

# Freedom to Speak Up Annual Report 2020/21

Author: Freedom to Speak Up Guardian

Trust Board paper P

## Purpose of report:

This paper is for:	Description	Select (X)
Decision	To formally receive a report and approve its recommendations OR a particular course of action	
Discussion	To discuss, in depth, a report noting its implications without formally approving a recommendation or action	x
Assurance	To assure the Board that systems and processes are in place, or to advise a gap along with treatment plan	
Noting	For noting without the need for discussion	

## Previous consideration:

Meeting	Date	Please clarify the purpose of the paper to that meeting using the categories above
CMG Board (specify which CMG)		
Executive Board		
Trust Board Committee		
Trust Board		

# Executive Summary

## Context

The Annual Report is to provide an update on the number of concerns raised through a variety of mechanisms. The data has been analysed and the themes have been captured as part of the report. This Annual Report also highlights the support that has been offered from the service and the achievements made from staff speaking up.

## Questions

1. What are the themes identified from the year?
2. What improvement work has the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian been involved in 2020/21?
3. What are the plans for the Freedom to Speak Up work programme in this current year?

## Conclusion

1. The total number of concerns raised using the four reporting platforms which come under the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian in March 2020 to April 2021 were 249, a decrease of 34 reports in comparison with 2019/2020 figures (283). The most notable themes from these were bullying and

harassment, infection prevention (such as social distancing and mask wearing) and communication issues.

2. In 2020/21 the Freedom to Speak up Guardian was involved with many pieces of improvement work to include; working in partnership with the Infection Prevention team to reduce staff anxieties about Covid-19 infection prevention controls, launched the BAME 'Your Voice' reporting platform, undertook drop in sessions for staff redeployed and developed a working group for shielding staff.
3. Plans for the Freedom to Speak Up work programme in this current year are:
  - The Freedom to Speak up Guardian will review and continual refresh the communications of the role.
  - Devise a communication plan to promote the internal mechanisms to aide staff to speak up.
  - Maintain high visibility of the role through walkabouts
  - A Freedom to Speak up workshop to be arranged to develop our strategy of key priorities for the role in collaboration with colleagues, and to further support and promote a speaking up and improvement culture across the trust
  - Undertake a review of the E-learning HELM training with the hope to make the module 'essential to role'
  - Refresh and relaunch of the Your Voice BAME Reporting Tool
  - Continue to support and provide feedback to supportive services across the Trust
  - Elevation of the UHL profile and sharing best practice as part of the East Midlands Freedom to Speak up Network and the National Guardian's Office
  - Ensure through Governance activity that the key themes and learning points are effectively communicated at senior levels through the provision of written reports to Trust Boards and liaison with the CEO, Directors and Non Directors at UHL.
  - Triangulation of key data sets to provide more detailed information to assist CMGs in driving patient and worker safety forward.

## Input Sought

We would welcome Trust Board's input in the following recommendations:

Members to please consider:-

- Are we taking sufficient action on the key themes raised, especially around bullying and harassment and cultures as this was the most notable theme across a number of CMG's
- Acknowledgement that during last year we saw a large number of anonymous concerns raised and that it is still important to address these even though there is no staff member to feed back to.

## For Reference

This report relates to the following UHL quality and supporting priorities:

### 1. Quality priorities

Safe, surgery and procedures	[Yes ]
Improved Cancer pathways	[Yes ]
Streamlined emergency care	[Yes ]
Ward accreditation	[Yes ]

**2. Supporting priorities**

People strategy implementation	[Yes ]
Investment in sustainable Estate and reconfiguration	[Yes ]
e-Hospital	[Yes ]
Embedded research, training and education	[Yes ]
Embed innovation in recovery and renewal	[Yes ]
Sustainable finances	[Yes ]

**3. Equality Impact Assessment and Patient and Public Involvement considerations:**

- What was the outcome of your Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)? None undertaken
- Briefly describe the Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) activities undertaken in relation to this report, or confirm that none were required. None required
- How did the outcome of the EIA influence your Patient and Public Involvement ? N/A
- If an EIA was not carried out, what was the rationale for this decision? N/A

**4. Risk and Assurance****Risk Reference:**

Does this paper reference a risk event?	Select (X)	Risk Description:
<b>Strategic:</b> Does this link to a <i>Principal Risk</i> on the BAF?	x	Clinical Quality and Patient safety
<b>Organisational:</b> Does this link to an <i>Operational/Corporate Risk</i> on Datix Register		
<b>New Risk</b> identified in paper: What <i>type</i> and <i>description</i> ?		
<b>None</b>		

- Scheduled date for the **next paper** on this topic: November 2022 – Annual report
- Executive Summaries should not exceed **5 sides** [My paper does comply]

# Freedom to Speak Up



University Hospitals  
of Leicester  
NHS Trust

Annual Report  
2020/2021



CIVILITY SAVES  
LIVES

## Welcome to the UHL Freedom To Speak Up Guardian Annual Report 2020/2021

This annual report provides an update on the continued progress and development UHL has made in responding to the concerns of staff and fostering a speaking up culture during the period of April 2020 to March 2021.

The provision of a full time Freedom to Speak Up Guardian was introduced in 2017, in response to the principles and recommendations outlined in the Francis Report 2015. This report was published following the findings of an enquiry into Mid Staffordshire Trust where it was revealed that a culture of suppression and blame had led to unnecessary patient deaths.

The UHL Freedom to Speak Up Guardian offers impartial and confidential advice to all staff who wish to speak up and raise a concern about patient safety. The Guardian is not part of any formal investigations but ensures that the person who has come forward is supported through the process; kept informed of all progress and does not suffer any detriment or harm.

2020/2021 has been a significantly difficult year, where the event of a global pandemic saw an increase in concerns raised at both local and national levels.

The National Guardian Henrietta Hughes noted'

*'The extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic have highlighted how vital Freedom to Speak Up Guardians are as an additional channel for speaking up and as a means of amplifying the voices of those who may not usually be heard. This is exemplified by the record number of cases that have been raised with them this year, in a range of organisations and across all professional groups. People have spoken up about the pandemic and its impact on their wellbeing, bullying and harassment at work, communication concerns, and organisational policies and procedures as well as more clinical issues around patient safety and quality of care.'*

**The Year of the Pandemic: A Summary of Speaking Up to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians' April 2020 – March 2021**



## Annual Data

This report examines the annual data for concerns raised including themes and the key learning points. In addition, it will relay both local and national developments in healthcare 'speaking up' culture and finally it will detail plans for the F2SU Guardian service for 2021/2022.

One team Shared values



## Annual Data

### Reporting Platforms at UHL

There are a number of reporting platforms at UHL to support staff in raising concerns and speaking up for patient and staff safety. The platforms are:-

- \* 3636 Confidential phone line and mail box facility
- \* Freedom to Speak Up mailbox
- \* Freedom to Speak up Guardian direct mobile telephone and email
- \* Junior Doctor Gripe Tool

## Freedom to Speak up Concerns raised in 2020/2021

### 2020/21

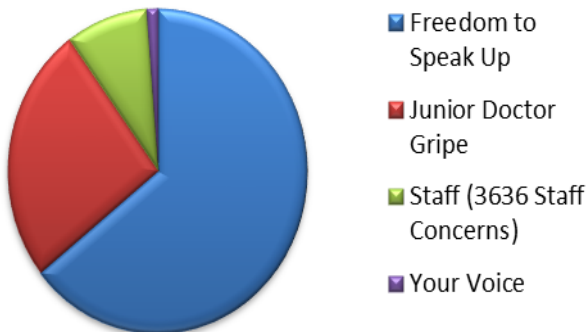


Figure 1 above highlights the reporting activity

The total number of concerns raised using the four reporting platforms which come under the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian in March 2020 to April 2021 were **249**, a decrease of 34 reports in comparison with 2019/2020 figures (**283**).

The Freedom to Speak Up mail box and mobile telephone was the most consistently utilised as a reporting tool through-out the year accounting for 64% of the overall reporting numbers.

The use of the Junior Doctor Gripe tool received 64 Gripes, 25 in quarter 1 where as only 16 Gripes were received in quarter 2. Whilst the Staff Concerns Reporting line was utilised less in Q3 and Q4. Use of the 3636 Reporting tool continues to fall, this decline was first reported in 2018/2019.

In response, the Freedom to Speak up Guardian will review and refresh the communication plan to ensure there is an on-going promotion of all the mechanisms to encourage staff to raise concerns.

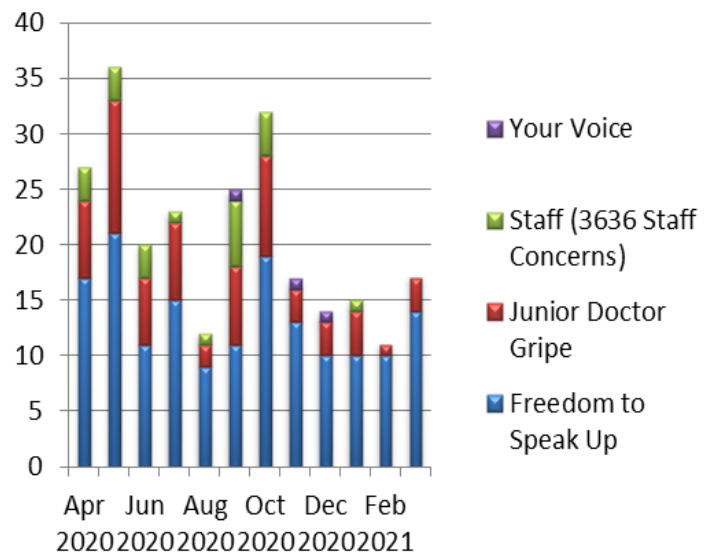


Figure 2 above provides the figures of activity

The highest reporting activity was in Q1 of the year which was in contrast to the national activity which reported increases in raising concerns during Q3. The general increase in reporting between September and October reflects a national trend which may be attributed in part to the end of the summer annual leave period and the promotion of the Freedom to Speak up Guardian role during F2SU Awareness month of October. The Your Voice reporting tool was launched in July 2020 but given the context of COVID-19 it was not possible to prioritise widespread communications and utilisation of the reporting platform was minimal.



## Annual Data continued....

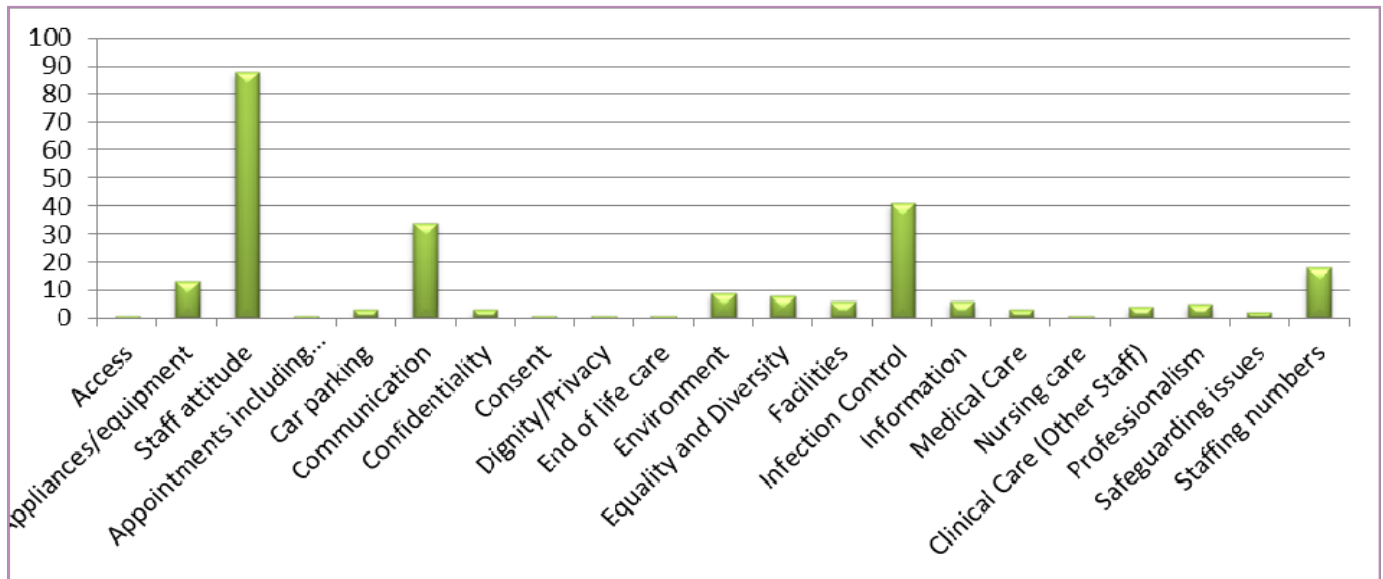
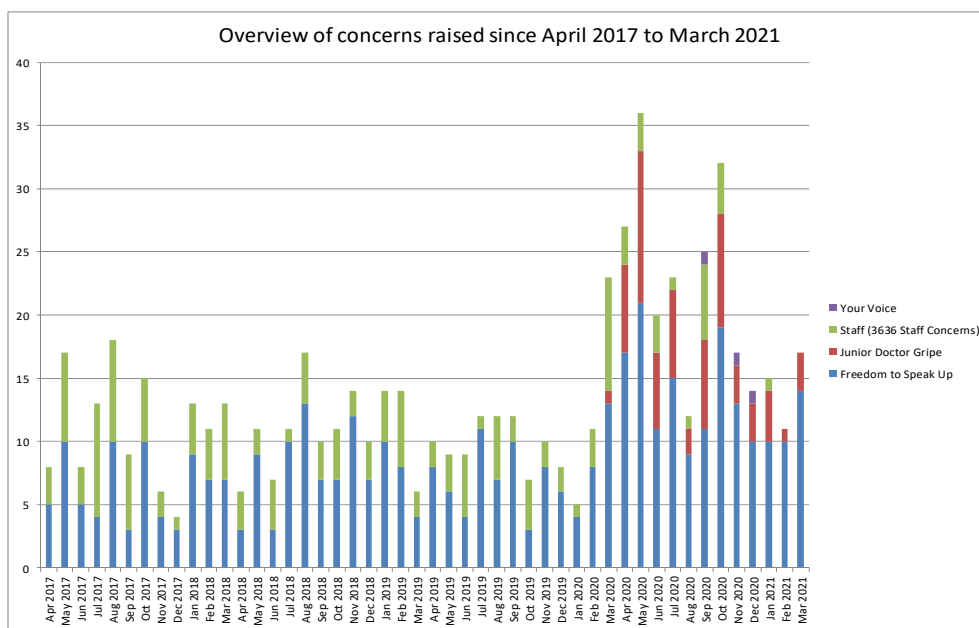


Figure 3 above reports the themes across all Reporting Platforms

In total; **160** concerns were raised with the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian; **64** Junior Doctor Gripe tool, **29** 3636 concerns and **3** Your Voice concerns. The band width of reporting themes overall was much broader than in 2019/20, with the highest number of staff reporting concerns over staff attitude (**88**) infection control (**41**) communication (**34**) and staffing numbers (**18**). Within these categories, staff reported instances of bullying and harassment as well as concerns around inadequate PPE, adherence to social distancing and poor communication. Staffing numbers and redeployment strategies were also highlighted as challenging throughout the year.

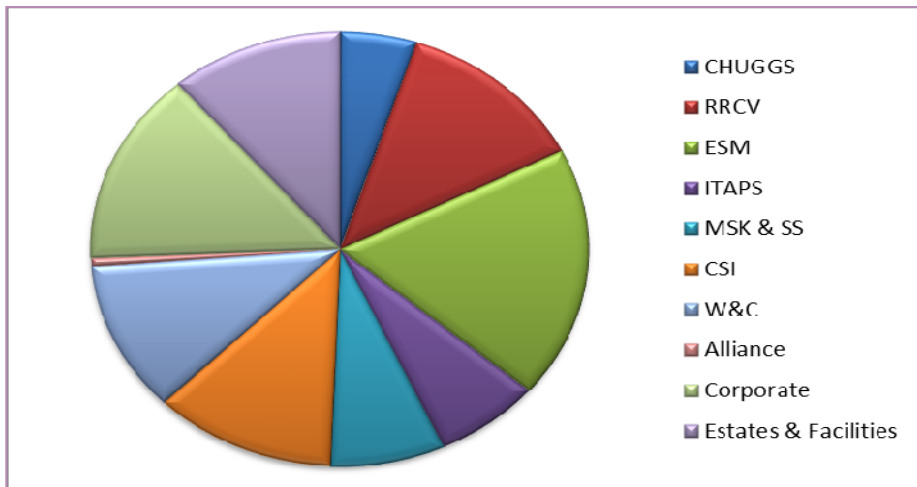
## Overview of Reporting Activity April 2017 to March 2021



This graph illustrates the activity of staff raising concerns across UHL since 2017 and how the mechanisms by which staff can raise a concern. The blue indicates the introduction of the Guardian in 2017. The red is the inclusion of Junior Dr Gripes onto the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Datix system in March 2020 and finally, the introduction of Your Voice in July 2020 in purple.

Figure 4 above provides an overview of concerns raised since April 2017 to March 2021

## Freedom To Speak Up Concerns 2020/2021



All staff can contact the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian via their direct mobile line or email Monday to Friday. Staff can discuss their concern at their own pace and in confidence. The Guardian will talk staff through the options for next steps using the 5 Steps approach.

Figure 8 above highlights the Freedom To Speak Up Concerns by CMG

CMG	Top Themes 1	Top Themes 2	Top Themes 3
Alliance	Equipment	-	-
CHUGGS	Bullying & Harassment	Infection Control	Facilities
Corporate	Bullying & Harassment	Infection Control	-
CSI	Bullying & Harassment	Communication	Infection Control
E&F	Bullying & Harassment	Communication	Equality and Diversity
ESM	Bullying & Harassment	Infection Control	Equality and Diversity
ITAPS	Bullying & Harassment	Communication	Infection Control
MSK	Bullying & Harassment	Infection Control	Communication
RRCV	Infection Control	Bullying & Harassment	Confidentiality
W&C	Bullying & Harassment	Infection Control	Staffing numbers



Figure 9 this table identifies the top 3 themes of Freedom to Speak Up Concerns

On occasion, those who wish to raise a concern want to consider raising their concern personally with their line manager and the Guardian is happy to provide support and guidance. Alternatively, staff can request that the Freedom to Speak Guardian escalates their concerns appropriately for their concerns to be looked into. The Freedom to Speak Guardian must then monitor the progress of the concern raised and contact staff with any feedback.

The Freedom to Speak up Guardian responds to concerns within 48 hours as per the UHL Freedom to Speak Up: Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy. In supporting the process of speaking up, it may be possible in some circumstances, for the Freedom to Speak up Guardian to organise a listening meeting between parties to discuss their concern in a safe and neutral environment, these open conversations have empowered staff to feel they have a voice.





3636 Staff Concerns reporting line data

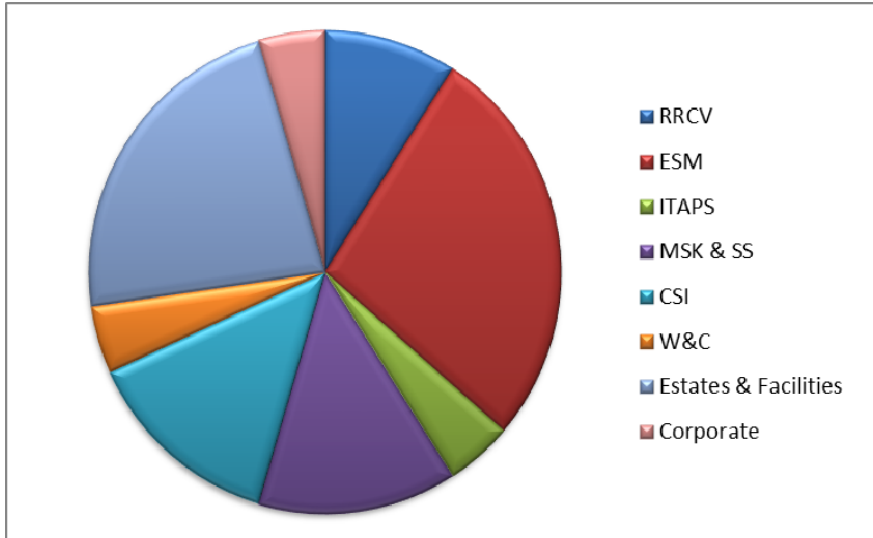


Figure 5 above shows 3636 staff concerns reporting line figures by CMG.

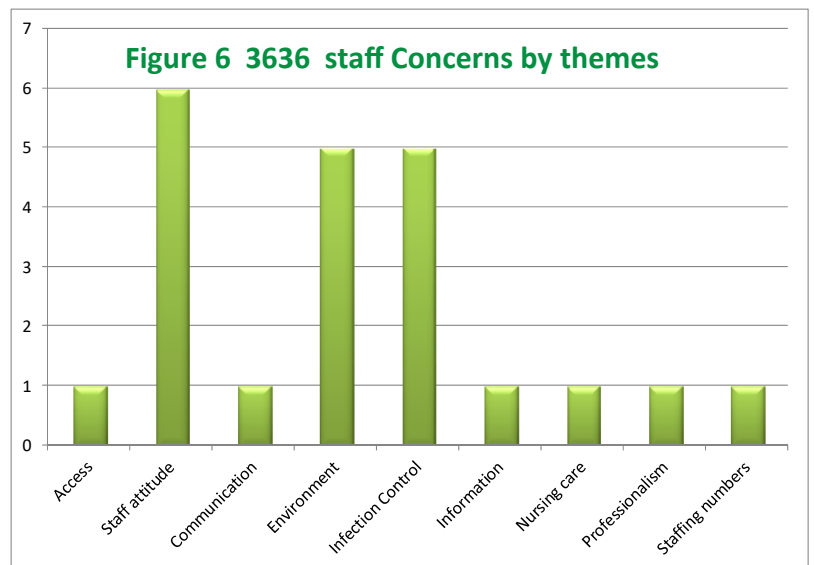
All staff are able to raise concerns via the 3636 Staff Concerns reporting line. Callers to the 3636 line are able to leave a messages over a 24 hr period; 7 days a week and managed by the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian.

Staff are also able to use the 3636 online form, which can be found on InSite.

Concerns are escalated by the Guardian to the Director on Call of the day and it is encouraged that they contact the staff member directly . The Freedom to Speak up Guardian is kept updated as part of the process.

The pandemic and the radical changes which were required to respond effectively, created many concerns for staff who reported issues of bullying and harassment behaviours across a number of CMGs.

Social distancing and infection control also featured regularly in Staff reporting line calls and emails. In response, the Guardian worked closely with colleagues from Infection Control; a summary of which can be found on page 7.



	Top Themes 1	Top Themes 2	Top Themes 3
ESM	Bullying and harassment	Infection Control	Information
E&F	Environment	Communication	Access
MSK & SS	Bullying and harassment	Infection Control	-
CSI	Environment	Infection Control	-
RRCV	Environment	Infection Control	-
ITAPS	Infection Control	-	
W&C	Bullying and harassment	-	-
Corporate	Professionalism	-	-



Figure 7 above identifies the top themes by CMG.



## Freedom to Speak Up

### Junior Doctor Gripe Reporting tool

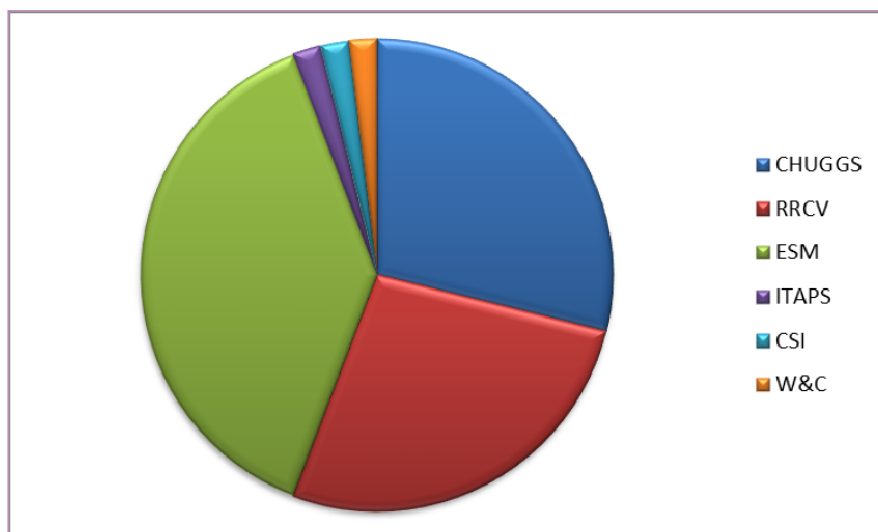


Figure 10 above highlights the Junior Doctor Gripe Concerns by CMGs.

The Junior Doctor Gripe Reporting Tool is available on the Insite pages and gripes are submitted and escalated appropriately.

The Guardian requests feedback on any actions taken and will update the Junior Doctor if their have left their details as part of the initial Junior Doctor Gripe.

There were **64** Junior Doctor Gripes in total. The top three notable theme were communication, appliances and equipment and medical staffing.

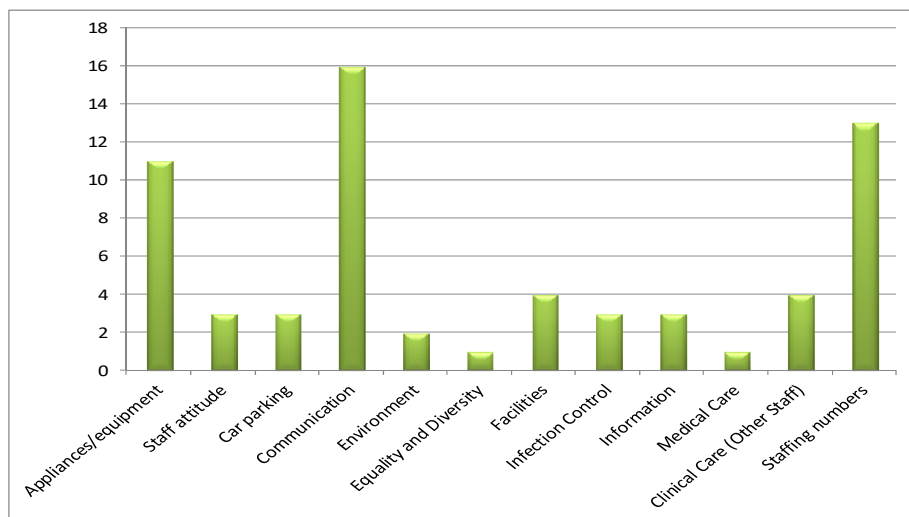


Figure 11 above identifies the themes of Junior Doctor Gripe.



	Top Themes 1	Top Themes 2	Top Themes 3
<b>CHUGGS</b>	Staffing Numbers	Clinical care	Communication
<b>RRCV</b>	Communication	Staffing Numbers	Appliances/Equipment
<b>ESM</b>	Appliances/Equip	Communication	Infection Control
<b>ITAPS</b>	Information	-	-
<b>CSI</b>	Information	-	-
<b>W&amp;C</b>	Equality & Diversity	-	-

Figure 12 above identifies to Junior Doctor Gripe Concerns top themes by CMG

Sadly we have seen a significant decrease of Junior Doctor Gripes received in 2020/21. In 2019/20 the Freedom to Speak up Guardian received **156** Junior Doctor Gripes in comparison to the **64** gripes received this year. There may be many reasons for this, as part of the work plan for this internal mechanism going forward they will be further promotion of the Junior Doctor Gripe tool.

## Partnership Working:

### Staff Engagement: Health and Wellbeing

Through-out the year, the Guardian liaised closely with the Health and Wellbeing team to develop both individual and holistic team responses to the concerns that were raised. For example, where reporting hotspots were identified, the Freedom to Speak up Guardian and the Health and Wellbeing Team worked collaborated to respond to the area as a whole.



Among the interventions put in place were the provision of temperature checks to help alleviate concerns over Covid-19 symptoms; a ward improvement project to empower and involve staff in creating their own solutions and the provision of team building sessions to address any conflict or behavioural concerns that had arisen out of persistent levels of adaptation and change. The Freedom to Speak up Guardian developed strong links with the Amica team who attended locations across the Trust where levels of reporting over anxiety and mental health concerns were raised.

### Infection Prevention

In the first quarter of the year, there were numerous concerns raised in relation to PPE. Initially, this focused upon the correct PPE for staff who were caring for patients with Covid-19. Colleagues from Infection Prevention were contacted and asked to assist. Where possible, staff who raised concerns staff who were contacted personally by the IP team, to provide specialist advice and respond to staffs’ anxieties about infection control.



In Quarter 3 (Autumn 2020), the number of reports over Covid-19 and working environments rose and once again, the Infection Prevention team responded offering advice over PPE and the decontamination of office spaces. As a result of this work, the Infection Prevention team promoted the role of the Freedom to Speak up Guardian by signposting staff where a concern was raised outside of their remit. The Freedom to Speak up Guardian would like to acknowledge the support of the Infection Prevention team during this particularly challenging time.

## You Said; We Did

The National Guardian’s Office defines the Speaking process as Speak Up; Listen Up and Follow Up and the table below outlines just some of the issues and follow up actions which were achieved in 2020/2021.

You Said	We Did
No access to refreshments or quiet room	Coffee maker provided and refurbishment of wellbeing room
Number of concerns received due to staff not social distancing	Communications sent out from managers to individual teams and trust wide communication
Junior doctors raised concerns around lack of equipment, such as phones and computers in their offices	Provided new phones, upgraded computers as part of the reconfiguration programme
Staffing challenges- Lack of clinical aides and phlebotomy support in areas	This was reviewed within the Clinical Management Group and adaptation to rotas were made
Concerns around behaviours raised	Escalated to individual managers or to teams for staff to acknowledge their behaviours and the impact of those
Lack of PPE and space to work in administrative areas	PPE provided and Perspex screens placed on desk spaces

## Freedom to Speak Up

### Achievements of 2020/2021 Listening during the Pandemic:

#### BAME Listening events and Your Voice Launch: July 2020

In May 2020, our BAME staff network held their bi-annual meeting chaired by our Chief Executive, supported by Non-Executive Director and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Lead. The meeting highlighted that staff from our BAME community felt unable to speak up about they expressed the challenges they faced and felt they may suffer a detriment as a result of raising a concern. Five Listening events were held throughout the first week of July supported by Non-Executive Director, Chief People Officer, Director of Safety and Risk and Chief Executive.

The Freedom to Speak up Guardian and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead facilitated the virtual presentation meeting with 112 colleagues to explore a more culturally inclusive and accessible service for our BAME colleagues. Themes highlighted by staff were: lack of BAME representation at management level; the provision of equality training for managers; no discernible changes after speaking up; BAME representation across the Trust at all levels; lack of effective communication and fear of detriment after raising concerns. A steering group was then created to progress the actions generated by the listening events.

The BAME 'Your Voice' reporting platform was launched, enabling our BAME colleagues to report concerns to the Guardian. The reporting platform is available on InSite under Working Life and supports BAME staff in raising concerns.

#### Your Voice Reporting Tool:

Since the launch of the BAME "Your Voice" reporting tool 3 anonymous concerns have been received. One emanating from ESM over ventilation. One from MSK &SS concerning BAME staff being treated less favourably than their white counterparts and a third from Estates and Facilities voiced concerns about the vaccine roll-out and how this would increase the risk to BAME staff. All reports were received anonymous but escalated accordingly.

We acknowledge the utilisation of this reporting platform has been slow, this will be reviewed as part of the communication plan going forward.

#### Whistleblowing Policy:

The reviewed **Freedom to Speak Up: Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy 2021 (version 7)** was approved by the UHL Policy and Guidelines Committee in February 2021 and includes updated contact information and details of the Your Voice BAME Reporting tool.

#### Redeployment and Wellbeing Concerns:

In a period of radical adaptation, many staff were redeployed across the trust. Redeployment was necessary in order to support the trust's response to Covid-19. As the pandemic progressed, issues raised around redeployment became more prevalent and key learning points these highlighted the importance of communication. The Freedom to Speak up Guardian was invited to a number of departments for drop-in sessions to listen to staff concerns and to feedback to the Executive Board. In some instances, referrals were made to the Staff Engagement Officer to offer support to departments.

#### Shielding Groups :

The Freedom to Speak up Guardian received a concern from a staff member who was shielding and was frustrated by the issues they had faced whilst not attending onsite work. Following on from this the Freedom to Speak up Guardian developed a working group which included two shielding staff, Health and Wellbeing, People Services and Organisational Development to tackle issues rose. From this monthly listening meetings for Shielding staff commencer, Development of a Charter for all shielding staff and a support pack for managers was devised.

### The National Guardian's Office:



The National Guardian's Office (NGO) leads, trains and supports a network of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians in England and provides support and challenge to the Healthcare system on speaking up.

Through-out the year, it offered support to some 700 Guardians across the NHS. As part of the UHL Guardian's governance activity, data is submitted to the NGO at quarterly intervals and collated to create a national picture of speaking up cultures, themes and key learning points.

This year, the NGO published their Annual Report entitled '**The Year of the Pandemic:**

**A Summary of Speaking Up to Freedom to Speak Up Guardians'. April 2020 – March 2021.**

**A total of 20,388 cases were raised between April 2020 and March 2021, indicating a 26% increase from the previous year.**

The highest number of cases (5,334) were recorded in Quarter 3 (October – December 2020). The most prevalent work group who spoke up were nurses and midwives recording their concerns about the pandemic and in particular social distancing, PPE support for workers isolating and shielding and increased stress and exhaustion. The key learning point underlying these reports was the importance of communication including workers being informed about changes; the style of communication and differing local interpretations of guidance.

### Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Index

Working in collaboration with NHS England, the National Guardian's Office utilises four questions from the NHS Staff Survey 2020 into a 'Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Index'. These questions ask whether staff feel knowledgeable, secure and encouraged to speak up and whether they would be treated fairly after an incident (namely an error, near miss or serious incident). **The results are useful as they provide each trust with an insight into their staff's perception of the 'speaking up' culture in their workplace.**

#### The questions asked staff whether they...

Question 16a -agreed their organisation treated staff who were involved in an error, near miss or incident fairly.

Question 16b -agreed their organisation encouraged them to report errors, near misses or incidents.

Question 17a -agreed that they would know how to report a concern about unsafe clinical practice.

Question 17b - agreed that they would feel secure raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice.

#### The key findings are:

- **The National Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Index score (79.2%) continued to improve for the fifth consecutive year.**
- **The FTSU Index continues to be positively correlated with Care Quality Commission ratings.**

**The University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust Freedom to Speak Up Index score is 77.8% a minor increase from last year's figure of 77%.** The score reveals that despite the continued pressures and challenges faced by staff in 2020/2021, our staff's perception of a positive speaking up culture in patient safety at UHL remains consistent and continues to improve, albeit marginally, year on year.

#### A new NHS Survey Question:

In 2020 the NHS included a new survey question (18f) which provided a much broader speaking up focus;

**% of staff "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" that they feel safe to speak up about anything that concerns them in their organisation**

This question is not included in the F2SU Index but the results for this question were published separately to provide a much broader perspective of speaking up. The results for UHL indicate that **63.9%** of UHL staff agreed or strongly agreed that they feel safe to speak up about anything nationally the figure resides at 65.6%. The results of this question also showed a strong positive correlation with the FTSU Index.

Together, these figures suggest that staff at UHL, feel more confident in speaking up about patient safety but much less confident in speaking up generally. Moving forward, the UHL Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Service will continue to promote speaking up in patient safety. The team will consider the results of the question 18f as an opportunity to develop a strategy with UHL staff to explore the values, mind-set and environment in which a healthy speaking up culture can flourish.



