NHSHighland

Annual Report 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

OVERVIEW

This document details the progress and development of the Speak Up service within NHSHighland identifying learning from the themes arising, providing feedback ad recommendations for the continuation of service.

Orculation:

Guardians
The Guardian Service Ltd.

Date: 14



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This report details the progress of The Guardian Service (GSL) within NHS Highland during the period of the 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. This report will provide an overview of the types of concerns raised by staff to The Guardian Service and an analysis of the kinds of issues which came forward.

In total, there were 205 concerns raised from staff across NHS Highland. Concerns received are recorded by GSL against specific themes which are Management Issue, System & Process, Bullying & Harassment, Discrimination & Inequality, Behaviour & Relationship and Patient Safety/Quality.

The purpose of this paper is to detail the progress and development of the Speak Up service within NHS Highland (NHSH) and to identify learning from the themes arising from the cases received by the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians which can then be fed back to NHSH.

This report provides an overview of themes and issues raised through the Guardian Service from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. The report also sets out some learning points and makes recommendations for consideration.

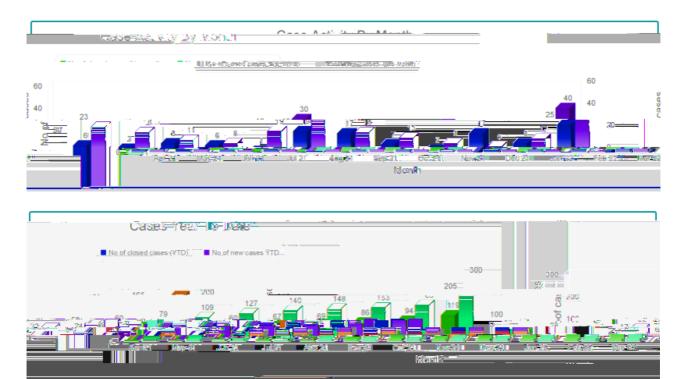
The Guardian Service Ltd (GSL) was implemented in NHSH on the 3rd of August 2020. It has been well received by staff and supported within the organisation at all levels of management.

GSL is an independent and confidential staff liaison service. GSL provides staff with an independent, confidential, and external 24/7 service to raise concerns, worries or risks in their workplace. GSL covers patient care and safety, whistleblowing, bullying and harassment and work concerns. Guardians have a key role in helping to raise the profile of raising concerns within the organisation and can escalate issues on behalf of staff to the appropriate manager, or support staff in taking concerns forward through internal channels.

Communication and marketing have been achieved by meeting with senior staff members, joining team meetings, site visits, the NHSIntranet 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.

Being available and responsive to staff are key factors in the operation of the service. Many staff

The total number of concerns raised to The Guardian Service in the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 is 205.



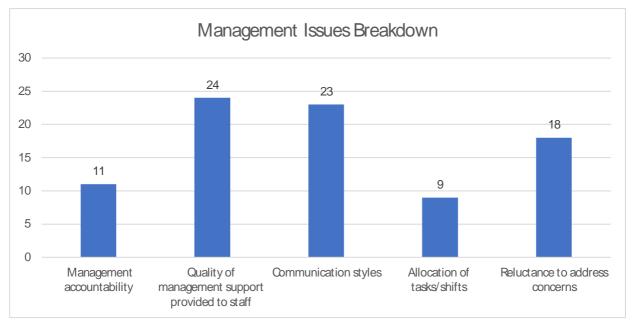
Monthly calls received have varied between 5 calls in the quietest month which was January 2022 with the busiest month being March 2022 with 40 calls. 17 concerns in March were from Raigmore Hospital of which 10 were escalated (both with names and anon). 19 concerns were from several Rural General Hospitals which had recently been visited by a Guardian. Of these 19 concerns, 10 were escalated.

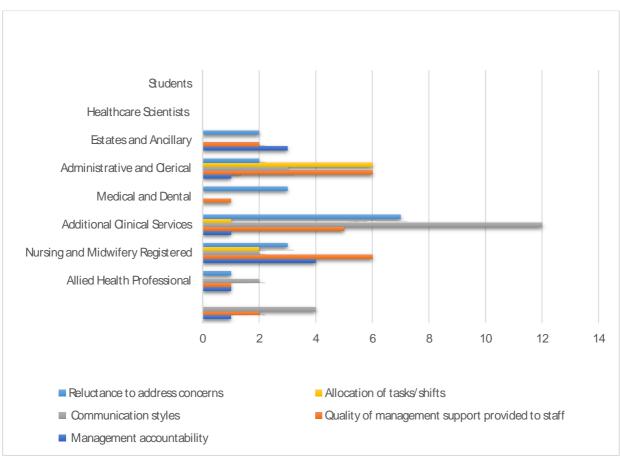
The number of emails, telephone calls (including text messages) and face to face visits engaged by the Guardians in responding to concerns are as follows:

There are often multiple contact points for every concern raised, therefore the numbers do not directly correlate with the number of concerns raised.









Over a third of concerns in this group are from Additional Clinical Services (26). (See attached Appendix 1 for roles which come under this heading). Concerns were raised about poor communications styles - predominantly how managers speak to staff, perceived lack of respect and oppressive management. Staff also spoke of managers making decisions without communication or consultation with staff when decisions affected their work. Staff in this group also felt a reluctance from managers to address concerns.



GSL received a higher number of concerns from Administrative and Clerical in relation to allocation of tasks/shifts and poor management of departmental processes. Staff raised concerns around perceived inappropriate working arrangements, short notice for completing work and unmanageable workloads due to an unfair distribution of work.

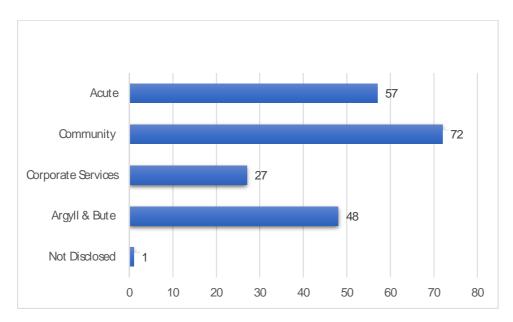
GSL received concerns from Nursing and Midwifery staff who felt unsupported in their role. It is widely known and, to some extent, accepted that when staffing levels are below an area s establishment level, staff are increasingly working additional shifts to minimise shortfalls. Staff have stated that they are



- Staff refusing to work with managers or colleagues due to conflict and incompatibility in personalities and approaches to work.
- Behaviour of a colleagues
 - Poor communication
 - Inappropriate language
 - Allocation of tasks
 - Rudeness and incivility
 - Deliberately withholding information
 - Professional standards and conduct
- Management behaviours
 - Talking negatively about other staff members
 - Eavesdropping
 - Unfair allocation of tasks
 - Lack of support
 - Rudeness and incivility
 - Favouritism
 - Unsupportive and unappreciative of work staff are doing

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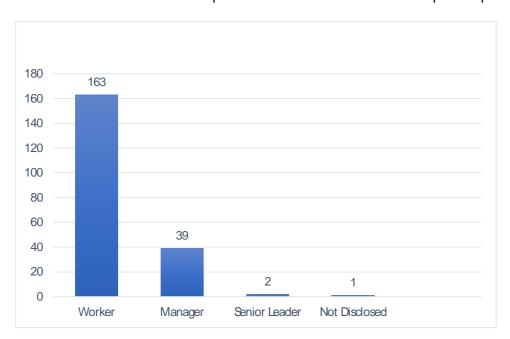
9.1. Concerns raised by Directorate



Concerns raised in Argyll & Bute are not broken down beyond Directorate level to ensure that confidentiality can be maintained.

9.2. Professional Levels

Detailed below is a record of the professional level of staff who have spoken up.



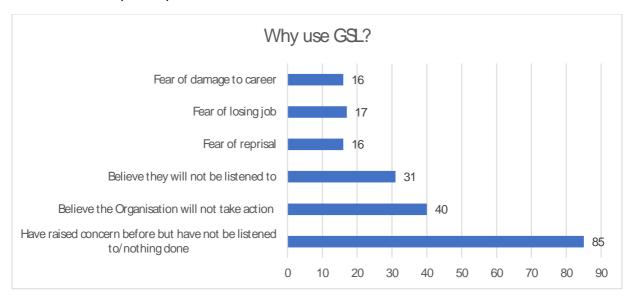


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9.4. Why use The Guardian Service?

Staff who make contact with The Guardian Service are routinely asked why they chose this route to raise a concern. The responses provided are demonstrated in the chart below;



Feedback from staff who have contacted The Guardian Service indicates that most contacts have learnt about the service from colleagues, people who used the service before, and managers. Several staff have contacted GSL after the Guardians have visited their place of work.

- Monthly meetings with the Director of People & Oulture, Deputy Director of HR, Employee Workforce
 Director and People Partners to talk through the monthly activity reports which includes themes and
 outcome of cases. No individual can be identified by the discussion of themes therefore maintaining
 staff confidentiality.
- Quarterly meetings held with ŒO to discuss emerging themes and learning points.
- The Guardians conduct walkabouts, visiting wards, and offices to speak to staff about The Guardian Service distribute promotional materials at different locations. The Guardians hold briefings with teams and attend meetings to talk about the service and encourage a culture of speaking up for all staff and managers.
- The Guardians assist managers in identifying issues within a specific team by offering a one-to-one session with each staff member so that they could confidentially and anonymously raise their



concerns. The Guardian Service produces a summary of themes and observations for management so that issues can be targeted and resolved.



is the same everywhere. There are also reports of managers asking staff to reduce their expectations and standards of care when staffing levels are at a low level.

- The Guardian Service is aware that considerable efforts are being undertaken to recruit new staff but there is a breakdown in the communication of this to teams and staff on the ground, When GSL escalates staffing issues, feedback is provided but not to all staff, only those who raise the concerns. One staff member said that managers are constantly putting out small fires and not looking at the bigger staff are not aware of decisions made at a higher level. Staff are looking for reassurance that things will get better, there is perhaps further work to do in terms of communicating plans to recruit and retain staff to existing staff members.
- Staff engagement with GSL from the People and Culture team is working well, they are very supportive when GSL raises concerns. GSL are aware that some managers are reluctant to promote or use the Guardian Service in their areas of responsibility and do not see the need for the



Patient Safety

A low number of calls were received in respect of this theme and the organisation reacted to all
calls promptly demonstrating a commitment to taking patient care concerns seriously when
escalated to the NHSH by a Guardian. This is encouraging and appreciated by staff and GSL

Behaviour and Relationship

- should be made aware of the consequences of poor behaviour and the core values reinforced. The core values are highlighted at induction but opportunities to emphasise these could be identified at different
- Staff spoke of difficult working relationships with either colleagues or managers in a high number
 of calls. In some cases, failure to act early meant tensions escalated and issues became difficult to
 resolve. Adopting an informal resolution / early intervention approach to all concerns relating to
 working relationships should prevent formal complaints. Staff and managers should be
 encouraged to speak to an appropriate manager or a Guardian as soon as a problem arises. It is
 never too early to speak to a Guardian.

System/Process

- Staff contact during absence is inconsistent with some staff citing excessive daily calls and/or
 emails and others having little or no contact at all. There appears to be different approaches to
 the application of the attendance management policy and further training on what is
 appropriate could be introduced in ongoing management development programmes.
- Staff spoke of very little contact from management and HR when going through a formal
 process. GSL can be the only contact for a staff member involved in grievance, disability or
 conduct investigations. Whilst GSL is aware that some areas make reference to the support
 service available from GSL in correspondence to staff, this could be more dynamic with staff
 being signposted to GSL as a matter of course. Attention could also be given to reviewing the
 frequency of contact and level of support for staff in these circumstances.
- Recruitment concerns raised by staff to GSL, demonstrated a lack of planning when identifying
 vacancies at an early stage through retiral and resignation. Posts are delayed by months
 because paperwork is submitted late. NHSH could review how managers identify vacancies
 early to ensure timely approval to recruit which will mitigate risk in gaps to service provision.
- There are cases where staff have requested exit interviews when leaving a post for an internal move. Staff could be signposted to GSL for a conversation to establish if there are any concerns they have that led them to leaving that role.

Bullying & Harassment

• Less than half of what staff considered to be bullying and harassment behaviours were escalated



