouraging a culture of openness in which staff and contractors can freely express their concerns without any fear of reprisal. This can contribute constructively to the development and continuous improvement of the services provided by the LAS. As a result, if a member of staff raises such a concern, the matter will be dealt with positively, quickly and reasonably.

The LAS is committed to achieving in all its practices the highest possible standards of service to staff, patients, the public and its commissioners.

2. Scope and Definitions

- 2.1. This policy applies to all workers in NHS healthcare, including those working in pharmacy, optometry, and dentistry. This includes healthcare professionals, non-clinical workers, receptionists, directors, managers, contractors, volunteers, students, trainees, junior doctors, locum, bank and agency workers, and former workers

- 2.2. Freedom to Speak Up (FtSU): A process through which workers can raise concerns about patient care, working conditions, or any matter affecting their wellbeing or that of their colleagues.

- 2.3. Whistleblowing is the term used when a worker raises a concern about malpractice, risk (for example about patient safety), wrongdoing or possible illegality, which harms, or creates a risk of harm, to people who use the service, colleagues or the wider public.

To be considered under whistleblowing, the wrongdoing you disclose must be in the public interest. This means you are making a protected disclosure.

For further information on whistleblowing, please refer to the Government website or by contacting Protect, the UK whistleblowing charity.

- 2.4. Protected Disclosure:

A disclosure as defined under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), providing legal protection for workers who speak up about certain matters in the public interest. The legislation is complex and to qualify for legal protection under it, very specific criteria need to be met in relation to who is speaking up about what and to whom. More information on PIDA can be found in Appendix C

- 2.5. Detriment:

Detriment, mostly referred to as 'disadvantage', relates to feeling unfairly treated after raising a concern. This includes perceived threats or unfavourable treatment, which may be subtle but result in a person feeling uncomfortable.

If a person feels that they have been disadvantaged because of raising a concern, they should contact the employee relations, their union representative and the FtSU Guardian immediately. The Guardian is required to submit data to the National Guardians Office (from June 2026 the NGO will become NHS England) of the number of cases where staff feel disadvantaged because of speaking

up. Cases of detriment/disadvantage are managed under HR policies. [The NHS Speaking Up Support Scheme](#) provides a range of support for past and present NHS workers who have experienced a significant adverse impact on both their professional and personal lives, to move forward, following a formal speak up process. The scheme, formerly known as the Whistleblowers Support Scheme, was created in 2019 as a response to the recommendations from the [2015 Freedom to speak up review](#).

3. Accountabilities and Responsibilities

- 3.1. FtSU Guardian: Carmen Peters (londonamb@speakup.nhs.net) – supports workers to speak up and ensures concerns are responded to.
- 3.2. Senior Executive Lead for FtSU: Simon Steward, Deputy Chief People Officer(simon.steward@nhs.net) – provides senior support for the FtSU Guardian and reviews the effectiveness of FtSU arrangements.
- 3.3. Non-Executive Director for FtSU: Dr Anne Rainsberry (a.rainsberry@nhs.net).
- 3.4. HR Team: londamb.las.ppc@nhs.net
- 3.5. Patient Safety / Clinical Governance Team: londamb.governancendcompliance@nhs.net
- 3.6. Local Counter Fraud Specialist (RSM UK): Kirsty Clarke (Kirsty.clarke8@nhs.net) 02032018054 and Rakesh Patel, Chief Financial Officer
- 3.7. London Ambulance FtSU Ambassadors provide support and signposting to existing mechanisms we have in place to support staff at LAS. Ambassadors can direct a staff member to the FTSU Guardian but cannot escalate or manage cases.

4. Speaking Up at LAS

- 4.1. When should staff raise a concern?

Speaking up is vital and helps LAS to continuously improve services for patients and the working environment for all staff. Workers should feel empowered to raise any concern, including those relating to patient safety, working conditions, discriminatory practices, behaviours affecting staff wellbeing, financial irregularities, or any other matter in the public interest. If you are unsure whether something should be raised, you are encouraged to speak up. You are not required to have evidence before raising a concern, provided it is raised in good faith and without malicious intent.

- 4.2. How to Speak Up:

You can speak up to any person or organisation, in person, by phone, or in writing (including email). You have a choice about how to raise your concern: **Openly** (your identity may be shared as needed), **Confidentially** (your identity is known to the person you report to but shared no further without your consent), or **Anonymously** (your identity is not revealed, though this may limit the action that can be taken and feedback provided). LAS will respect your chosen approach and will not pressure you to raise concerns in a way you are not comfortable with.

4.3. Internal Reporting Routes:

Workers are encouraged to raise concerns with their line manager in the first instance. Where this is not appropriate, or if concerns cannot be resolved at that level, they may be escalated to another manager.

Where management routes are not suitable, or where concerns remain unresolved, the FtSU process can be accessed. The FtSU Guardian act as a safety net complementing existing routes. Support may be provided by trade union representatives. Additional internal routes include Patient Safety and Clinical Governance team and HR team.

Concerns relating to Fraud should be reported to the Local Counter Fraud specialist:
Kirsty.Clarke8@nhs.net | 020 3201 8054 and Chief Financial Officer Rakesh Patel

4.4. External Reporting Routes:

Where workers feel unable to raise concerns internally, or where concerns have not been appropriately addressed, they may raise concerns externally, including with the Care quality Commission (CQC), NHS England, the NHS Counter Fraud Authority (0800 028 4060), relevant professional regulatory bodies (e.g. NMC, HCPC), the National Guardian's Office.

4.5. Support for Staff Speaking Up:

LAS will thank every worker who speaks up and will support them in identifying appropriate resolution options. Workers will be kept informed of progress and outcomes wherever possible, while respecting confidentiality and data protection obligations. Wellbeing support will be signposted throughout the process, including Occupational Health and the Employee Assistance Programme. PIDA protects workers from detriment or dismissal for making a protected disclosure, and settlement agreements must not contain clauses that prevent protected disclosures.

4.6. Investigation and Confidentiality:

All concerns will be considered carefully and routed through the most appropriate process. Where concerns can be resolved locally without wider safety implications, the FtSU Guardian or Deputy may facilitate resolution. Where this is not possible, a formal investigation or review will be commissioned, led by an individual with appropriate independence. Investigations will be objective, evidence-based, and subject to independent oversight. Learning will be shared across the organisation, and employment matters will be managed separately under HR procedures.

Please note: matters relating to informal or formal HR processes fall outside the remit of Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU). FTSU does not investigate these concerns, and they should instead be raised through the appropriate HR policies and procedures. All HR policies can be accessed [here](#)

4.7. Protection from Detriment and Victimisation:

LAS will not tolerate bullying, victimisation, or any adverse treatment as a result of speaking up. Managers must take all reasonable steps to protect individuals who raise concerns. Where detriment occurs and LAS cannot evidence that reasonable steps were taken to prevent it, the Trust may be held vicariously liable. Concerns raised maliciously or in bad faith may be addressed under conduct procedures.

4.8. National Guardian's Office:

The LAS FtSU Guardian is registered with the National Guardian's Office. The National Guardian can independently review how staff have been treated after raising concerns where LAS may have failed to follow good practice. Staff can contact the National Guardian's Office directly if they feel their concern has not been handled appropriately. The free, confidential NHS Whistleblowing Helpline (08000 724 725) also provides independent advice and support to NHS and social care workers at any stage.

5. Prevention of Sexual Harassment

- 5.1. Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. London Ambulance Service NHS Trust is committed to providing a working environment free from sexual harassment for all workers, including employees, contractors, volunteers, students and bank staff.
- 5.2. Proactive Duty from October 2026: With effect from October 2026, the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 imposes a strengthened proactive duty on LAS as employer. LAS must take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of its workers — this goes beyond responding to complaints after they occur.
- 5.3. To meet the “all reasonable steps” standard, LAS will: conduct regular risk assessments to identify where sexual harassment is most likely to occur; maintain and actively promote an up-to-date Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy; deliver regular, role-appropriate training to all staff and managers; ensure clear and accessible reporting routes are in place and widely communicated; monitor and respond to concerns and data trends; and take prompt, proportionate action when concerns are raised. These steps will be reviewed at least annually, and evidence of compliance will be reported to the Trust Board.
- 5.4. Workers who experience or witness sexual harassment are encouraged to speak up using any of the internal routes described in this policy, including your line manager, the FtSU Guardian (Carmen Peters, londonamb@speakup.nhs.net), Safeguarding (londamb.safeguardingteam@nhs.net) the HR Team (londamb.las.ppc@nhs.net) or an RfR application to the Resolution Hub (londamb.lasresolutionhub@nhs.net). Concerns may also be reported to an external body, including the Care Quality Commission or a relevant professional regulatory body, where appropriate.

6. Resolution and Investigation

6.1 Resolution and Investigation

We encourage all our staff to raise concerns locally with their line management team and support our managers/leaders to listen to the issue and take action to resolve it, wherever possible. In most cases, it is important that this opportunity of local resolution be fully explored, which may include facilitated conversations and/or mediation. Where an investigation is required, it will be objective and conducted by someone who is suitably independent and if required, trained in investigations. Staff can expect a conclusion within a reasonable timescale (and notified of). Within the confines of confidentiality, staff will be informed of the **outcome** and lessons learned.

Please note: Any employment issues that have implications for an individual in terms of capability or conduct, as identified during an investigation, will be addressed separately under HR policies.

6.2 Communicating with people who speak up

We will always treat staff who speak up with respect and thank them for speaking up. We will discuss the issues with individuals raising the concern, to ensure we understand exactly what they are worried about. If we decide the concerns raised need to be investigated, tell them how long we anticipate the investigation to take from HR or external investigator. We will agree with them how to

keep them up to date with progress and feedback any lessons learned. FTSU Executive leads will be sighted on investigations.

6.3 How we learn from 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 undertaken. We will then ensure that they are working effectively. Lessons will be shared with teams across the Trust and if appropriate, more widely.

6.4 Review

We will seek feedback from workers about their experience of speaking up. We will review the effectiveness of this policy and annually review our local processes and make changes if needed.

6.5 Trust Board and People and Culture Committee oversight

The Trust Board know how vital it is that leaders listen to concerns raised to them. If actions are not taken, workers may remain silent, which has the potential to cause harm. The Executive leads and Chief Executive are informed of high-level non-identifiable information about themes of concerns raised by our staff through this policy and meet monthly. A report is presented to the Board at least annually, providing a thematic overview of speaking up by our staff. The FTSU guardian will also inform the Board what the Trust is doing to address any problems. The Trust Board fully supports staff speaking up and wants them to feel free to do so.

7 Education and Training

- 7.1 LAS managers and leaders must complete training on speaking up culture, active listening, and policy responsibilities. The FtSU Guardian will ensure FtSU Ambassadors are trained and supported. FtSU process awareness will be included in staff induction. Starting October 2026, training on preventing sexual harassment is required for all managers and relevant staff, as mandated by the Worker Protection Act 2023. Training needs will be reviewed annually by the FtSU Guardian and People & Organisational Development. Freedom to Speak up Training can be found [here](#)

8 Policy Review

- 8.1 This policy will remain under active review to ensure it stays applicable, relevant, and aligned with national Freedom to Speak Up guidance and any changes in legislation. The FtSU Guardian is responsible for monitoring changes in national guidance from the National Guardian's Office and bringing any required updates to the attention of the Senior Lead for FtSU (Chief People Officer) and the Non-Executive Director for FtSU. Where substantive changes are required ahead of the three-year review cycle, the policy will be updated and taken through the appropriate approval process at the earliest opportunity.
- 8.2 Reporting on the operation of this policy and the FtSU function will take place through the governance structure set out in the Monitoring Compliance section above. In addition, LAS will submit an annual return to the National Guardian's Office as required. Any serious systemic concerns or significant detriment cases identified through the FtSU process will be escalated to the Chief Executive and Non-Executive Director for FtSU without delay, and to the Trust Board where appropriate. The effectiveness of LAS's speaking up culture will be assessed annually using data

from the NHS Staff Survey, FtSU case data, and any other available intelligence.

Associated Documents

[Resolution Framework TP151](#)
[Request for Resolution Paper Form](#)

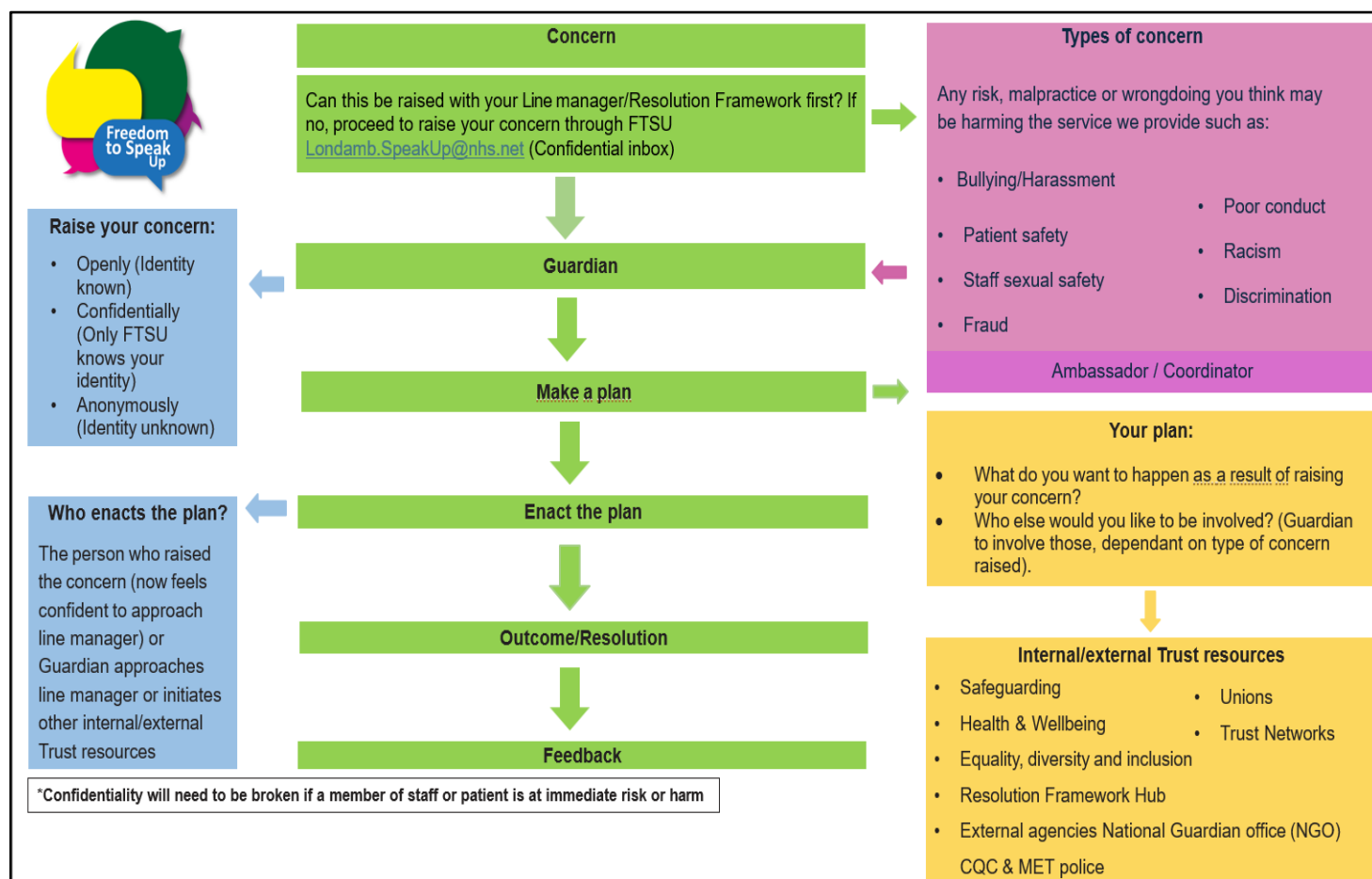
References

[NHS England Speaking Up Policy](#)
[National Guardian Office](#)

Appendix A: Freedom To Speak Up Process-Flow

We will	Steps towards resolution	Outcomes	Escalation
Thank you for speaking up ❖ Help you identify the options for resolution ❖ Signpost you to health and wellbeing support ❖ Confirm what information you consent for us to share ❖ Support you with any further next steps and keep in touch with you.	Engage with relevant senior managers (where appropriate) ❖ Referral to HR team/processes (where appropriate) ❖ Referral to Patient safety processes (where appropriate) ❖ Consider other type of appropriate support, e.g. mediation, trade unions.	The outcomes will be shared with you wherever possible (within the confines of confidentiality) ❖ Learning and improvement identified	If resolution has not been achieved or you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can escalate the matter to the Executive Director for FtSU or the Non-Executive Director for FtSU ❖ If you are still not satisfied or you think there are good reasons not to use internal routes, you can speak to an external body, such as the CQC or NHS England.

Appendix B: Freedom To Speak Up Plan



Appendix C: Making a protected disclosure / Whistleblowing

Making a protected disclosure

A protected disclosure is defined in the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998. This legislation allows certain categories of worker to lodge a claim for compensation with an employment tribunal if they suffer because of speaking up. The legislation is complex and to qualify for protection under it, very specific criteria must be met in relation to who is speaking up, about what and to whom.

To be counted as a public interest disclosure / “whistleblowing disclosure”, information must be disclosed; it is not sufficient to gather information or threaten to make a disclosure. The individual reporting must reasonably believe that the information relates to one of seven categories listed in PIDA:

1. From 6 April 2026, UK law will explicitly include sexual harassment as a whistleblowing "qualifying disclosure," The whistleblowing disclosure could cover sexual harassment that has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
2. A criminal offence, for example fraud
3. Failure to comply with a legal obligation
4. A miscarriage of justice
5. Danger to the health and safety of any individual
6. Damage to the environment
7. The deliberate concealment of information falling within any of these categories.

Whistleblowers who maliciously or deliberately raise a matter that they know to be untrue are not covered by whistleblowing protection.

To help you consider whether you might meet these criteria, please seek independent advice from Protect or a legal representative. For free confidential advice, you can call Protect on 020 3117 2520

Prescribed Persons

Prescribed persons provide workers with a mechanism to make their whistleblowing disclosure to an independent body, where the worker does not feel able to disclose directly to their employer or as a route of escalation, where the workers feel their concerns have been ignored or the employer has taken no action. Prescribed persons in the NHS include:

[NHS England](#)
[Care Quality Commission](#)
[National Guardian Office](#)