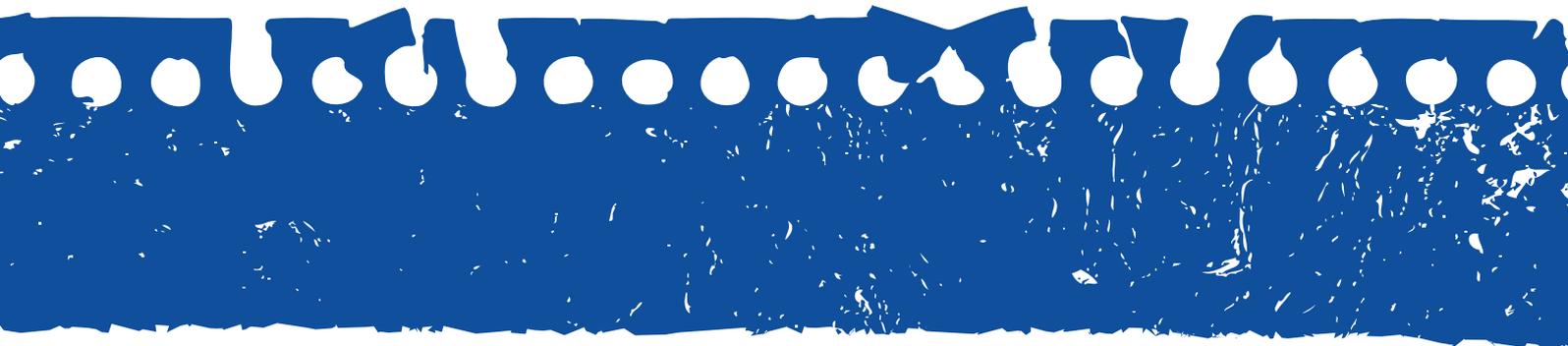




The **Whistleblowing** Charity



THE UK WHISTLEBLOWING REPORT

2nd edition

About Public Concern at Work

Public Concern at Work (PCaW), the whistleblowing charity, aims to protect society by encouraging workplace whistleblowing. We do this in three ways:

- We advise individuals with whistleblowing dilemmas at work
- We support organisations with their whistleblowing arrangements
- We inform public policy and seek legislative change

We carried out a detailed review of 1,000 of our advice line cases in 2013, and published our report *The Inside Story*.¹ This demonstrated that much needed to be done to improve outcomes for whistleblowers as 74% said nothing is done about the wrongdoing and 15% said they were ultimately dismissed for raising a concern.

Following an unprecedented rise in demand for advice on how to blow the whistle, we decided to publish annual reports to highlight the key sectors, industries, concerns and outcomes for workers who have sought advice from PCaW.

This report relates to data gathered on all cases received in 2014 where the individual was seeking advice on how to raise a concern about wrongdoing, risk or malpractice.

Headlines from the report are:

- The top issue being raised was financial malpractice (18%)
- The number of ethical concerns has risen by 50% (meaning those relating to cronyism, nepotism, abuse of position, breach of confidentiality or manipulation of research for example)
- Twenty-two percent of calls to the advice line were from the education sector, making this sector the highest in 2014
- In most cases (52%) the employer's response was to deny or ignore whistleblowing concerns
- Half of the whistleblowers who contacted us were dismissed or resigned after raising their concern. Eight out of ten whistleblowers suffered some form of reprisal but there has been some improvement in the outcomes data in the last year (see pages 8 – 9)

¹ Whistleblowing: The Inside Story, <http://www.pcaw.org.uk/files/Whistleblowing%20-%20the%20inside%20story%20FINAL.pdf>, May 2013

An introduction to the advice line

Over the past 22 years, PCaW has advised over 18,000 whistleblowers. The charity was set up in 1993 to help workers speak truth to power. We aim to help workers who have witnessed risk, malpractice or wrongdoing to raise their concern so that the issue has the best chance of being resolved, but at the same time aiming to minimise the risk to the whistleblower's own personal position.

The individuals who call the advice line may do so at varying points of their whistleblowing journey. It may be when they first see something going wrong in their organisation or much later when they have raised the matter in multiple places, internally and externally. They may be seeking advice on how to raise the concern, where else they can go, how best to seek feedback, what they can do to have the concern addressed and what to do if they are being victimised or have been dismissed.

PCaW advisers will ask about the nature of their concern, how serious it is, whether it is on-going, why they are looking to raise the concern, who they have raised it with and how it was received by colleagues or managers as well as asking for information about the structure of the organisation and their working relationships. PCaW also advises on the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), the law that protects whistleblowers. Consequently, advisers will ask whistleblowers about their length of service and whether they suffered as a result of raising a concern.

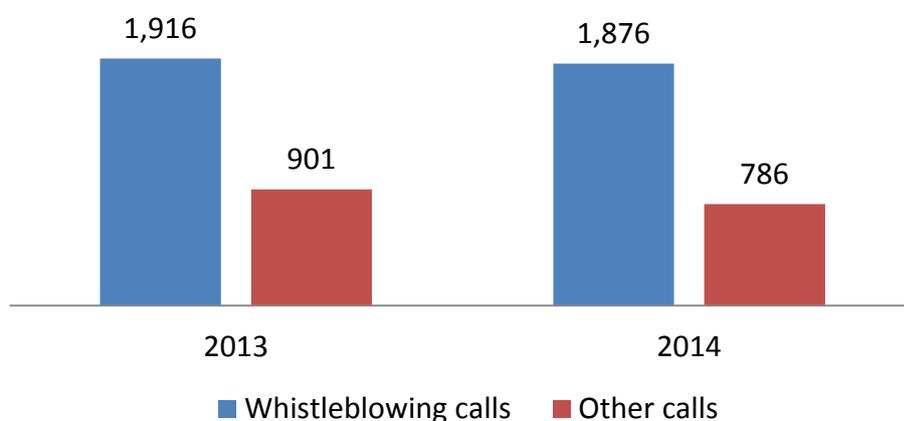
Considering the data from our advice line renders much information about the whistleblower, the organisation and the wrongdoing they have witnessed. There are many lessons to be learnt from the experiences of those who are prepared to speak truth to power and we try to use this data to persuade and influence those in a position to change matters for the better. The journey of many of our advice line clients can be fraught with threats, fears and contradictions and can be incredibly stressful for the individual involved. We hope you will continue to support our advice line clients and us in this important work.

2014: An overview

Total calls

1,876 individuals contacted us for advice on a workplace whistleblowing matter in 2014. This was a very slight decrease on the 1,916 requests for advice in 2013 but was still 15% higher compared to 2012.

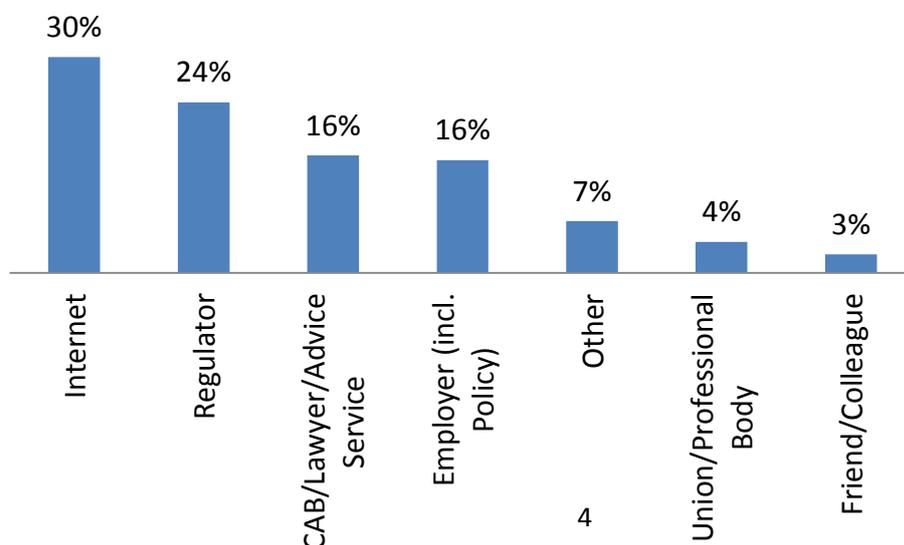
We also received 786 calls in 2014 regarding issues such as private employment rights. This is a 13% drop from 2013. This drop is welcome as it means there is better understanding among members of the public about our role and a smaller percentage of our heavily stretched resources are being spent on handling these calls.



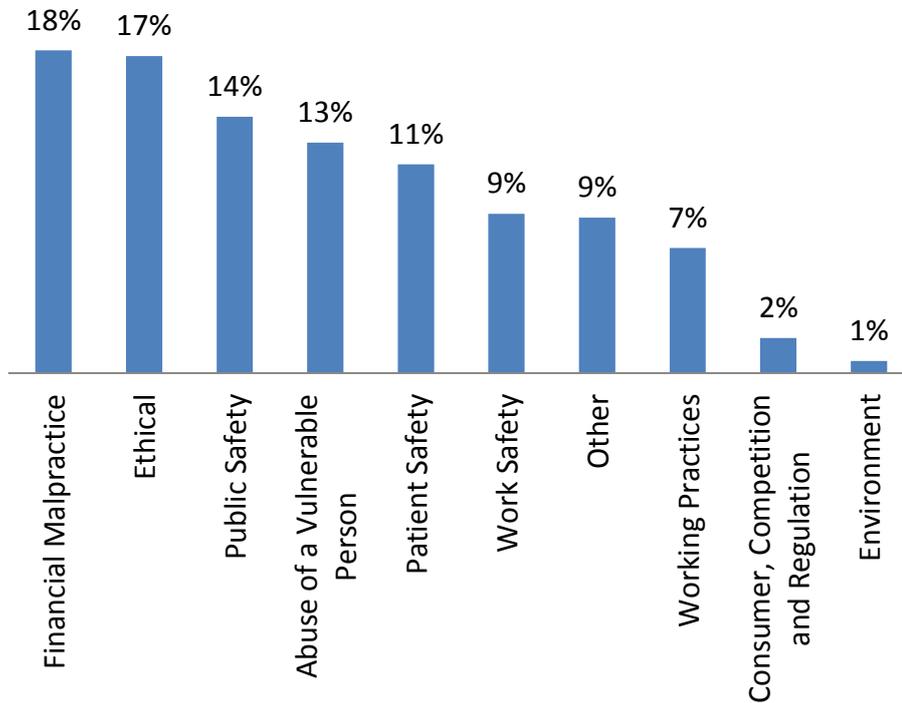
The vast majority of callers (78%) had already raised their concern by the time they got in touch with our advice line. We encourage workers to get in touch with us for advice as soon as they become concerned about malpractice, risk or wrongdoing. This is because our advice is most effective at the early stages before the worker has raised the concern.

How individuals found out about PCaW

Most individuals who contacted our advice line found out about us via the internet (30%) or through a regulator (24%). Sixteen percent found out about us through their employer's whistleblowing policy.



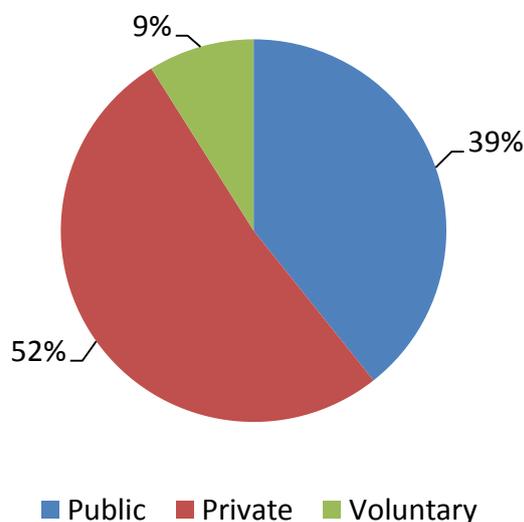
Whistleblowing cases by type of concern



Financial malpractice and ethical concerns were the first and second most common types of wrongdoing. There were 340 calls about financial malpractice and 334 calls about ethical concerns.

The total number of cases regarding ethical concerns rose by 50% compared to 2013. Ethical concerns include issues such as exam malpractice, nepotism, cronyism and breach of data protection or confidentiality. These concerns are often the hardest to raise because the wrongdoing is less clear cut compared to other types of concerns such as patient safety. Many individuals contact us seeking advice and reassurance that raising an ethical concern is the right thing to do.

Whistleblowing calls by sector



There was a 6% increase in the number of calls from workers in the private sector in 2014 compared to 2013. There was an 11% drop in calls from the public sector over the same period.

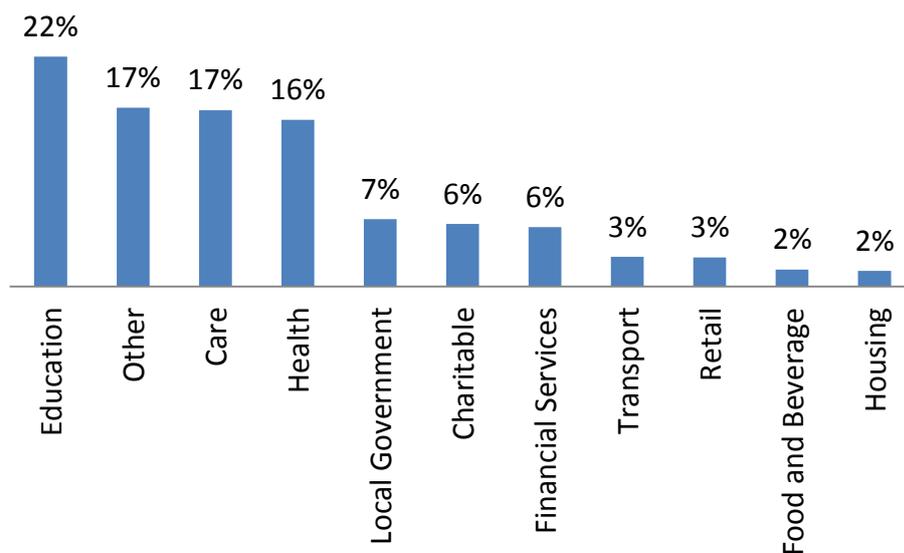
These changes mean that public sector calls made up 39% (636) of calls in 2014 compared with private sector calls which formed 52% (838) of calls.

Sector breakdown

Education remains the sector from which we receive the most calls. The percentage of calls from the education sector rose to 22% in 2014, up from 2013. This continued a trend that started in 2013 but has since dropped significantly.²

Calls from the care sector made up 17% of calls in 2014.

The health sector was in third place. The percentage of calls from the health sector fell from 18% in 2013 to 16% in 2014.



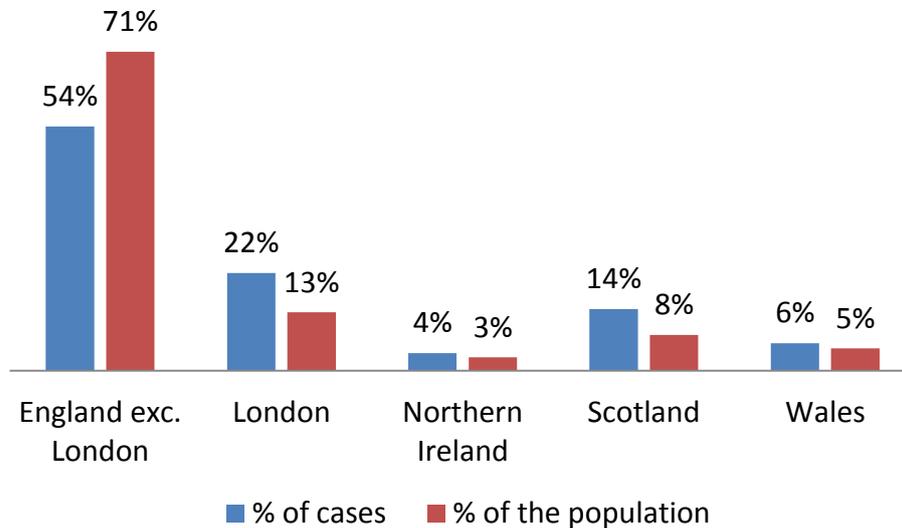
Cases by region

In the vast majority of cases (62%) we do not know where the caller is located. Of the cases where we do know, we received disproportionately higher calls from workers in London, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Although London made up 13% of the UK's population, 22% of advice line calls were from whistleblowers in London.³

² First half of 2015.

³ Mid-year population estimates for the UK 2014, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/population-estimates-for-uk--england-and-wales--scotland-and-northern-ireland/mid-2014/mid-year-population-estimates-for-the-uk-2014.html>

England (excluding London) accounted for 71% of the UK's population. However, whistleblowers in this part of the UK make up only 54% of calls to our advice line.



Sector focus: Education, care and health

We receive most calls from the education, care and health sectors. When combined they make up 55% of calls to the advice line. In this section we take a closer look at these top three sectors to identify the profile of whistleblowers in these sectors and the nature and manner in which they raise their concerns.

Top concerns

Whistleblowers from the education sector were most commonly calling about ethical concerns (28%). Ethical concerns include issues such as exam malpractice, nepotism, cronyism and breaches of data protection or confidentiality. Public safety concerns were the second most common concern (25%) among whistleblowers from the education sector.

Forty-nine percent of callers from the care sector were concerned about abuse of a vulnerable person. Patient safety and public safety were the second (14%) and third (10%) most common concerns, respectively.

Fifty percent of whistleblowers in the health sector were concerned about patient safety.

With whom did whistleblowers raise their concern?

Whistleblowers in the education sector were more likely to have raised their concern with senior management. Forty-five percent of whistleblowers in the education sector, compared with 36% of all callers to the advice line, raised their concern with senior management.

Care workers are more likely to have raised their concern with their direct line managers (45% raised their concern with their line manager). They are also more likely to go outside with their concern, whether that is to the regulators (13%) or to the police (3%).

What was the consequence of raising their concern?

Callers from the education sector were more likely to have been dismissed (16%) and are far more likely to have resigned (18%) after raising their concern when compared to whistleblowers in the health and care sectors where 15% were dismissed and 7% resigned.

Callers from the care sector were less likely to be dismissed or to resign but were more likely to be bullied (8%) and faced disciplinary action (31%) for raising concerns. This compares with 6% of all callers to the advice line in 2014 who were bullied by co-workers and 29% who faced disciplinary action.

Length of employment

Those calling us from the health sector were likely to have been in their jobs for a longer period. A quarter of health sector whistleblowers had been working for the same employer for over 11 years.

Callers from the care sector were working for their employer for a much shorter period. Forty-six percent of whistleblowers from the care sector had only been working for their employer for less than a year.

Final outcomes

We call back clients 6-12 months after the initial call to find out the outcome for both them and their concern. The data below relates to cases that were opened in the first half of 2014.

Outcome for the concern	
The employer denied that there was a concern	36%
The worker did not know the resolution	13%
The employer admitted that the concern was valid	13%
The employer ignored the concern	16%
The employer resolved the concern	16%
The employer continues to investigate the concern	6%

In over half of the cases (52%) employers ignored or denied the concern. In a further 13% of cases the whistleblower was not aware of the outcome.

Thirty-three percent of whistleblowers had a positive reaction whereby the concern was admitted, investigated or resolved.

In comparison, 63% of whistleblowers who contacted our advice line in 2012 reported that their concern was ignored or denied by the organisation. Twenty-six percent had a positive reaction whereby the concern was admitted, investigated or resolved.

Although we welcome the reduction in the number of cases where concerns are ignored or denied by employers, we remain worried that the concerns raised by the majority of whistleblowers are still

ignored or denied by organisations.⁴ More needs to be done by organisations to ensure that they have effective whistleblowing arrangements which are sensitive to concerns raised by whistleblowers.

Outcome for the individual	
Dismissed after raising the concern	25%
Victimised and/or disciplined by my employer	25%
I resigned after raising the concern	24%
My workplace improved	15%
There were no consequences	7%
Bullied by co-workers	3%
Thanked and/or rewarded for raising the concern	1%

Fifty percent of whistleblowers reported being dismissed or resigned after raising their concern. A further 28% were bullied by co-workers or victimised and/or disciplined by their employer. This means that almost 8 out of 10 whistleblowers suffer some sort of reprisal after raising a concern.

Sixteen percent of whistleblowers reported a positive outcome after they raised a concern, including being thanked by their employer or their workplace improved after they raised their concern.

When we compare these figures to individuals who contacted our advice line in 2012, again we see a marked improvement in outcomes for workers who raise concerns. In 2012, 55% of whistleblowers reported that they were dismissed or that they resigned after they raised their concern. Only nine percent reported a positive reaction whereby they were thanked or their workplace improved.

Feedback on our service

We continue to receive very positive feedback regarding the quality of our service. Ninety-five percent of callers said they found our advice clear and easy to understand and 89% of whistleblowers said they would recommend our charity to other whistleblowers.

The following are some of the positive comments about our service:

- *"I think the charity was fantastic ... I'm so pleased that I stumbled across it"*
- *"It's a very important thing your charity does"*
- *"The person I talked to was thoroughly professional and helpful"*

⁴ It must be remembered that individuals are seeking advice from us because they are experiencing problems or sense that the concern they are seeking to raise may be unwelcome. As such these figures are not representative of all workers who raise concerns in the workplace.



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