



Pwyllgor Pobl, Datblygu Sefydliadol a Diwylliant/ People, Organisational Development and Culture Committee

DYDDIAD Y CYFARFOD: DATE OF MEETING:	18 August 2026
TEITL YR ADRODDIAD: TITLE OF REPORT:	Speak Up – Make Meaningful Change Update on Progress
CYFARWYDDWR ARWEINIOL: LEAD DIRECTOR:	Lisa Gostling – Deputy Chief Executive / Executive Director of Workforce & Organisation Development
SWYDDOG ADRODD: REPORTING OFFICER:	Rob Blake – Head of Culture & Workforce Experience Corinna Lloyd-Jones – Interim Assistant Director of Organisation Development

Pwrpas yr Adroddiad (dewiswch fel yn addas)

Purpose of the Report (select as appropriate)

Er Sicrwydd/ For Assurance

ADRODDIAD SCAA SBAR REPORT

Sefyllfa / Situation

NHS Wales continues to develop and embed a culture in which staff feel safe, supported and empowered to speak up. The overarching aim remains to ensure that individuals at every level of the organisation are confident in how to raise concerns, challenge practice or share ideas relating to patient care, workforce wellbeing and wider organisational issues, without fear of detriment or reprisal. This commitment supports greater organisational transparency, accountability and shared learning, whilst reinforcing a proactive approach to delivering a compassionate, responsive and continuously improving health service for the people of Wales.

Since the previous update to the Committee in [February 2026](#), Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDdUHB) has continued to progress the implementation of the Speak Up, Make Meaningful Change (SUMMC) agenda. The Health Board has also sought to align this work with broader organisational priorities relating to culture, employee wellbeing, inclusion and compassionate leadership, ensuring that speaking up is recognised as a key enabler of quality, safety and continuous improvement.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a further update on the SUMMC agenda, initially introduced in the Committee in [June 2023](#). This report represents the third bi-annual update requested by the Committee and aims to provide assurance and oversight of the progress made in embedding the SUMMC principles across HDdUHB. The report highlights achievements to date, key performance indicators, emerging themes, areas of good practice and the priorities for the next reporting period.

Cefndir / Background

The Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) agenda continues to evolve significantly within NHS England following the closure of the National Guardian's Office on 30 June 2026, with NHS England assuming responsibility for national Guardian support, training, policy development

and data analysis. This change reflects a wider shift towards greater organisational accountability for creating open, transparent and psychologically safe cultures. At the same time, assessment of FTSU arrangements is moving beyond the presence of policies, Speak Up Guardians and reporting mechanisms, towards a stronger focus on organisational culture, staff experience and demonstrable learning. Organisations are increasingly expected to evidence that colleagues feel safe to speak up, trust that concerns will be acted upon, experience fair treatment and can see meaningful improvement resulting from concerns raised. Increased scrutiny is also being placed on leadership behaviours, psychological safety, inclusivity and Board oversight of cultural indicators

Whilst these developments apply to NHS England, they provide an important indication of the future direction of travel for healthcare organisations across the UK, including NHS Wales. For HDdUHB, the implications are a continued need to strengthen psychological safety, leadership accountability and organisational responsiveness to staff concerns, while ensuring robust Board assurance regarding culture and employee experience. Increasingly, the effectiveness of speak up arrangements will be assessed not by the existence of processes, but by the extent to which staff feel heard, supported and able to influence meaningful organisational change.

The past six months have seen HDdUHB continue to strengthen its organisational approach to psychological safety, openness and compassionate leadership through the ongoing implementation of the SUMMC framework. Since its introduction in October 2024, SUMMC has become increasingly embedded within the Health Board's wider culture and workforce experience agenda, supporting a proactive and preventative approach to addressing concerns, learning from staff feedback and driving meaningful improvement. While progress has been made in increasing awareness of speak up mechanisms and embedding the principles of SUMMC across the organisation, further work remains to ensure consistency of experience across all services and staff groups. The Health Board remains committed to learning from concerns raised, responding in a timely and transparent manner, and fostering an environment where staff voices are valued and acted upon.

A significant area of progress has been the continued development of leadership capability to create and sustain psychologically safe working environments. Psychological safety is a recurring theme throughout the Health Board's leadership development programmes, underpinning the promotion of compassionate leadership behaviours, visible leadership and an ability to respond effectively and constructively to concerns raised by staff. These programmes aim to equip leaders with the skills and confidence required to foster openness, encourage challenge and create environments where staff feel safe to speak up. Continued focus is required to this becomes fully embedded and consistently experienced across all areas of the organisation.

The Health Board also continues to acknowledge the unique challenges associated with its historical organisational context, multi-generational workforce and the sustained operational pressures facing the NHS. However, the increased use of speak up mechanisms, alongside positive feedback from staff engagement activities, suggests that trust in the organisation's commitment to listening and responding is continuing to develop. Whilst the culture remains fragile in some areas and variability in staff experience persists, there is evidence (NHS Wales 2025 Staff Survey findings) that the organisation is moving in the right direction and avoiding the stagnation reported elsewhere within the wider NHS system.

Looking ahead, the Health Board will continue to focus on strengthening psychological safety, increasing awareness and accessibility of speaking-up routes, improving feedback mechanisms and ensuring organisational learning is visible and meaningful. Attention will be

given to enhancing leadership capability, widening engagement with underrepresented staff groups and further embedding speak up principles within everyday working practices.

Through these actions, HDdUHB will continue to build a culture in which staff feel safe, respected and empowered to contribute to the continuous improvement of services for patients, communities and colleagues.

Asesiad / Assessment

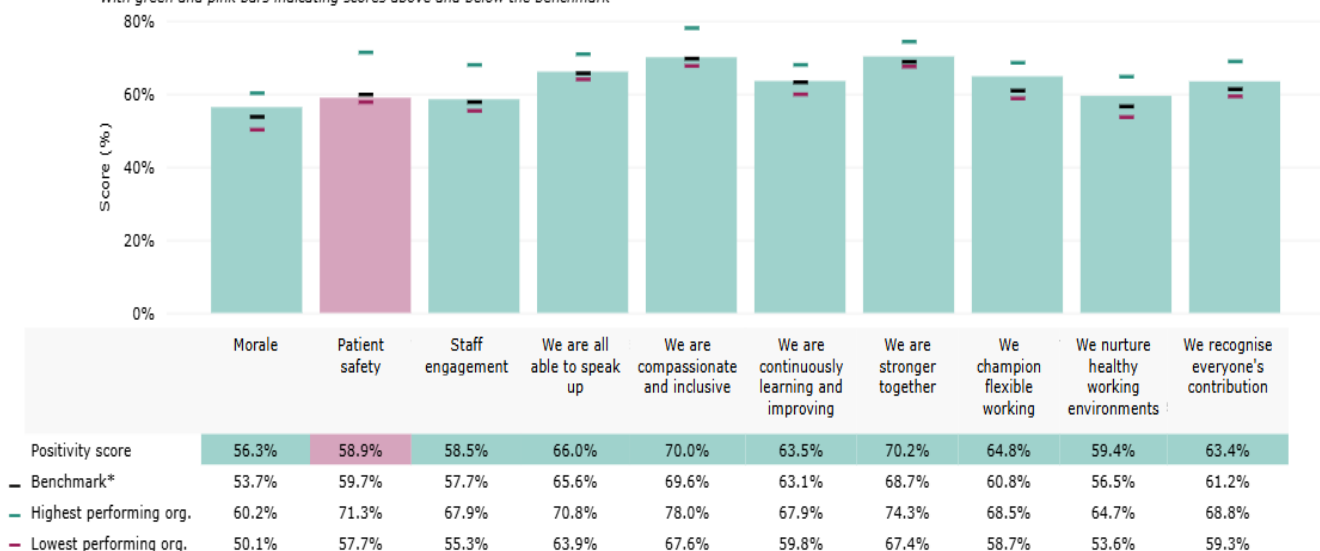
The effectiveness and impact of this strategy continue to be measured through quantitative data, with the NHS Staff Survey serving as a key source of evidence.

Findings from the 2025 Staff Survey highlighted:

- The 'We Are All Able to Speak Up' theme achieved the third-highest positivity score across all ten survey themes. Performance was also 0.4 percentage points above the national benchmark, indicating a culture in which staff feel able to raise concerns and share their views.

Positivity scores by survey theme: 2025 NHS Wales Staff Survey: Hywel Dda University Health Board: Multiple Tier 2s: Multiple Tier 3s: Multiple sites: Multiple staff groups

With green and pink bars indicating scores above and below the benchmark*



Overall, the results are favourable, with six of the ten questions achieving positivity scores above the NHS Wales Health Board average. Key strengths are evident in areas relating to trust, responsibility, ethical and clinical practice, and staff autonomy. Staff generally report feeling trusted, capable and empowered to undertake their roles effectively.

Question	Positivity score	Benchmark	Variance from Benchmark
14b) I am trusted to do my job.	88.5%	87.4%	▲
14a) I always know what my work responsibilities are.	81.7%	82.4%	▼
14j) I would feel secure raising concerns about unethical behaviour.	76.8%	75.0%	▲
14i) I would feel secure raising concerns about unsafe clinical practice.	75.1%	74.8%	▲
14d) I have a choice in deciding how to do my work.	73.7%	68.6%	▲
14c) There are frequent opportunities for me to show initiative in my role.	72.4%	71.5%	▲
17d) I feel safe to speak up about anything that concerns me in this organisation.	55.4%	56.7%	▼
14k) I am confident my organisation would address my concern.	52.8%	52.2%	▲
23d) I am involved in deciding on changes introduced that affect my work/area/team/department.	44.2%	44.7%	▼
17e) If I spoke up about something that concerned me, I am confident my organisation would address my concern.	39.6%	42.4%	▼

However, several areas require further attention. Lower positivity scores were recorded in relation to staff confidence in speaking up, confidence that concerns raised will be acted upon appropriately and involvement in decisions regarding organisational change. These areas also demonstrate negative year-on-year variance, indicating a decline in staff perceptions compared to the previous reporting period.

While staff feel empowered within their individual roles, the findings highlight an ongoing challenge in relation to organisational listening and responsiveness. In particular, there is a gap between staff willingness to raise concerns and their confidence that meaningful action will follow. This theme is also reflected in other sources of staff experience data and suggests a need to strengthen feedback mechanisms, engagement processes and visible organisational responses to concerns raised.

Working In Confidence

The Working in Confidence (WiC) platform remains a key component of the Speak Up Strategy, supporting staff to raise concerns anonymously where they may feel unable or reluctant to do so through other channels. The platform helps to build trust between the responder and colleague, enabling concerns to be explored, understood and resolved in an appropriate, timely and supportive manner. By providing a safe and confidential mechanism for raising issues, the platform contributes to a culture in which staff feel empowered to speak up and confident that their concerns will be listened to and managed effectively.

In response to the ongoing need to evaluate both national and local priorities, the Culture and Workforce Experience (CWE) Team continues to assess and introduce new categories within the system to ensure comprehensive data capture and reporting:

- Benefits, Rewards and Recognition
- Breach of Confidentiality

- Bullying and Harassment
- Clinical Concerns (to which only Speak Up Guardians can respond to)
- Discrimination
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Leadership and Management
- Other
- Patient Safety (to which only Speak Up Guardians can respond to)
- Resources to do My Job
- Sexual Safety
- Support around Finances
- Thinking of Leaving
- Unpaid Carer's Concerns
- Values and Behaviours
- Wellbeing

During the past six months:

- 35 new user accounts were opened to utilise the system.
- New responders from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Team have been added to the platform to provide specialist support and guidance for any concerns raised under the EDI category.

The WiC system has recorded the following key trends and activities:

<i>Time period</i>	<i>Concerns raised</i>	<i>Closed</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Average time to first respond</i>	<i>Average time to close</i>
<i>Jan 2026 – June 2026</i>	22 (-24%)	12 (-50%)	10	15 hours	29 days
<i>July 2025 – December 2025</i>	29 (+7.5%)	24 (9%)	5	4 days	20 days
<i>January 2025 - June 2025</i>	27 (+42%)	22 (+16%)	5	2 days	30 days
<i>July 2024 - December 2024</i>	19 (+90%)	19 (+90%)	0	4 days	43 days
<i>January 2024 - June 2024</i>	10	10	0	1 day	56 days

There has been a decrease in both the number of concerns raised and the number subsequently closed. Positively, the average time to first response has improved significantly, reducing from 4 days to 15 hours. However, the average time taken to close conversations has increased from 20 days to 29 days, representing a 45% increase. This measure continues to be influenced by a small number of particularly complex cases that require extended management and resolution.

Responders continue to utilise the platform to build confidence and trust with colleagues who raise concerns. In some cases, for appropriate action to be taken, it may be necessary for the

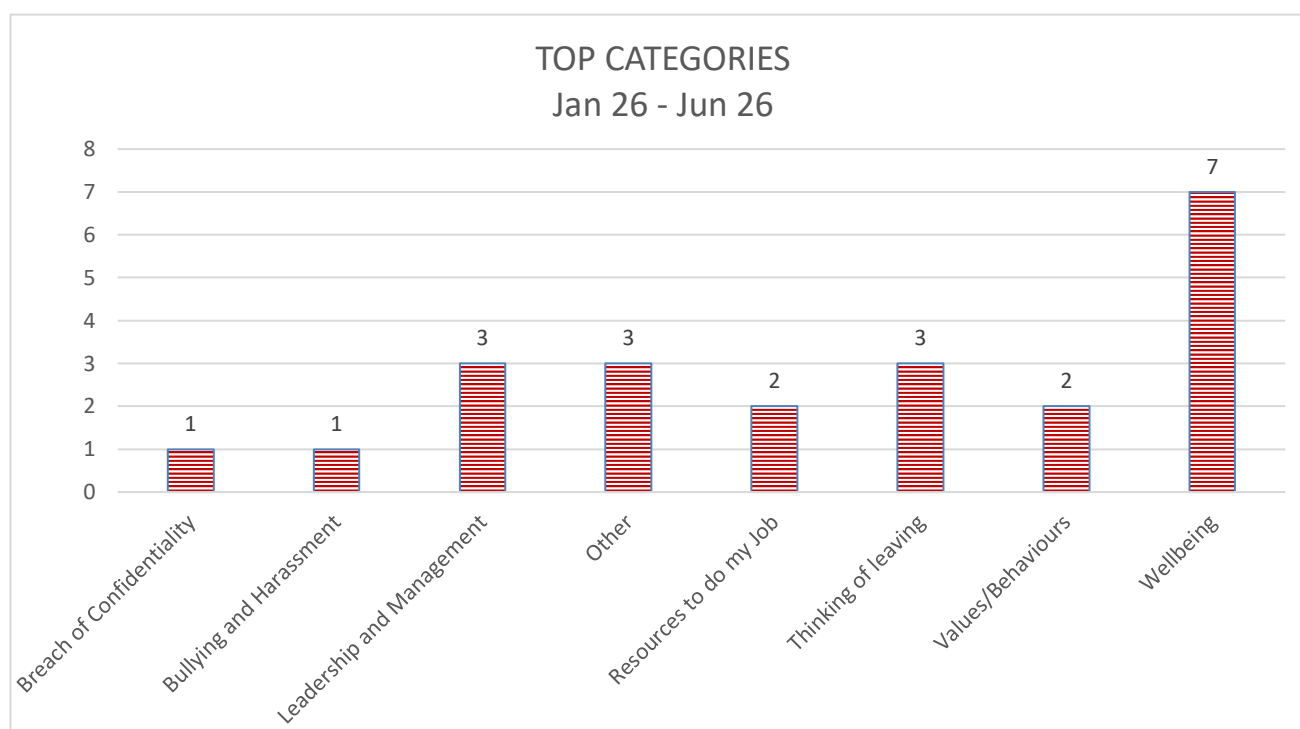
individual raising the concern to disclose their identity. This process can be time-consuming and may not always be possible, particularly where psychological safety concerns exist or where individuals do not feel sufficiently confident to be identified.

Current open conversations relate to the following categories:

- Breach of Confidentiality
- Bullying and Harassment
- Clinical Concerns
- Leadership and Management
- Other
- Patient Safety
- Resources to Do My Job
- Values and Behaviours
- Wellbeing

Analysis of platform usage indicates that Wednesday is the most common day for colleagues to initiate a conversation, with 8:00am being the most frequent time at which concerns are raised.

The category of “Wellbeing” recorded the highest number of concerns, representing a 133% increase compared with the previous 6-month period. This was followed by “Leadership and Management”, “Thinking of Leaving” and the universal “Other” category.



The next most frequently reported categories were “Resources to do my job” and “Values/Behaviours”. Notably, there were no “discrimination”, “Patient Safety” or “Diversity and Inclusion” related concerns in this 6-month period, as there were in the previous 6 months.

There have been reductions in the number of concerns raised across several categories, including “Leadership and Management”, “Other” and “Thinking of Leaving”. This suggests a lower volume of concerns being reported within these areas during the reporting period, although ongoing monitoring will be required to determine whether these reductions represent a sustained trend.

Whilst the last six months have seen a reduction in the number of colleagues utilising the Speak Up process, colleagues continue to use the strategy to raise concerns and seek support. There is encouraging evidence that many individuals are increasingly engaging directly with designated responders to discuss issues informally, explore options for resolution and address concerns at an earlier stage. This suggests growing awareness of available speak up routes and a willingness to seek constructive resolution where possible.

Category	Jan 24 to Jun 24	Jul 24 to Dec 24	Jan 25 to Jun 25	Jul 25 to Dec 25	Jan 26 to Jun 26	Difference from previous 6 months
Leadership and Management	4	3	4	8	3	-5
Breach of Confidentiality					1	1
Discrimination	1	2		3		-3
Other	4	4	4	6	3	-3
Wellbeing			1	3	7	4
Diversity and Inclusion Matters				2		-2
Patient Safety			2	3		-3
Thinking of leaving			1	2	3	1
Benefits, Rewards and Recognition		1	1			
Clinical Concerns			1			
Support around Finances			1			
Resources to do my Job		1	2		2	2
Values/Behaviours		4	4	1	2	1
Bullying and Harassment	1	4	6	1	1	
Total	10	19	27	29	22	-7 (-24%)

Despite the reduction in case numbers, the themes emerging from concerns raised remain consistent with previous reporting and continue to provide valuable insight into organisational culture, leadership behaviours, workforce wellbeing and patient safety. The continued use of both formal and informal speak up mechanisms highlights the ongoing importance of maintaining accessible, trusted and responsive routes for colleagues to raise concerns, ensuring that issues are addressed promptly and opportunities for organisational learning are maximised.

WiC Platform Trends 2022–2026

Since its introduction in 2022, the WiC platform has shown a progressive increase in utilisation, reflecting growing awareness, trust and engagement amongst colleagues.

2022 – Foundation Stage

During the first year, reporting activity was relatively low, with concerns raised intermittently. This is consistent with the early stages of implementation, where awareness of the platform, understanding of its purpose and confidence in using the system were still developing.

2023 – Increased Engagement

Throughout 2023, levels of reporting became more consistent, with a gradual rise in monthly activity. This suggests that colleagues were becoming more familiar with the platform and increasingly willing to use formal speaking-up routes to raise concerns and seek support.

2024 – Significant Growth

Reporting volumes increased markedly during 2024, with more frequent periods of heightened

activity. This rise is likely to reflect a combination of increased confidence in speaking up and greater visibility of workforce, cultural and leadership related concerns.

2025/26 – Continued Utilisation

High levels of reporting continued throughout 2025, with activity remaining relatively sustained across the year. Whilst this may indicate that speaking up is becoming more embedded within organisational culture, it also highlights the persistence of concerns relating to leadership, workplace culture, employee wellbeing and organisational processes. Whilst the organisation has experienced lower engagement with the WiC platform during the first half of 2026, valuable speak up intelligence continues to be gained through a range of informal routes, including where colleagues are informally engaging directly with other designated responders. This suggests that, whilst formal reporting volumes have reduced, colleagues continue to raise issues and utilise alternative mechanisms to have their voices heard.

The organisation has also experienced an increase in the use of the anonymous discussion boards provided through WiC. A growing number of concerns have been raised in relation to car parking, waste management and the condition of working environments and facilities. This trend suggests that colleagues are willing to highlight issues affecting their experience at work when they can do so through a confidential and anonymous channel. It also indicates that staff may perceive limited alternative mechanisms within the organisation for raising concerns and influencing positive change.

Overall, the trend demonstrates a positive increase in colleague confidence and willingness to raise concerns, representing a strengthening of employee voice and engagement. However, the sustained level of reporting suggests that many underlying issues continue to emerge across the organisation and may require broader systemic action to address root causes. While the platform is increasingly being used as intended, the volume and consistency of concerns indicate that organisational culture, leadership behaviours and workplace experience remain key areas requiring ongoing attention and improvement.

Conclusion

The SUMMC agenda continues to mature across HDdUHB, with evidence of increasing organisational commitment to psychological safety, compassionate leadership and employee voice. Although WiC reporting has reduced during the first half of 2026, colleagues continue to utilise a range of formal and informal speak up routes, demonstrating ongoing confidence in raising concerns and seeking support.

The findings suggest that speaking up is becoming more embedded within organisational culture, however recurring themes relating to leadership behaviours, wellbeing, organisational responsiveness and confidence that concerns will lead to meaningful action indicate further improvement is required to achieve a consistently positive staff experience across all areas of the Health Board.

The national direction of travel further reinforces the importance of this agenda, with increasing emphasis on organisational culture, psychological safety and demonstrable learning rather than simply the existence of reporting mechanisms. Whilst progress has been made, the continued emergence of similar themes across multiple feedback channels suggests that some cultural and systemic challenges remain. Sustained focus on leadership accountability, visible organisational learning and strengthening staff confidence that concerns will be listened to and acted upon will be critical to maintaining momentum and supporting further cultural improvement.

Future Progression

To further support the Speak Up agenda, Workforce and Organisational Development (WOD) will utilise NHS Wales Staff Survey data to target interventions where colleagues have identified barriers to speaking up:

- Include the delivery of Active Bystander training and other targeted programmes designed to strengthen psychological safety and encourage constructive challenge.
- Align emerging workforce strategies, including the Sexual Safety Strategy, with the SUMMC framework to create a more coherent and integrated approach to employee voice, psychological safety and organisational culture. This will create a more consistent and coordinated approach, helping colleagues understand their support options and feel confident to raise concerns.
- Undertake a targeted recruitment campaign for Speak Up Guardians to strengthen the network's capacity and visibility across the organisation. Recruitment to these roles has continued to be challenging, largely due to difficulties in releasing staff from their substantive posts to undertake what is currently a voluntary role alongside existing responsibilities. Consideration should therefore be given promoting the role's strategic importance to ensure a sustainable and representative Guardian network that can effectively support the SUMMC agenda.
- Undertake a review of the training provided to responders and Speak Up Guardians to ensure it adopts a more trauma-informed approach. The increasing complexity and breadth of issues being raised can have a significant emotional impact on those listening to and supporting colleagues through difficult experiences. It is therefore essential that appropriate safeguards, training, supervision and wellbeing support are in place to protect responders and Speak Up Guardians, enabling them to fulfil their roles effectively while maintaining their own psychological wellbeing.

Argymhelliad / Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

- **TAKE ASSURANCE** from the progress made in embedding the SUMMC agenda and the continued availability and utilisation of formal and informal speaking-up mechanisms across the HDdUHB.

Amcanion: (rhaid cwblhau)

Objectives: (must be completed)

Cyfeirnod Cylch Gorchwyl y Pwyllgor: Committee ToR Reference:	3.1.6 Ensure robust mechanisms are in place to deliver effective staff engagement in accordance with the Health Board's values and behaviour framework, and builds sustainable social partnerships that prioritise inclusion and equity to ensure the experience of underrepresented communities and voices inform decision making.
Cyfeirnod Cofrestr Risg Datix, Teitl a Sgôr Risg Cyfredol: Datix Risk Register Reference and Score:	N/A
Parthau Ansawdd: Domains of Quality	7. All apply

Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)	
Galluogwyr Ansawdd: Enablers of Quality: Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)	6. All Apply
Amcanion Strategol y BIP: UHB Strategic Objectives:	All Strategic Objectives are applicable
Nodau Cynllunio 2026/27 Planning Goals 2026/27	1. Healthy, Thriving Teams 2. Customer Service Excellence 6. Safe, Timely, High Quality Care
Hypergyswllt i Amcanion Llesiant HDdUHB 2026 Hyperlink to HDdUHB Well-being Objectives 2026	4. Create an inclusive culture where every voice matters, individual needs are considered and staff well-being is promoted and supported 5. Foster a learning culture by sharing knowledge and applying new ways of working that enhance local and global well-being
Model Cymdeithasol ar gyfer Iechyd a Llesiant : (wedi'i gwblhau ar gyfer newid strategol a/neu newidiadau sylweddol i wasanaethau) A Social Model for Health and Wellbeing : (<i>complete for strategic change and/or significant service changes</i>)	3. Involvement with individuals and communities will take place to understand their needs and support the co-production of solutions. 6. A culture of testing and learning will be encouraged, enabled, supported and celebrated.
Gwybodaeth Ychwanegol: Further Information:	
Ar sail tystiolaeth: Evidence Base:	NHS England » The future of Freedom to Speak Up Revised responsibilities for Freedom to Speak Up in the NHS - Patient Safety Learning
Rhestr Termiau: Glossary of Terms:	Included within the body of the report.

Partïon / Pwyllgorau â ymgynhorwyd ymlaen llaw y cyfarfod hwn: Parties / Committees consulted prior to this meeting:	N/A

Effaith: (rhaid cwblhau) Impact: (must be completed)	
Ariannol / Gwerth am Arian: Financial / Service:	None arising for this paper.
Ansawdd / Gofal Claf: Quality / Patient Care:	None arising for this paper.
Gweithlu: Workforce:	None arising for this paper.
Tegwch Iechyd: Health Equity:	None arising for this paper.
Risg: Risk:	None arising for this paper.
Cyfreithiol: Legal:	None arising for this paper.
Enw Da: Reputational:	None arising for this paper.
Gyfrinachedd: Privacy:	None arising for this paper.
Cydraddoldeb: Equality:	None arising for this paper.