



Living Well North Tyneside

Supporting Health and Wellbeing

Speak Up Month is a national campaign held every October to encourage individuals and organisations across the UK to foster a culture of openness and transparency. Organised by the **National Guardian's Office**, the campaign highlights the importance of creating an environment where people feel empowered to raise concerns and confident that their voices will be heard and acted upon.

Why is Speaking Up Important?

Speaking up is crucial in any workplace or community, especially in sectors like healthcare, education, and public services. When people feel safe to raise concerns about issues such as safety, wrongdoing, or unfair practices, it leads to better outcomes for everyone involved. Open communication can prevent problems from escalating, improve workplace culture, and ensure that individuals feel respected and valued.

Speak Up Month aims to reinforce that everyone has a role in fostering this culture—whether as a colleague, manager, or leader. By promoting open dialogue, we can create environments where people are encouraged to share their ideas and concerns without fear of reprisal or being ignored.

The Role of the National Guardian's Office

The National Guardian's Office (NGO) plays a key role in supporting and protecting those who speak up, especially in healthcare settings. Established in response to recommendations from the Francis Inquiry into failings at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, the NGO works to ensure that NHS staff can raise concerns in a safe and supportive environment.

The office supports Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, who are appointed in healthcare settings to offer impartial advice, listen to concerns, and promote a positive culture where staff feel comfortable speaking out. Speak Up Month is an important part of the NGO's work in raising awareness of these services and encouraging more people to come forward when they see issues affecting patient care or staff wellbeing.

How Speak Up Month Encourages Change

Throughout October, Speak Up Month promotes a range of activities designed to encourage open dialogue and showcase the positive impact of speaking up. These activities help to raise awareness about the importance of listening to concerns and acting on them effectively. The campaign also highlights the role of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians and how they can support staff in challenging situations.

Key activities include:

- **Training Sessions** – Workshops and webinars for staff and managers to learn how to foster a speak-up culture and deal with concerns constructively.
- **Sharing Success Stories** – Case studies and testimonials from individuals who have spoken up, highlighting the positive outcomes that can come from raising concerns.
- **Awareness Campaigns** – Organisations across the UK are encouraged to run their own campaigns to promote Speak Up Month, using posters, social media, and internal communications to spread the message.
- **Engagement Events** – Staff meetings, Q&A sessions, and other events that encourage open dialogue about the challenges and benefits of speaking up.

How You Can Support Speak Up Month

Regardless of your role or organisation, there are many ways to get involved in Speak Up Month and contribute to creating a more open and transparent culture. Here are some ideas:

1. **Raise Awareness** – Use your organisation’s communication channels to spread the message of Speak Up Month. Encourage colleagues to learn more about the campaign and the support available to them.
2. **Promote Freedom to Speak Up Guardians** – If your workplace has a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, make sure staff know who they are and how to reach them. Share information about the role and how Guardians can help.
3. **Lead by Example** – As a manager or team leader, demonstrate a commitment to openness by actively listening to your team and taking action when concerns are raised.
4. **Create Safe Spaces** – Ensure that there are clear, accessible channels for raising concerns in your organisation. Make sure that staff know they can speak up confidentially without fear of negative consequences.
5. **Reflect on Your Own Practices** – Think about how you respond when others speak up. Are you supportive and proactive in addressing issues, or could you do more to foster an open culture?

The Benefits of Speaking Up

Creating a culture where people feel confident to speak up benefits everyone. When concerns are raised and addressed in a timely manner, it can prevent larger issues from arising and contribute to a healthier, more effective workplace. It also improves staff morale and trust, as people feel valued and heard.

For organisations, encouraging staff to speak up can lead to better decision-making, more innovative ideas, and greater overall transparency. In sectors like healthcare, it can also directly improve patient safety and quality of care.

Speak Up for a Better Future

As we move through Speak Up Month 2024, let’s remember that we all have a role to play in fostering open, supportive environments where everyone feels able to raise their voice. Whether in healthcare, education, or any other sector, the power of speaking up can help build trust, prevent harm, and drive positive change.

By promoting a culture of openness, we can create workplaces and communities where people feel safe, respected, and empowered to share their concerns and ideas.

Related Links

- [For more information on Speak Up Month and the role of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, visit the National Guardian’s Office website:](#)

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