

Witness Name: Helené Donnelly
Statement No.: 2
Exhibits: n/a
Dated: January 2025

THIRLWALL INQUIRY

SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF HELENÉ DONNELLY

I, Helené Donnelly, will say as follows: -

1. I make this statement further to my First Witness Statement dated 11 April 2024.
2. I gave oral evidence to the Thirlwall Inquiry on 4 December 2024. During my oral evidence, the Inquiry Chair noted that I had "*mentioned a couple of times that there are places where Freedom to Speak Up/open culture actually does exist and people are able to bring their concerns to the Guardian and it's dealt with appropriately*". I have been asked to set out in this statement which hospital Trusts this applies to.
3. Probably the most objective way to look at this is via the 2023 NHS National Staff Survey results. Within the survey, there are several questions that relate to raising concerns as part of one of the People Promise elements.
4. Organisations are given a score on how staff rate their Organisation against those questions. This is a percentage of staff responding to the question with a positive response. For example, Q 20a – "*Would feel secure raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice*". The scores from these questions are then amalgamated to give a sub score, or average. The usual caveats apply, the survey is a snapshot taken over a couple of months September to November with the results published the next March. The organisation's culture can change due to mergers, staffing changes, Board support & changing standards in good leadership, but I think it's about as objective as anything else.
5. From NGO survey analysis and general intelligence. Rotherham NHS FT, Leeds and York Partnership, Pennie Care, Royal Berkshire and Chesterfield appear to have good speaking up cultures. However, it is always more about leadership than Guardians and is subject to change. I have spoken with a few regional FTSU Guardian network chairs who agree that the survey ranking generally fits the feedback they get from Guardians in most of those Organisations high on the list.
6. It is also important for me to note that I was quite concerned having reached out to network chairs asking for feedback from FTSU Guardians about positive cultures they could

showcase as examples of good practice, none felt comfortable or confident in doing so. It was stated that Guardians are feeling in a difficult position with regard to culture and it must be recognised that good, open culture is down to the organisation and not just the guardian. The hierarchy within organisations was clearly influencing some reticence, many Guardians will only speak up (even about positive examples) if they have their CEO's awareness and agreement. This is very concerning and begs the question, if they do not feel empowered to speak up about positive examples, what will they do with the negative.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed: H. Donnelly

Dated: 23/01/2025