



Dear Sir/Madam

## UK whistleblowing law is stuck in 1998 – reform is long overdue

The publication of the government's whistleblowing framework review on 14 July 2025 marks a pivotal moment for the UK. It is now more than 25 years since the first whistleblowing law (the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998), was introduced, yet the legislation has proved inadequate in preventing repeated scandals where insiders were ignored, sidelined, or punished for speaking out.

History offers sobering lessons. The Clapham rail crash of 1988, the Piper Alpha disaster, and the Herald of Free Enterprise tragedy all revealed organisational cultures where staff feared raising safety concerns. The collapse of BCCI in 1991 further exposed the dangers of silencing employees in financial services. These events paved the way for the legislation in 1998, designed to give workers confidence to disclose wrongdoing without fear of retaliation.

When it first passed, the UK's was a world-leading piece of legislation and many countries used it as a template when introducing their own whistleblower protection laws, in the process implementing better and stronger protections – including requirements on employers - which surpassed ours. The UK has simply not kept pace with international standards.

The economic case for reform is stark. Analysis by Protect found that across three scandals — the Post Office Horizon affair, Carillion's collapse, and the Lucy Letby murders, the cost to the taxpayer of failing to act on whistleblower's concerns, was at least **£426 million**. Whistleblowers have a key role in exposing fraud and corruption. The APPGs on Anti-Corruption and Responsible Tax, and on Fair Business Banking, cite that economic crime and financial opacity cost the UK economy **£350 billion** per year. Given the government's drive to accelerate sustainable economic growth, stronger protection and incentivisation for whistleblowers makes good economic sense.

There has been a piecemeal approach to addressing the gaps in our current law with legislative proposals related to whistleblowing, including making sexual harassment a protected disclosure, duties to prevent fraud and economic crime, a duty of candour on NHS managers, whilst the Serious Fraud Office is considering financial incentives for whistleblowers. These measures would be strengthened by implementing a duty on employers to investigate whistleblowing concerns - a measure which has been added to the Employment Rights Bill by a cross-party amendment in the House of Lords, and by requiring organisations to have a whistleblowing procedure. These measures, together with a statutory code of practice on whistleblowing, would provide a coherent legislative and policy framework.

The government should seize the opportunity of this review. Priorities must include:

- including a statutory duty on employers to investigate whistleblowing disclosures in the Employment Rights Bill;
- a statutory Code of Practice drawing on international best practice;
- an independent Whistleblowing Commissioner with enforcement powers appointed to the new Integrity and Ethics Commission;
- robust protection against vexatious SLAPP's litigation supported by the EHRC's human rights powers; and
- a coherent cross-departmental government strategy led by a Whistleblowing Champion, instead of today's fragmented oversight.

Whistleblowers are often the first to detect fraud, corruption, and safety failures. Protecting them is not only a moral obligation but an economic necessity. Early intervention saves money, lives and reputations. After decades of "lessons learned" but not acted upon, this government must ensure that the UK once again leads the way in whistleblowing protection.

Yours faithfully

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