



PRESS RELEASE: for immediate release

25 June 2014

Government misses opportunity to strengthen law to protect whistleblowers

Today sees the release of the Government response on whistleblower protection in the UK. The response contains proposals for a number of reforms including:

- A duty on regulators to publish information about whistleblowing concerns raised with them;
- Improved guidance from Government for those facing a whistleblowing dilemma and help for businesses to deliver best practice;
- Changes to the scope of the whistleblower protection to include student nurses (but not other categories of workers such as non-executive directors, public appointments, volunteers, interns and those working in the armed forces and national security services) ;
- Review of the Employment Tribunal regulatory referral process.

Cathy James Chief Executive of Public Concern at Work said:

“These reforms do not go far enough. This is a clear missed opportunity for the Government to strengthen the law that protects whistleblowers. While the proposed new requirements on regulators to report annually are a step forward, there are still some gaping holes in the law. These include the prevention of blacklisting of those who have blown the whistle, the issue of gagging clauses and an overall simplification of the law. This must be addressed within the wider context of access to justice and legal remedies and in light of the 79% drop in claims to employment tribunals since the introduction of fees which is an indisputable barrier to whistleblower claimants.¹ We will work hard over the coming months to persuade the Government to address these issues during the passage of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill through Parliament.”

Last year Public Concern at Work set up the Whistleblowing Commission to review whistleblowing in the UK and make recommendations for reform. Effective whistleblowing is vitally important as it helps the early detection and prevention of wrongdoing. The Commission concluded that current legislation is “not working” and immediate change is needed to ensure whistleblowers are given the confidence to speak out without fear of adverse repercussions.

Cathy James adds:

“Having undertaken a thorough review of the effectiveness of whistleblowing in the UK, we are disappointed that only a handful of the Whistleblowing Commission’s recommendations are being adopted by government.”

ENDS

¹ The Ministry of Justice said 9,801 claims were received in October to December, down 79 per cent on the same period in 2012 and 75 per cent fewer than in the previous quarter.



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Notes to editors

The [Whistleblowing Commission](#) made 25 recommendations. The key recommendations that we will continue to campaign on are as follows:

- The Secretary of State to adopt the Commission's [Code of Practice](#) detailing whistleblowing arrangements in the workplace.
- This Code of Practice to be taken into account by courts and tribunals when whistleblowing issues arise.
- Regulators to require or encourage the adoption of this Code of Practice by those they regulate.
- Specific provisions against the blacklisting of whistleblowers.
- Strengthening anti-gagging provisions in the law.
- Specialist training for tribunal members to handle whistleblowing claims effectively.
- Strengthening and clarifying the legal protection for whistleblowers.

About Public Concern at Work

Public Concern at Work (PCaW), the whistleblowing charity, runs a confidential advice line for workers who witness wrongdoing or malpractice in the work place. Since being established in 1993, the charity has advised 17,000 whistleblowers to date. PCaW also works with organisations and campaigns on public policy to encourage workplace whistleblowing. For further information, please visit www.pcaw.org.uk