

Public Concern at Work

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[Speaking up for vulnerable adults](#)

[What the whistleblowers say](#)

Over 15%¹ of all whistleblowing concerns to Public Concern at Work's helpline came from the care sector. Today we reveal what these whistleblowers say:

- Half are concerns about abuse in care.
- In 40% of cases whistleblowers' concerns were either ignored or denied by management.
- In half of all cases where other staff knew about a risk they were either too scared or felt unable to speak up.
- Over 80% of the whistleblowers had already raised their concern before calling for advice. The majority said they wish they had sought advice from Public Concern at Work before taking action.
- Few care workers knew of or used their whistleblowing policy.

Cathy James, Acting Director of Public Concern at Work said "Our research demonstrates there are systemic deficiencies that prevent care workers from speaking up effectively to protect vulnerable adults. This must be addressed. We have to ensure that every worker who is in a position to speak up is encouraged and supported. Whistleblowers should not be lone voices in the workplace. This is all the more important when safeguarding those who cannot speak up for themselves.

We are calling for the proactive promotion of good whistleblowing arrangements and the support available for whistleblowers. This includes training and guidance for managers on how to handle concerns, employers providing feedback when responding to concerns, a greater awareness of rights, zero tolerance of whistleblower victimisation, and clearer guidance about how and when to approach relevant authorities.

¹ Since we were established in 1993, we have received over 19,000 calls. In 2001 we developed a database to capture information about the individual caller and their concern. Therefore we have full sets of data for 2002 – 2010. During this period we have advised 13,406 individuals, 7994 of which were classified as public calls, i.e. those with a whistleblowing concern. The remainder are those where the caller is seeking advice about a private matter. 1,180 of our public calls (15%) were from the care sector.

making **whistleblowing** work

Many of these steps are straightforward and cost effective. Employers can do so much more to protect vulnerable adults by making it safe for care workers to question wrongdoing and malpractice.”

Note to editors:

Public Concern at Work, the whistleblowing advice line, is an independent charity set up in 1993. We give free, confidential advice to those concerned about malpractice or wrongdoing in the workplace. We also help organisations to address risk responsibly. The charity was instrumental in getting the whistleblowing legislation, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, on the statute books. For more information please visit www.pcaw.org.uk.

For further comment and information, please contact:

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On 6 April 2011 we are hosting a conference *How to speak up to protect vulnerable adults* at Westminster Central Hall, London. For press places contact Francesca West. For more information see www.pcaw.org.uk/policy/care