

Reflections on the role of the National Guardian

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The National Guardian (NG) is an outcome of the *Freedom to Speak Up Review* led by Sir Robert Francis at the invitation of the Secretary of State for Health in response to continuing disquiet about the way NHS organisations deal with concerns raised by staff. The Review confirmed that there is a serious issue within the NHS with regard to the treatment of staff who raise genuine concerns about patient safety and other matters of public interest. The NG will be expected to contribute substantially to the culture change which is urgently needed to enable staff to raise concerns without fear of reprisals and retaliation.

This talk will describe the role of the NG and outline drivers which have led to its creation. It will discuss the landscape and framework within which the NG will operate, recruitment to the post, and why it is controversial in some quarters.

Context

This talk was originally planned to be given by Dame Eileen Sills, the first *Freedom To Speak Up* National Guardian, under the title: *The role of the National Guardian*. However Dame Eileen resigned in March 2016 after just a few weeks in post, followed swiftly by the resignation of her deputy. I stepped in at short notice to fill the consequent gap in the congress programme, with personal reflections on the role of the National Guardian.

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