



UNIVERSITY  
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GREENWICH



the whistleblowing charity

# WHISTLEBLOWING: THE INSIDE STORY

A study of the experiences of 1,000 whistleblowers

A research project by  
Public Concern at Work  
and the University of Greenwich

# FOREWORD

**W**elcome to this report which presents the inside story for whistleblowers as told by 1,000 callers to Public Concern at Work's (PCaW) confidential advice line. From nurses and doctors, teachers and carers, office and factory workers, lawyers and accountants, our callers come from all walks of life. They have in common the fact that they have witnessed malpractice in the workplace and are unsure whether or how to raise their concern. More commonly known as "whistleblowers" our clients are faced with a difficult dilemma: do they take the risk and speak up or do they look the other way and stay silent?

The advice line was set up in 1993 to help workers speak truth to power. Over the past 20 years, PCaW has advised over 14,000 whistleblowers. 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. However the vast majority of individuals only ever raise their concern internally, which is why this report has been named the inside story. It tells the lesser known but far more common experience of whistleblowing.

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 their business 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.

PCaW's approach in advising our clients has rendered a wealth of information about the whistleblower, the organisation and the wrongdoing they have witnessed. Together with the University of Greenwich, we have tapped into this data to map patterns.

In almost all of these cases the individual is concerned that the information about wrongdoing is, or will be, unwelcome. It is likely that they will already be experiencing difficulties when they call us. This report does not therefore give an overview of British workplaces and how serious concerns are raised and addressed, but is a snapshot of the barriers and challenges faced by those who are not sure what to do next.

Their journey is often fraught with threats, fears and contradictions, and can be incredibly stressful for the individual involved. It is clear that there are some lessons to be learnt from this valuable data and as the Executive Summary suggests, there are limited opportunities for an organisation to listen to their staff as a concern will only be raised once or twice at most. Only the very tenacious persevere beyond this point. More junior workers tend to be ignored by their employer, and the more senior the worker the higher the risk of dismissal. Interestingly, raising a concern with a regulator decreases the chance of dismissal, though this still results in some form of reprisal for many.

As we know from news headlines we all read every day, in our care homes and hospitals, public transport systems and factories, schools, banks and even in Parliament, too often the questions are asked after the damage has been done. This report shows that we still face the risk of a culture of silence in UK workplaces. This is why we have launched a Whistleblowing Commission to make recommendations for change, which will report at the end of 2013. Whistleblowers are a vital safety net in our society and can prevent and detect damage and disaster. We all need to listen to them.



**Cathy James**  
Chief Executive  
Public Concern at Work

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This research was funded and carried out by PCaW and the University of Greenwich (Work and Employment Relations Unit), on a sample of narratives from the PCaW database. The sample consists of 1,000 cases from the PCaW advice line between 20 August 2009 and 30 December 2010. We coded the experience of the whistleblower at point of contact. We provide many individuals with advice on what to do, however the vast majority of individuals do not call us back to let us know what action they took or the outcome. In only 62 cases were we informed of final outcomes. As such much of the information below relates to information given to us of the experiences of whistleblowers up until the point they seek advice from PCaW.**

From our research we know that the typical whistleblower is a skilled worker or professional who has been working for less than two years, who is concerned about a wrongdoing that is on-going, affects wider society and has been occurring for less than six months. The concern is raised at the organisation at most twice with line then middle management and the whistleblower is most likely to experience no response from management (either negative or positive). Where management do respond the most common response is a formal reprisal. The most likely response to the concern is that nothing is done. Junior staff are more likely to be ignored than those in senior positions, who are more likely to be dismissed.

A third of whistleblowers who contact us are from the health and social care sectors. Those in financial services are more likely to see wrongdoing stopped or properly investigated, as are those in care. However both are likely to feel that their position has worsened and in care, individuals are more likely to resign. Those working in local government have poorer outcomes in having a concern addressed and in health individuals are most likely to describe their position as worsening throughout the process.

For the few that raise a concern a third or fourth time it is at this point it becomes more likely that the matter will be addressed but also more likely that the whistleblower will be dismissed or subjected to reprisal. In half of the cases where we knew final outcomes the wrongdoing had been stopped, but most individuals were still struggling on some level.

The findings indicate that organisations may be getting better at addressing wrongdoing but they are still shooting the messenger.

## MOST STRIKING IS THE HUGE MISSED OPPORTUNITY BY LINE AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT TO ADDRESS A CONCERN EFFECTIVELY AT AN EARLY STAGE AND PROTECT THE WHISTLEBLOWER.

The expectation or fear of individuals that they will be dismissed is also too frequently right, though they are more likely to experience formal action short of dismissal. Action short of dismissal may be an indication of employers' fear of litigation under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, a sign that the law is at least in part working. However the high incidence of formal reprisal suggests that much more needs to be done to protect whistleblowers pre-dismissal and deter employers from taking formal action.

The combination of the above demonstrates why speaking up in the workplace may seem futile or dangerous to many individuals. We remain at risk of a culture of silence existing in too many workplaces where few will be willing to pursue their concern to a degree that stops or prevents harm.

The research has provided additional evidence that the effectiveness of whistleblowing in the UK must be reviewed. To this end PCaW has established a Whistleblowing Commission which will run a public consultation on the effectiveness of existing whistleblowing arrangements in the UK, including UK business practices. The findings and conclusions of this research will be considered in detail as part of the Whistleblowing Commission's work in 2013 and their overall recommendations for change.

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# KEY FINDINGS:

## Type of wrongdoing

- Ethical and financial concerns are the most common types of wrongdoing followed closely by work safety.

## Top six industries

- The top six industries are health, care, education, charities, local government, and financial services.

## Who is harmed by the wrongdoing?

- In 74% of the cases the wrongdoing involved harm outside the workforce, e.g. consumers or patients were affected.

## How often does the wrongdoing take place?

- The vast majority of callers to the advice line witness wrongdoing which happens more than once or where the risk is on-going.

## How long has the wrongdoing been taking place?

- 86% of our sample said that the wrongdoing took place for less than two years.

## How powerful is the wrongdoer?

- The number of calls climbs in line with how powerful the wrongdoer is within the workplace. The more powerful the wrongdoer the more likely the whistleblower is to contact PCaW. This denotes the need for advice is linked with fear of reprisal.

## How many times do whistleblowers raise a concern and where do they go?

- Within our sample of 1,000 cases, concerns were raised 1,514 times, 82% of which was internal, 15% external, and 3% to a union.
- The majority of whistleblowers (44%) raise a concern only once, and a further 39% will go on to raise a concern a second time.

- This shows that employers usually have up to two opportunities to listen and respond to a concern.
- Of those that raise the concern three times (119), 60% continue to raise a concern internally.
- After first exhausting internal options, some whistleblowers may raise a concern externally. Only 22 individuals (2%) raised their concern four times. However even on the fourth attempt to raise the concern the numbers of those using external routes are still equal to the numbers of those making internal disclosures (47.6% for both).
- Four individuals first raised their concern with the media (0.5%). Only two individuals raised their concern with the media on the second, third and fourth attempt.

## Whistleblower's position

- 53% of those who contact us are skilled or professional workers.

## What responses are they met with?

- 60% of those who called our advice line did not report any response from management (either negative or positive).
- 40% (399 people) of our sample mentioned responses from management when raising a concern. Of the 40% where workers told us of a response, the most common response to the individual was formal action short of dismissal such as demotion, suspension or disciplinary. 33% of those who experienced an actual response experienced formal reprisal at the first attempt, increasing to 39% at the second attempt and 50% at the third attempt.
- Dismissal is the second most common response with 24% of individuals being dismissed after raising a concern once, 29% after raising a concern twice and 32% after raising a concern a third time. However the response individuals most commonly say they fear is dismissal, which increases as the journey continues. 66% of those who feared a specific type of response told us they feared dismissal at first



# KEY FINDINGS:

attempt, this increases to 71% at second attempt and 84% at third attempt. This fear is disproportionate to actual experience.

- Other reprisal such as blocking resources and informal reprisal (such as verbal harassment or ostracism), are experienced more than they are anticipated or threatened, and decrease as the journey continues.
  - Blocking resources – 15% of those who received a response experienced having their resources blocked at both first and second attempts, decreasing to 6% at third attempt.
  - Informal reprisal – 21% of those who received a response experienced informal reprisal at first attempt, 12% at second attempt decreasing to 6% at third attempt.

## Does the way in which the concern is raised have an effect on the outcome?

- Raising a concern as a grievance had negative outcomes for the whistleblower as there was a higher chance of formal reprisal at the first attempt (50%) and dismissal at the second attempt (55%).
- Raising a concern with the line manager and following up with higher management was most readily supported by management. Raising a concern with the line manager at the second attempt led to more informal reprisal than formal reprisal than with other recipients. This is in contrast with raising the concern with higher management, which tended to result more in the whistleblower being dismissed if they raised it with higher management first, and in blocking resources or formal reprisal at a second attempt.
- Raising the concern with a specialist channel resulted more than with other recipients in informal reprisal and blocking resources, but led less to formal reprisal and dismissal.
- Raising a concern with a regulator at first attempt also led to more informal reprisal and blocking resources, but less to formal reprisal and dismissals. If the concern was raised with a regulator at second attempt, this led to more formal reprisal whilst dismissal remained lower (16%).

## Does the whistleblower's position in the organisation make a difference?

- In organisations where whistleblowers encounter reprisal, whistleblowers who are lower in the hierarchy tend to be tolerated longer. The more powerful the whistleblower the sooner they are likely to be dismissed. This may be because they are deemed more of a threat due to an expectation that they will do more to expose the wrongdoing having fewer internal options to raise a concern.
- Unskilled workers, administrative workers and management are less likely to resign in the first instance. However executives are much more likely to resign, where they do not, their position worsens as matters progress and they are eventually silenced or move on. This is unsurprising given that executives are likely to be raising issues that may challenge the overall leadership of an organisation and may feel obliged to leave the organisation if the matter cannot be resolved.

## Responses of co-workers

- Only 20% of whistleblowers stated they experienced a response from co-workers.
- If whistleblowers experience responses from co-workers, they are most likely to experience informal reprisal and this tends to occur when the concern is raised with the line manager (65%) or specialist channels (100%).
- Formal reprisal by co-workers is most likely when a concern is raised with higher management (46%). There was also some support from co-workers (2%) when raising with higher management.

## Response to concern

- Overall the most common response is that nothing is done about the concern. However the likelihood of any investigation (where the whistleblower has a low or high expectation) increases significantly from first attempt (20%) to the third attempt (52%). Additionally by the third attempt it is more than three times as likely that an investigation where the whistleblower has a high expectation, has been triggered (34%).

- In finance there is a much higher likelihood that action is taken, either in an investigation trusted by the worker (16% at the first attempt, 29% at the second) or stopped at the second attempt (12%). In only two cases was there a third attempt to raise the concern in this sector.
- Those working in care have the highest expectations that the wrongdoing will be stopped and that the investigation will be good.
- Those working in local government have the lowest expectations that the wrongdoing will be stopped and that the investigation will be satisfactory throughout the process of raising a concern.
- Whistleblowers from all professional backgrounds felt that little was being done to address the wrongdoing. However, with the exception of unskilled workers, this perception usually decreased as the journey continued.

## Length of service

- 39% of our sample have been working for their employer for less than two years.

## Health

- 16% of individuals (164 people) indicated that they had a health problem as a result of raising a concern.
- Across all industries of those who indicated they had a health problem, 20% were still at work and 80% were on sick leave.
- In the top six industries, comparatively more whistleblowers with a health problem are on sick leave (around nine out of 10), except for education.

## Outcomes throughout the journey

- An average seven out of 10 individuals stated that their position worsened each time they raised a concern.
- Those working in financial services were most likely to feel at an early stage that their position had worsened due to whistleblowing (81% at the first attempt). Thereafter they are more likely to resign or stay silent than workers in other sectors.

- Care workers are unlikely to feel silenced, though they are also more likely than other sectors to resign at early and later stages (42%). This may be a reflection of the fluidity of the labour market in sectors that are predominantly privatised.
- Those working in health were most likely to describe their situation as worsening throughout the journey. As with the care sector and local government, it is unlikely workers in this sector will feel they must remain silent after raising a concern.
- Executives are the most likely group to resign at the first attempt compared with unskilled workers, administrative workers and management.



## Final outcomes

- The majority of whistleblowers are still struggling (85%), this includes where they have not received feedback, are unhappy with the investigation, continue to receive detrimental treatment at work or where they have lost their jobs and are still trying to see the concern addressed. It is important to note however, this is based on a small percentage of our findings.
- In contrast, only in 38% of the cases, where we had this information, was the wrongdoing not acted upon.
- In 38% of the cases, where we had this information, the wrongdoer had not received any sanction.
- 54% of our sample said that the wrongdoing was eventually stopped. Compared with the number of whistleblowers still struggling, it seems that organisations are better at focussing on correcting wrongdoing than on safeguarding the whistleblower from harm.

# CONCLUSIONS

**O**ur research has highlighted a number of avoidable problems in the whistleblower's journey. We set out here a number of observations based on the findings of this research:

## For organisations

The vast majority of whistleblowers say they have received no response from management and their concern is ignored at point of contact. Additionally 83% of individuals only raise a concern twice and usually with line then middle management. This demonstrates a huge missed opportunity by line and middle management to address a concern effectively at an early stage and protect the whistleblower. This will foster a view in the workforce that if you raise a concern, nothing will be done. Long term, this may lead to a silent or wilfully blind workforce. To ensure organisations capture and handle a concern effectively, organisations should train frontline managers on how to be proactive, identify whistleblowing concerns, handle problems well and support the whistleblower.

**THIS WILL FOSTER A VIEW IN THE WORKFORCE THAT IF YOU RAISE A CONCERN, NOTHING WILL BE DONE. LONG TERM, THIS MAY LEAD TO A SILENT OR WILFULLY BLIND WORKFORCE.**

The disproportionately high fear of dismissal is likely due to the common public perception that if you blow the whistle you will be dismissed. Additionally too many workers suffer formal reprisal. Both responses are usually visible to other employees and will likely deter others from speaking up. As such all organisations should ensure there is zero tolerance of the victimisation of whistleblowers.

The majority of individuals in this study have been employed for less than two years and raise a concern about wrongdoing that has occurred for less than six months. This highlights the importance of organisations ensuring whistleblowing arrangements are well communicated, promoted and refreshed with the existing workforce and on induction.

[1] For existing guidance see the Whistleblowing Arrangements: Code of Practice published by the British Standard Institution and Public Concern at Work ([www.pcaw.org.uk/bsi](http://www.pcaw.org.uk/bsi))

## For individuals

Raising a concern as a grievance tends to result in poor outcomes so individuals should find their whistleblowing policy and seek support at an early stage, if needed from their union, professional body or PCaW. Dismissal is not as frequent an outcome as feared, with two thirds of whistleblowers not experiencing any negative response from management.

Many individuals experience a better response if they raise a concern more than twice. However this should be balanced against the higher chance of a negative formal response when raising a concern for the third or fourth time.

Escalating a concern to a regulator at the second or third time a concern is raised increases the chances of the concern being addressed and decreases the chances of dismissal. However the likelihood of formal reprisal is increased. This demonstrates the value of an individual obtaining external oversight, though they should proceed with caution.

## For regulators

Many workers report a poor personal outcome when raising a concern internally or with a regulator. Regulators could consider following up with individuals that have raised a concern and should develop a clear policy on how complaints of mistreatment of whistleblowers could form part of assessment and compliance frameworks.

There is little guidance on effective whistleblowing practices [1] and it is likely that the quality of whistleblowing arrangements will vary widely. Regulators may assist their regulated entities by producing guidance on this issue.

Escalating a concern to a regulator at the second or third time a concern is raised, increases the chances of the concern being addressed and decreases the chances of dismissal for the individual. However the likelihood of formal reprisal is also increased. Regulators may wish to do more to encourage and guide individuals as to when to contact them.

## Legal protection

The expectation or fear of individuals that they will be dismissed is too frequently right, though they are more likely to experience formal action short of dismissal. This may be an indication of employers' fear of litigation under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, a sign that the law is at least in part working. However the high incidence of formal reprisal suggests that much more needs to be

done to protect whistleblowers pre-dismissal and deter employers from taking formal action. The combination of the above demonstrates why speaking up in the workplace may seem futile or dangerous to many individuals. We remain at risk of a culture of silence existing in too many workplaces where only the tenacious few will be willing to pursue their concern to a degree that stops or prevents harm.

# METHODOLOGY

**E**ach time an individual contacts us for advice, we take notes on the nature of the concern and the unique situation of the whistleblower. This helps us to give advice when the whistleblower calls back. We enter these notes on case files in our database. Thus, for each whistleblower we advise, our database includes a narrative of their whistleblowing journey.

For this research, we did a content analysis of 1,000 of these narratives. Together with the University of Greenwich, we developed a code book of variables and categories which we then used to code these narratives.

To avoid using case files from on-going cases, we started with entries in the PCaW database from December 2010 and worked backwards in time until 1,000 narratives had been coded. Thus, the sample consists of 1,000 cases from the PCaW advice line between 30 December 2010 and 20 August 2009. We only included entries where the contact with the whistleblower was by phone. We excluded entries where the call for advice came from those other than the whistleblower. We further excluded entries where there was no information on the type of wrongdoing or type of organisation the whistleblower was working for.

For confidentiality reasons, a PCaW staff member coded the narratives. This staff member was specially trained by a researcher from the University of Greenwich. Hence the research team consisted of these two people. Between March and July 2012, both researchers independently coded the same 90 narratives. These 90 were first cleared

of any content that would allow the identification of the organisation or individuals by PCaW to ensure confidentiality in relation to the users of the advice line. The researchers first coded 20 and then 30 narratives to develop the code book. A further 10 narratives were double coded at three subsequent instances to gain a shared understanding of the coding categories and to ensure consistent coding. At each instance differences in coding would be discussed and clarified. The PCaW researcher would then go back and recode the narratives already entered into the research database. A shared understanding was reached after the third session. A final double coding of 10 random narratives at the end of July 2012 revealed no differences.

Data entry was finalised at the end of October 2012. The researcher from the University of Greenwich then analysed the data using SPSS. All variables were treated as nominal. A Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit test was carried out for each variable. All variables used in this report showed to be non-random at a statistical significance of  $p < .001$ . It is important to point out this research is based on secondary data. The narratives were written by PCaW staff for the purpose of giving advice, not for research purposes. The implication is that not every case included data for all variables. We indicate in the report the size of the subsample (N) which provided relevant data for the findings we present.

This research has been approved by the University of Greenwich Research Ethics Committee (Ref 11/12.3.5.21). This research is independent. It was funded by PCaW and the Work and Employment Relationships Unit (WERU) of the University of Greenwich.



# 1. PERCEIVING THE WRONGDOING

a. Type of wrongdoing

The top five concerns in the sample (N= 1,000) were ethical, financial malpractice, work safety, public safety and patient safety.

Table 1.1 Top-five concerns

Ethical	Financial Malpractice	Work Safety	Public Safety	Patient Safety
191 (19%)	187 (19%)	156 (16%)	106 (11%)	81 (8%)

Other concerns were about environment, discrimination/ harassment or consumer, competition and regulation.

- Ethical concerns could include: abuse of position, cronyism, breach of policy, breach of confidentiality, or manipulation of scientific research.
- Work safety usually relates to health and safety in the workplace, principally affecting employees. This could include unsafe machinery or no appropriate safety equipment.
- Public safety is where the safety of the public is at risk. This could include faulty wiring on a train track or unsafe meat in a supermarket.

How we understand these findings:

Ethical and financial concerns were the most common types of malpractice followed closely by work safety. These concerns take place across all industries, while concerns such as patient safety or work safety are more sector specific to health and social care.

An ethical concern may be subjective and often occurs in grey areas where workers may be unsure whether or not they should raise the matter. This may explain why more individuals seek support when faced with an ethical concern.

With regards to those who witness financial malpractice, they may be likely to seek advice because of the serious implications for the wrongdoer or organisation if they raise a concern. The malpractice may involve criminal activity (e.g. theft or bribery) or the individual may be at risk themselves if they do not report the concern, as in the case of accountants or FSA authorised persons.

Additionally financial malpractice can take place across all organisations. While ethical or financial concerns are the most statistically common, on a sector by sector basis the number of concerns about patient safety concerns remains very high considering it is likely they occur only in care or health.

b. Industry

Table 1.2 Industries where callers worked

Health	148 (15%)
Care	143 (14%)
Education	111 (11%)
Charities	89 (9%)
Local government	69 (7%)
Financial services	67 (7%)
Retail	44 (4%)
Manufacturing	33 (3%)
Food/Bev	29 (3%)
Transport	27 (3%)
Construction	21 (2%)
Leisure/hospitality	21 (2%)
Utilities	16 (2%)
Science/Tech	12 (1%)
Insurance	9 (1%)
Central government	8 (<1%)
Police	7 (<1%)
Housing	6 (<1%)
Legal services	5 (<1%)
Pharmaceutical	4 (<1%)
Quango	4 (<1%)
Agriculture/Forestry	3 (<1%)
Armed services	2 (<1%)
Mining/Oil	2 (<1%)
Media	1 (<1%)
Other	100 (10%)
Unknown	19 (2%)

The top six industries on the advice line were: care, health, education, charities, local government, and financial services.

According to Census 2011 data, 13% of employed people in England and Wales work within the health and social care sector, 10% work in education, 6% work in public administration, and 4% in financial services. In our sample, callers working in the health and care sectors add up to 29%, compared with the 13% in the Census data. This means that those working in caring environments, where patients, vulnerable people or children are involved, tend to contact the advice line more than other sectors. Perhaps this is due to the nature of their work, media attention, policy agendas, scandals or awareness of PCaW.

c. Ethical distance

Apart from the type of wrongdoing and the industry these occurred in, we also looked at whether or not the wrongdoing fell within the whistleblower's job responsibility. A wrongdoing that falls within a whistleblower's job responsibility would be where a member of the finance team was aware of false invoicing. As invoicing would conceivably form part of their job responsibility they are ethically close to the wrongdoing; whether they were involved or not was coded accordingly. Conversely an example of the wrongdoing falling outside a whistleblower's job responsibility would be where a care worker becomes aware that the care home manager was misleading a regulator. A care worker would not typically be in a position to mislead a regulator so ethically they are quite distant from the wrongdoing, again their level of involvement was coded. This was done by comparing the roles of both the whistleblower and the wrongdoer and determining how ethically distant the whistleblower is from the wrongdoing.

Table 1.3 Ethical distance of the whistleblower to the wrongdoing

No contribution (wrongdoing outside of job responsibility)	437 (45%)
No contribution (wrongdoing within job description)	460 (47%)
Contributed to wrongdoing (within job responsibility)	63 (6%)
Contributed to wrongdoing (outside of job responsibility)	15 (2%)

We had information for 975 cases in our sample for this variable (N=975)

- In the vast majority of cases (92%) the whistleblower states that they have not contributed to the wrongdoing, while 8% admit that they have been involved.

- 47% said that the wrongdoing falls under their responsibility but they did not contribute to the wrongdoing, while 45% said that they did not contribute to the wrongdoing and that it does not fall under their responsibility.

How we understand these findings:

This demonstrates that the majority of those contacting the advice line are witnesses to wrongdoing as opposed to perpetrators. 8% have contributed in some way, the majority of these (6%) stating that the wrongdoing was part of their job responsibility and they were complicit (for example an office manager who followed instructions to raise an invoice she knew to be false). The remaining 2% of our sample stated that they had contributed to wrongdoing that was not part of their role, (for example a caretaker of a school falsifying exam results).

There is little disparity between those who view the wrongdoing as falling under their job responsibility and those who see it as someone else's responsibility, demonstrating that staff are willing to speak up whether or not they are ultimately responsible.

d. Who is harmed by the wrongdoing?

In analysing the impact of the wrongdoing we distinguished between cases where the wrongdoing caused:

- Outsider harm, e.g. where a teacher raises a child protection concern at a school.
- Insider harm not including the whistleblower, e.g. where an IT manager raises a breach of data protection which affects a colleague.
- Insider harm including the whistleblower, e.g. health and safety in the workplace.
- Both insider and outsider harm, e.g. where there are multiple concerns, where bank staff feel pressured to mis-sell to customers, presenting a risk to staff and consumers.

Table 1.4 Impact of the wrongdoing

Outsider harm	569 (57%)
Insider harm (not including the whistleblower)	68 (7%)
Insider harm (including the whistleblower)	193 (19%)
Both in and outsider harm	164 (17%)

We had sufficient information on this for 994 of the cases in our sample (N=994).

## How we understand these findings:

Where only insider harm was occurring, this included harm to the whistleblower in 19% of the cases. In 7% of the cases the wrongdoing involved insider harm to others than the whistleblower.

In 74% of the cases the wrongdoing involved harm to outsiders (57% only outsider harm and 17% both outsider and insider harm). This means that most of the concerns (74%) in our sample relate to harm that the whistleblower witnessed that affects not only the organisation but also the wider public, be it child protection, patient safety, financial malpractice.

## e. How often does the wrongdoing take place?

We coded the wrongdoing in our sample cases as either a one-off incident or recurring incidents, i.e. one incident of abuse in care or on-going neglect. We also looked at the risk depending on the type of wrongdoing and the stage of concern, e.g. where the fire escape is consistently blocked in a school: the incident is anticipated but the risk is on-going, this would be categorised as recurring wrongdoing.

Table 1.5 Frequency of the wrongdoing

One-off occurrence	140 (14%)
Recurring	858 (86%)

From the cases in our sample (N=998), 14% called for a one-off wrongdoing and in 86% of the calls the wrongdoing was recurring.

## How we understand these findings:

The vast majority of callers to the advice line witness wrongdoing which happens more than once or where the risk is on-going.

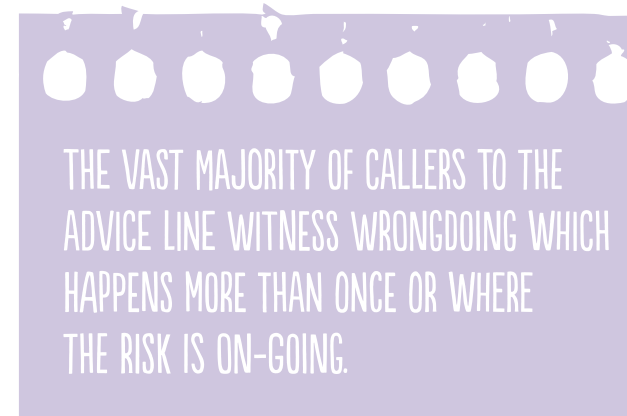
## f. Duration of the wrongdoing

Table 1.6 Duration of the wrongdoing

Anticipated	50 (10%)
Less than 1 month	67 (13%)
1 - 6 months	161 (30%)
6-24 months	175 (33%)
2-5 years	55 (10%)
More than 5 years	22 (4%)

We had sufficient information about this in 530 of the cases in our sample (N=530).

- 86% of our sample said that the wrongdoing took place for less than two years (this does not necessarily imply that the whistleblower has been raising the concern for two years).
- 53% said that the wrongdoing took place for less than six months.



## How we understand these findings:

Just over half of our sample contacted us when the concern had been taking place for under six months, showing that while whistleblowers may not always seek advice at the first step they do tend to seek advice quite early on in their journey. This also indicates that individuals are motivated to speak up at an early stage if they witness wrongdoing and can act as an early warning system for an organisation.

## g. Power of the wrongdoer

This was coded to reflect the balance of power between the whistleblower and the wrongdoer, whether the wrongdoer held a position of less, equal or more power in the organisation.

Table 1.7 Wrongdoer power as compared to whistleblower's position

Wrongdoer is less powerful	Wrongdoer is equally powerful	Wrongdoer is more powerful
41 (4%)	231 (24%)	715 (72%)

We had sufficient information in our sample for 987 cases (N=987).

The majority of our sample described the wrongdoer as more powerful than the whistleblower in the organisation. It is perhaps not surprising that whistleblowers seek advice when they have witnessed wrongdoing by someone more powerful than themselves as this is likely to be where the perceived risk in raising the concern and challenging the wrongdoing is higher for the worker.

# 2. RAISING A CONCERN

## a. How many times do whistleblowers raise a concern?

We looked at the first four events in a whistleblower's journey, which include where the whistleblower actually raises the concern or expresses an intention to raise the concern. In 868 cases a concern was actually raised and in 132 cases an intention to raise a concern was expressed. There were only some cases when the whistleblower raised the concern more than four times, however this was highly exceptional.

From our total sample of 1,000 advice line cases, in 868 of these the concern had been raised at least once, in 483 at least twice, in 141 at least three times, and in 22 cases the concern had been raised four times. In 132 cases people expressed only an intention to raise a concern.

Table 2.1 Number of times a whistleblower raises the concern

Raises once	Raises twice	Raises three times	Raises four times
385 (44%)	342 (39%)	119 (14%)	22 (3%)

Most whistleblowers (44%) actually raise a concern only once, however another 39% raised a concern twice. It is important to note that while there is a large decrease from those who raise a concern twice to those who raise a concern three or four times, the whistleblower may continue on their journey and raise a concern in one of the ways we have advised. It is unusual that they will call us back to let us know what they decided to do or how the matter may have been resolved.

## How we understand these findings:

Whistleblowers' motivation decreases each time they are faced with raising a concern. This is most obvious in the disparity between those who raise a concern twice and those who raise a concern three times. This shows that employers usually have up to two opportunities to listen to individuals.

This drop in motivation could be explained by a number of factors, e.g. they may have suffered some form of reprisal, fear losing their job, or have lost faith that anything will be done. Additionally individuals usually want to raise a matter locally, where they know the managers that they are contacting. Once these first two options have been exhausted, going elsewhere may feel alien or challenging. If employers do not have clear, well promoted policies it is unlikely an individual will know where to go after they have raised a matter locally and it has not been resolved.

## b. Where do they go?

When developing the codebook for this research it was clear that whistleblowers can raise a concern either within the organisation (internal), outside of the organisation (external) or where relevant, with their trade union. We then looked at how this changed depending on how many times the whistleblower tries to raise a concern.

We coded the recipients as follows:

- Internal - wrongdoer, line manager, higher manager, grievance, specialist route
- External - regulator, independent bodies
- Union - union representative

To avoid ambiguity, the following categories cover:

- Grievance – where the individual raises a concern usually with personal issues, via the formal grievance procedure
- Specialist – audit, compliance, through a whistleblowing hotline, professional body (advisory)
- Independent bodies – police, MP, NGO, media

There is also an 'other' category which covers situations where the whistleblower raises a concern to someone who falls outside of the above categories, to customers or funders for example. It also covers the situation where they have spoken to a colleague about their concern (not typically raising a concern) but have been found out and suffered repercussions. The numbers below do not include the counts for 'other'.

Table 2.2 Internal and external whistleblowing

	Internal	External	Union
Attempt1 (N=849)	777 (91%)	57 (7%)	15 (2%)
Attempt2 (N=477)	350 (73%)	108 (23%)	19 (4%)
Attempt3 (N=140)	84 (60%)	50 (36%)	6 (4%)
Attempt4 (N=21)	10 (47.6%)	10 (47.6%)	1 (4.8%)



Fig 2.1 Internal and external whistleblowing

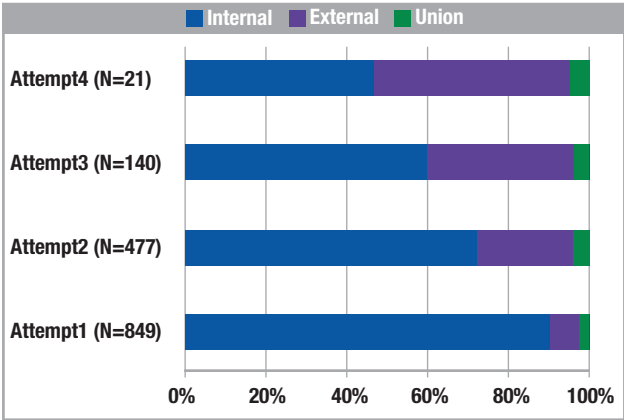


Table 2.3 Recipients per attempt

	Attempt1 (N=868)	Attempt2 (N=483)	Attempt3 (N=141)	Attempt4 (N=22)
Wrongdoer	61 (7%)	7 (1.5%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
Line manager	447 (52%)	68 (14%)	5 (3%)	0 (0%)
Higher manager	195 (22%)	159 (33%)	22 (16%)	2 (9%)
Union rep	15 (2%)	19 (4%)	6 (4%)	1 (5%)
Specialist	37 (4%)	48 (10%)	20 (14%)	2 (9%)
Regulator	31 (4%)	54 (11%)	29 (21%)	4 (18%)
Independent bodies	22 (2.5%)	52 (11%)	19 (14%)	4 (18%)
Grievance	37 (4%)	68 (14%)	36 (25%)	6 (27%)
Media	4 (0.5%)	2 (0.5%)	2 (1%)	2 (9%)
Unknown	19 (2%)	6 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (5%)

This means that in total, within our sample of 1,000 cases, a concern was raised 1,514 times, 82% of which was internal, 15% external, and 3% to a union.

- The majority of whistleblowers tend to raise their concern internally on at least three occasions.
- On the third attempt 60% of whistleblowers continue to raise a concern internally.
- The number of those making external disclosures increases as the journey continues. It does not, however, surpass the amount of those willing to make internal disclosures and there are still equal numbers of those making internal and external disclosures at the fourth attempt (47.6% for both) though this is based on the 22 cases where individuals raised a matter a fourth time.
- By the third and fourth attempt whistleblowers are most likely to pursue the matter via a grievance.

A grievance procedure places the onus on an individual to prove their complaint. A whistleblower is a witness, passing on information to those with a responsibility to address the problem. As such the grievance vehicle is unsuited to a whistleblowing concern as a witness should not have to prove their concern.

We checked whether the preferred recipient differed depending on which industry the whistleblower worked in. We did not find any strong departures from the overall pattern.

FEAR OF REPRISAL, INERTIA ON MANAGEMENT'S PART OR LACK OF FEEDBACK MAY LEAD AN EMPLOYEE TO BLOW THE WHISTLE EXTERNALLY.

How we understand these findings:

Employees are willing to give their employers a number of opportunities to look at the concern before they make an external disclosure. If a concern is ignored or not addressed at an earlier stage only the more tenacious individuals will pursue this, carrying a risk for organisations if they fail to address the concern quickly. To mitigate the risk of missing an important warning, organisations need to ensure strong lines of communication and good training in line and middle management. This indicates a need for an integrated compliance culture throughout an organisation.

The use of grievance procedures will drive a whistleblowing concern into a formalised process and is likely to indicate an escalating workplace dispute. The grievance procedure may be used for a number of reasons, e.g. failure to investigate, a poor investigation, or because the whistleblower is experiencing victimisation. The grievance process is only suitable for the latter, where a whistleblower is seeking redress for poor treatment. As such the onus is on employers to ensure staff know the difference between grievances and whistleblowing, that whistleblowers are listened to at an early stage, protected from victimisation, and to ensure that all staff know that they can raise a concern, before the matter becomes a more complex workplace dispute.

Fear of reprisal or inertia on management's part or lack of feedback may lead an employee to blow the whistle externally. However, overall these statistics show that there is a reluctance to raise the concern externally. On the advice line whistleblowers often fear losing their job if they raise a concern externally. It is particularly challenging for those who are working with patients, vulnerable adults or children, as they may fear passing on confidential information in breach of their professional duties.

C. Whistleblower's position

This section was divided into the following categories:

- Unskilled (e.g. carers, support workers, bartenders)
- Administrative/clerical positions (e.g. office administrators, secretaries, advisers)
- Skilled (e.g. brokers, chefs, engineers)
- Professionals (e.g. nurses, doctors, teachers, accountants)
- Management (e.g. line managers, general managers)
- Executive (e.g. board members, chair persons)
- Unknown (e.g. scientist, researcher, specialists)

Table 2.4 Whistleblower's position

Unskilled	128 (13%)
Skilled	272 (27%)
Administrative	80 (8%)
Professional	261 (26%)
Managerial	150 (15%)
Executive	24 (2%)
Unknown	85 (9%)

Our sample ranges from unskilled and skilled workers, followed by administrative/clerical positions, professionals, managers and executives at the top of the organisational structure.

Similar numbers of unskilled workers (13%) and managers (15%) blow the whistle. This suggests that whistleblowers can come from all career paths, from the bottom of an organisation to the top. From this we can see that typically our callers are skilled workers (27%) and professionals (26%).

As 53% of our calls come from skilled workers and professionals, it seems as though a worker's level of expertise affects their propensity to seek advice or access our support. This could be due to a variety of factors, for example, their education, knowledge of whistleblowing, the sector in which they work, professional ethics, guidance from professional bodies or professional duties.

d. Does the position of the whistleblower make a difference?

Our findings suggest it does. People in different positions within an organisation tend to use different routes to try to raise their concern.

Fig 2.2 Wrongdoer as preferred recipient per whistleblower's position (in %)

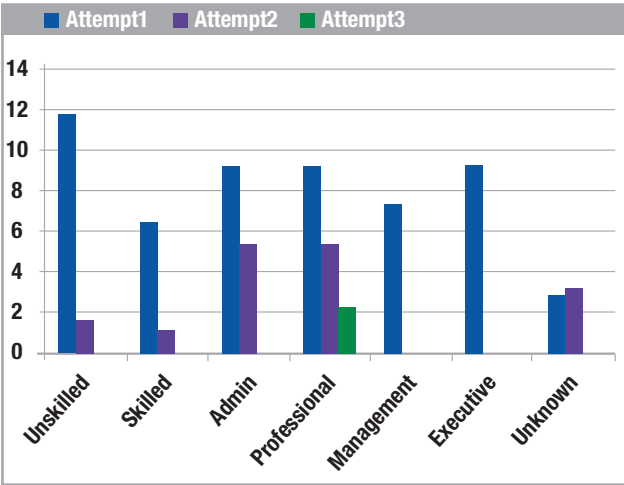


Fig 2.3 Line manager as preferred recipient per whistleblower's position (in %)

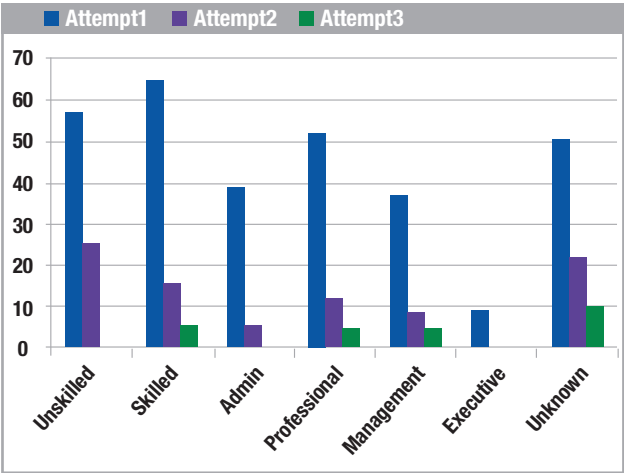
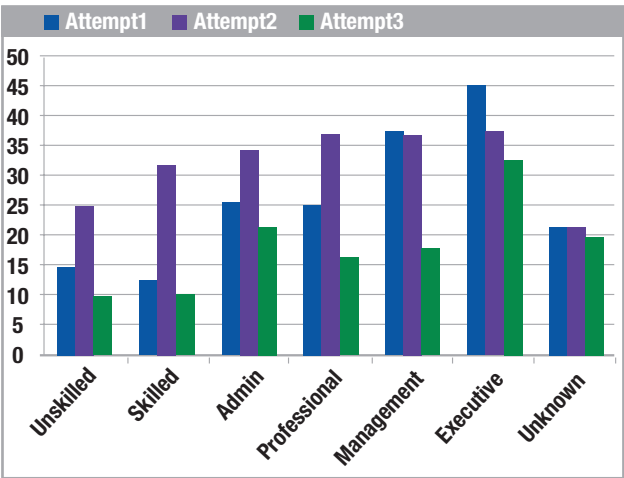
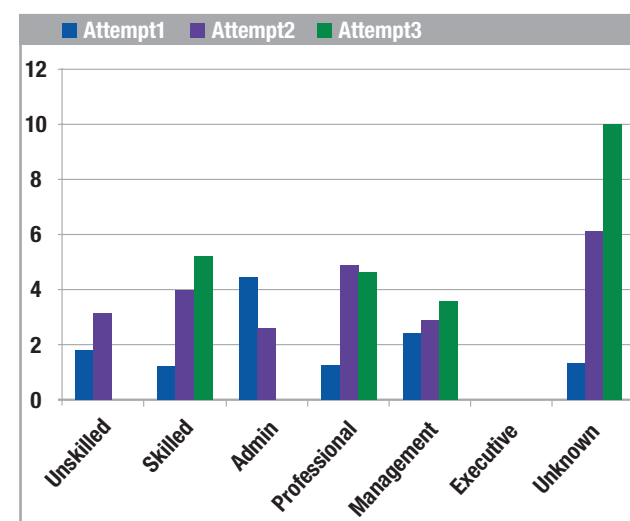


Fig 2.4 Higher management as preferred recipient per whistleblower's position (in %)

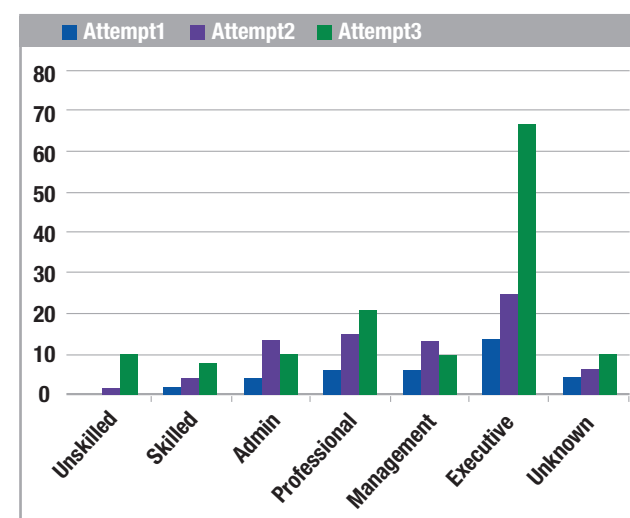




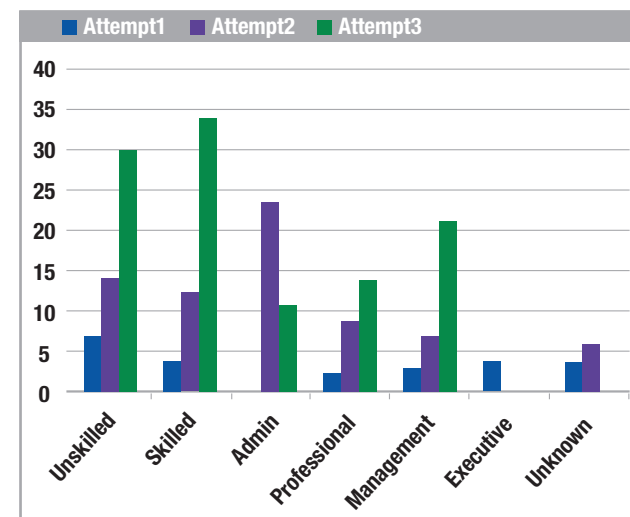
**Fig 2.5** Union as preferred recipient per whistleblower's position (in %)



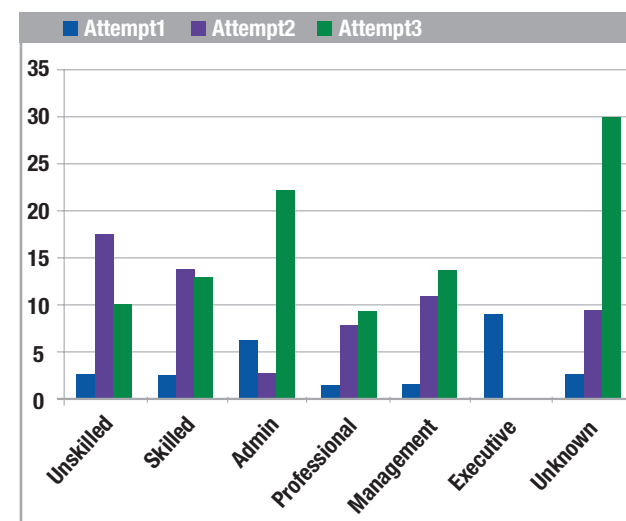
**Fig 2.6** Specialist channel as preferred recipient per whistleblower's position (in %)



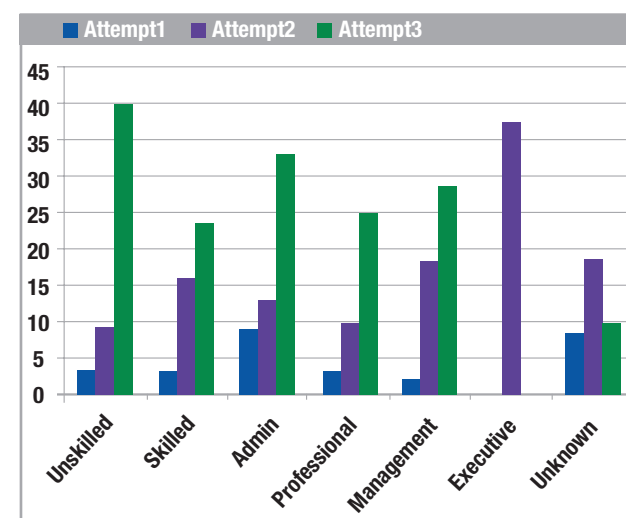
**Fig 2.7** Regulator as preferred recipient per whistleblower's position (in %)



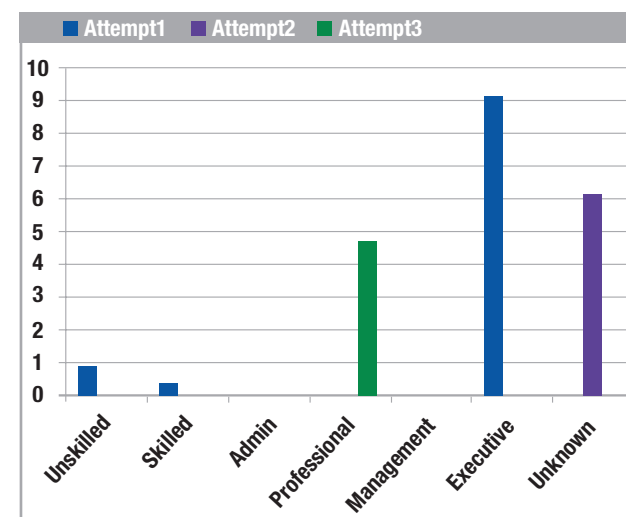
**Fig 2.8** Independent body as preferred recipient per whistleblower's position (in %)



**Fig 2.9** Grievance procedure as preferred recipient per whistleblower's position (in %)



**Fig 2.10** Media as preferred recipient per whistleblower's position (in %)



## Unskilled and skilled workers

Our findings show that this group of workers is less likely to approach higher management, which is in direct contrast with those in more senior positions. Unskilled and skilled workers are more likely to approach the wrongdoer and are more likely to make a disclosure to independent bodies as a second step than other workers. Specialist channels are generally not on the radar of blue collar workers and it seems as though this key group of workers do not explore internal options aside from their line manager. As a third step they approach the regulator or raise a grievance.

This shows the importance of line management in understanding whistleblowing and escalating concerns. Readily available whistleblowing policies will also help this group to raise a concern responsibly.

## Administrative workers

In the first instance, those in administrative positions are more likely than others to raise their concern through a grievance, with higher management or with a union rep

than other workers and were less likely to approach their line manager. As their journey proceeds, they are slightly more likely than others to raise a concern with a regulator, or through a specialist channel. At later stages, they are more likely than others to explore external options.

This group of workers is more aware of their options, in terms of specialist channels and regulators, but did not necessarily make the right choice when raising a concern. As we will see in part 3d, raising a concern through a grievance almost always results in a negative outcome.

## Professionals, management and executives

Those in more senior positions are more likely to raise a concern through a specialist channel at any step (professionals, managers, and especially executives). Managers and executives are more likely to raise their concern initially to higher management (e.g. board) and raise a grievance thereafter.

This group is less likely to raise a concern with a regulator but more likely to go to the media at an early stage.

# 3. RESPONDING TO WHISTLEBLOWERS

## a. What was the response from management?

We noted that there are a number of common responses from management that whistleblowers may experience. These were categorised as follows:

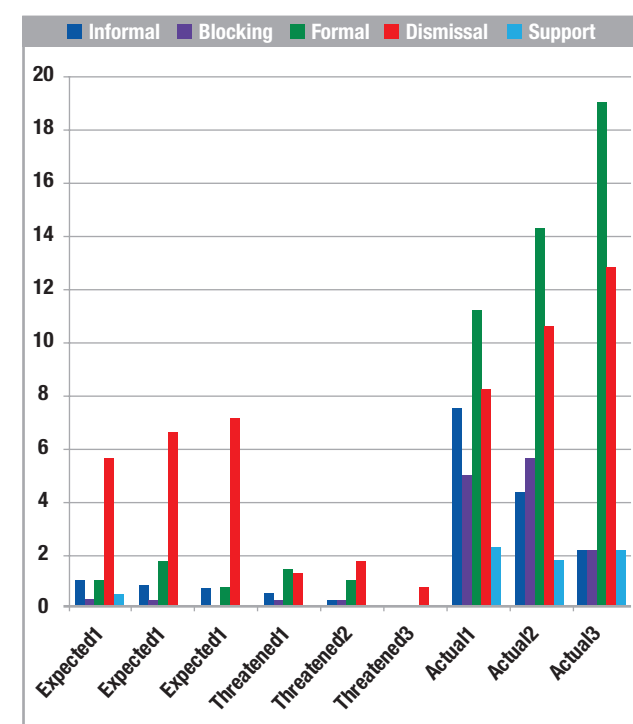
- Informal: closer monitoring, ostracised, verbal harassment.
- Blocking resources: blocking access to emails, information, training, hours.
- Formal: relocation, demotion, job reassigned, suspended, disciplined.
- Dismissal.
- Support: taking the issue seriously is also categorised as support. If an individual feels supported by their employer it is less likely that they will be seeking our advice and support.

We noted also that while these may be the common responses they are not always acted upon. We coded

whether these responses were expected or feared, threatened or had actually happened.

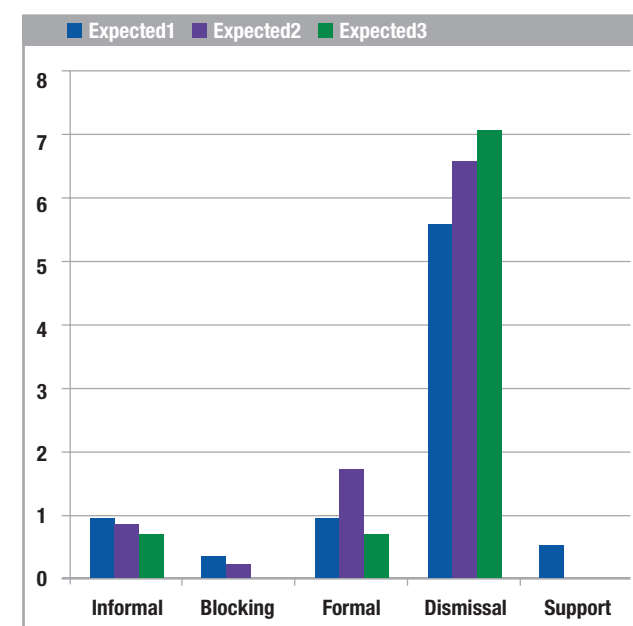
- 60% of those who called our advice line did not report a response from management (either positive or negative)
- The remaining 40% (399 people) of our sample mentioned responses from management after raising a concern.
- Of these:
  - 74 (19%) feared or expected a response;
  - 29 (7%) had been threatened by management; and
  - 296 (74%) had actually experienced a response from management.
- Taking each response separately, we looked at when they occur in the whistleblower's journey (omitting attempt four as the number of cases was too low) and whether they are feared, threatened or actually take place.

**Fig 3.1** Overall expected, threatened, and actual responses from management at first three attempts (in %)

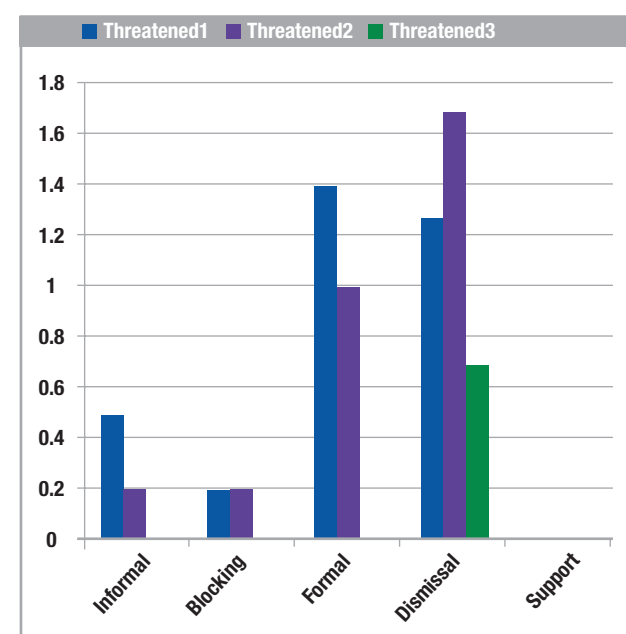


(based on those who raised Attempt1 N=868, Attempt2 N=486, Attempt3 N=141)

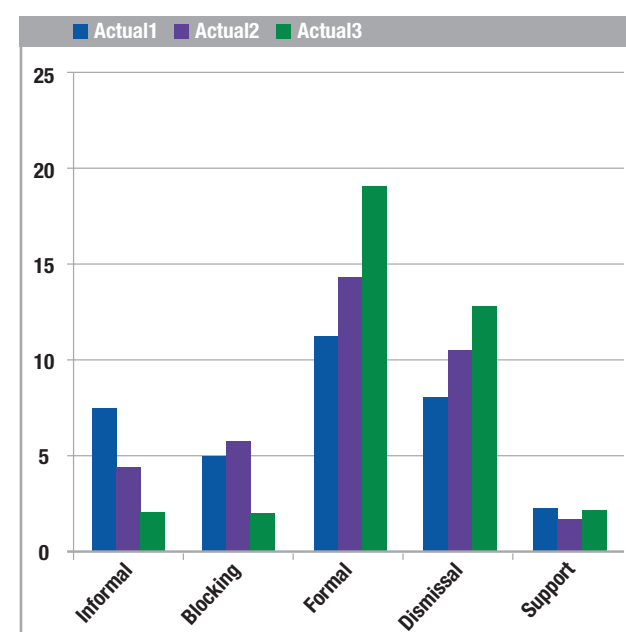
**Fig 3.2** Expected responses from management (% from all who raised)



**Fig 3.3** Threatened responses from management (% from all who raised)



**Fig 3.4** Actual responses from management (% from all who raised)



Where reprisal is mentioned, most whistleblowers contact PCaW when they have actually experienced reprisal from management rather than when they fear reprisal or have been threatened with reprisal.

Where there is a response from management, formal reprisal is the most common. This includes disciplinary action, suspension, written warnings.

The fear of dismissal increases as the whistleblower continues to raise the concern, as does the actual chance of dismissal. However the fear of dismissal greatly outweighs the number of times an individual is actually dismissed.

## How we understand these findings:

Most individuals will not receive a response from management at all, either positive or negative. While this counteracts a common view that whistleblowers are usually victimised or dismissed, it also indicates a lack of feedback, communication or support. Coupled with the results below (5.7) the result of this will be that many individuals will not see the value of raising a concern as nothing will be done.

As fear or threat of dismissal surpasses the actual response this may indicate a cultural barrier to raising a concern. Common perceptions that this is the inevitable outcome heighten fear within the workplace and may lead to a culture of silence or only a single individual being prepared to speak up. The lower than anticipated rate of dismissal could also be due to the employer's fear of litigation under PIDA if they dismiss an individual. However much needs to be done by employers to counteract this fear if staff are to feel safe speaking up. Additionally this highlights the need for robust protection for employees pre-dismissal as formal reprisals are the most likely response from management.

Blocking resources is a form of workplace bullying perpetrated by management and tends to occur later down the line. Bullying, subjective in nature, can be invisible to others and is difficult to prove. This seems to be a comparatively common way of pushing whistleblowers out of an organisation next to the more direct action of dismissal.

## b. Does the response from management differ according to industry?

- Those in financial services are more frequently dismissed on the first attempt to raise a concern than any other sector but much less likely on second attempt.
- In health dismissal is the most likely management response at first attempt but much less likely than other sectors to occur when a concern is raised a second time.
- In all other sectors the likelihood of dismissal increases when a concern is raised a second time, though most sharply in education.
- In local government it is more likely an individual will receive support or formal reprisal.

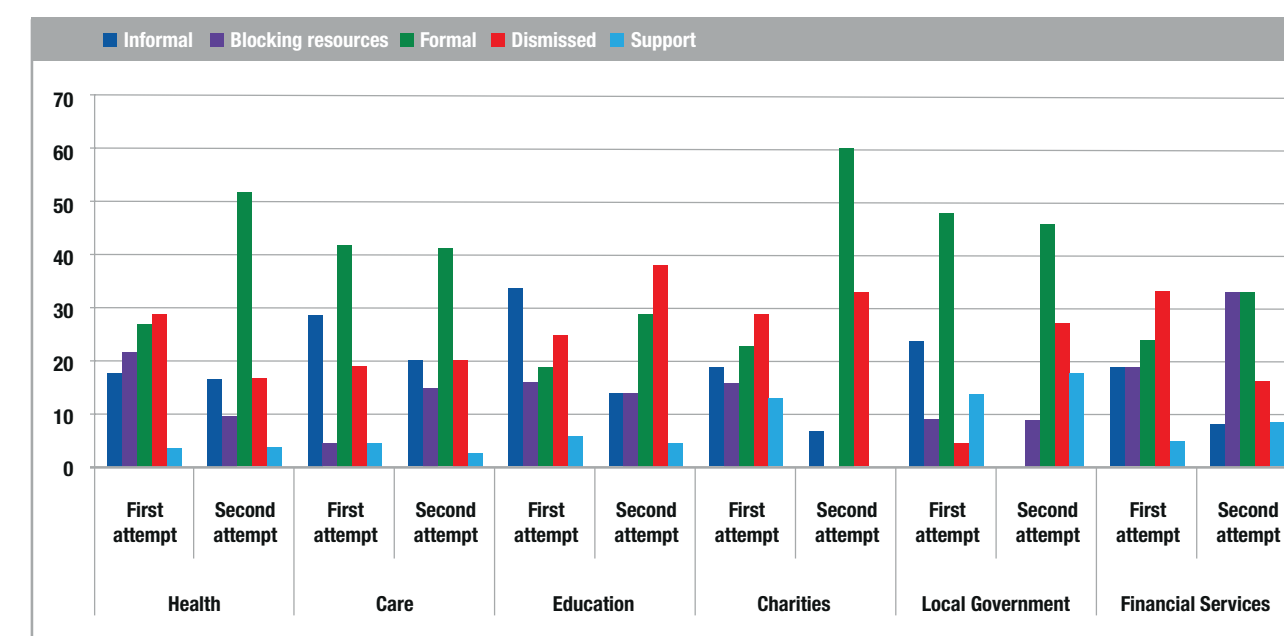
## How we understand these findings:

The variation per industry may be due to the types of concern that are raised, the impact of escalating and the quality of systems in place. Without more information on the above no further conclusions can be drawn.

## c. Does the response from management differ according to type of wrongdoing?

Our findings suggest it does. The top five types of wrongdoing were ethical issues, financial wrongdoing, patient safety, worker safety, and abuse in care.

**Fig 3.5** Response from management according to industry (in %)



NB the above is based on small data sets. Data sets were too small to code a third attempt.

THOSE WHO RAISED A WORK SAFETY CONCERN WERE MORE LIKELY TO BE DISMISSED AT FIRST AND SECOND ATTEMPT THAN THOSE WHO RAISED OTHER TYPES OF CONCERN.

Fig 3.6 Responses from management at two attempts for patient safety concern (in %)

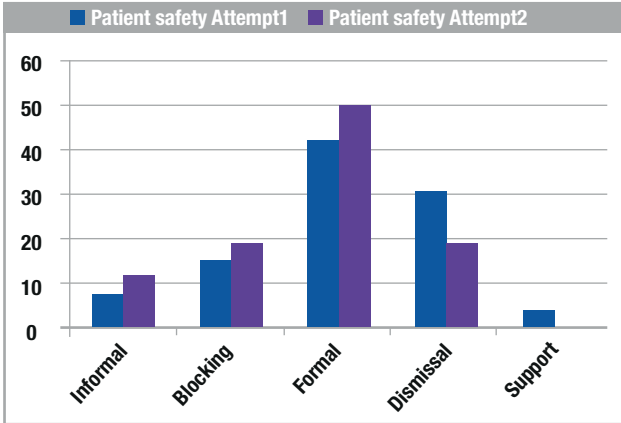


Fig 3.7 Response from management at two attempts for financial wrongdoing concern (in %)

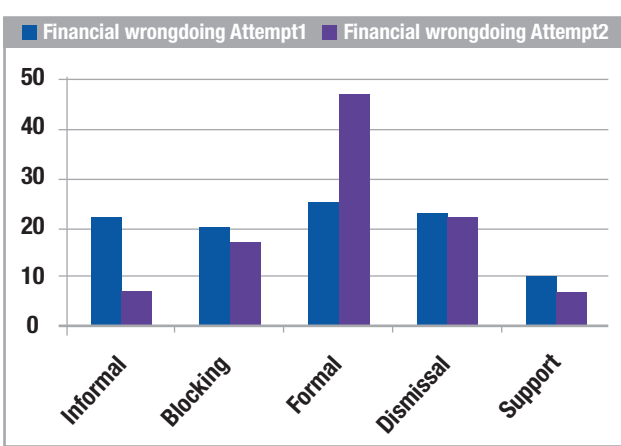


Fig 3.8 Response from management at two attempts for work safety concern (in %)

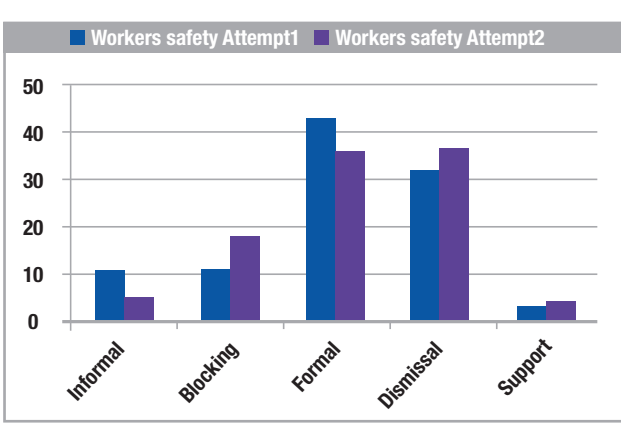


Fig 3.9 Response from management at two attempts for abuse in care concern (in %)

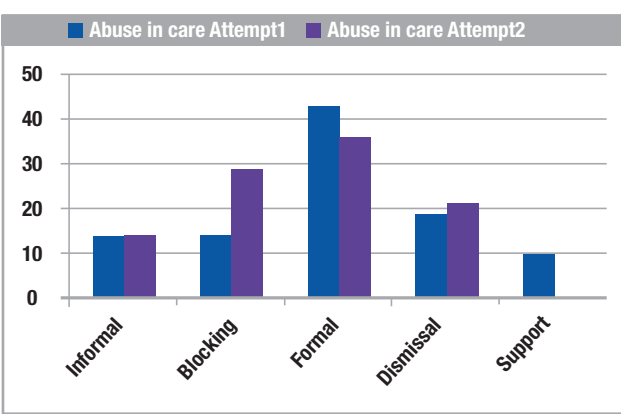
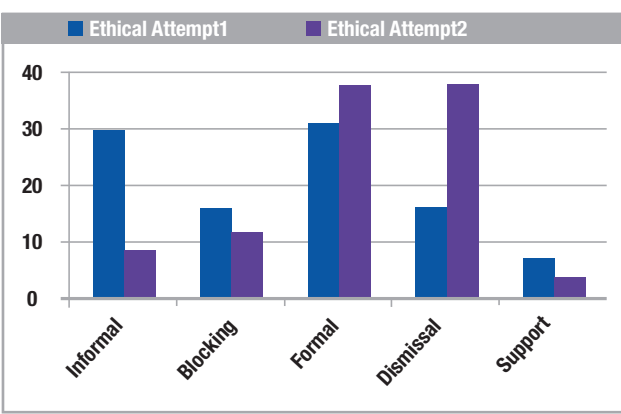


Fig 3.10 Response from management at two attempts for ethical concern (in %)



How we understand these findings:

Patient safety

Whistleblowers who raise a patient safety concern were more likely to suffer formal reprisal throughout the journey and less likely to encounter informal reprisal than those raising other types of wrongdoing. Also, those who were dismissed for raising a patient safety concern, tended to be dismissed at their first attempt to raise the concern.

Abuse in care

Those who raise a concern about abuse in care were comparatively more likely to see their resources blocked or suffer formal reprisal along the journey. However, these whistleblowers were less likely to be dismissed.

Work safety

Those who raised a work safety concern were more likely to be dismissed at first and second attempt than those who raised other types of concern. Formal reprisal was also experienced more at first attempt, while informal reprisal or blocked resources were experienced less.

Financial malpractice

Those who raised a concern about financial malpractice were more likely to have their resources blocked at the first instance with formal reprisal following later on. Notably, they experienced less informal reprisal and were less likely to be dismissed the longer the journey went on.

Ethical

Those who raised an ethical concern were initially met with more informal reprisal compared to other types of concern. However, those who continued to raise the concern were more likely to be dismissed. This may be due to the fact that such a concern will fall outside the categories of wrongdoing covered by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

In summary, with concerns such as abuse in care and financial malpractice, areas which have both received significant media attention, management tend to block resources or resort to formal reprisal and are less likely to dismiss whistleblowers. Where the concern is deemed more ambiguous or subjective (such as varying ethical codes) dismissal is more likely.

d. Does the response from management differ depending on who the concern was raised with?

Table 3.1 Responses from management per recipient at first attempt (in %)

Recipient (N=297)	Informal 64 (22%)	Blocking 44 (15%)	Formal 97 (33%)	Dismissed 71 (24%)	Support 20 (7%)
% in table to be compared with % at top of columns					
Wrongdoer	50%	0%	33%	11%	6%
Line manager	18%	18%	29%	24%	11%
Higher manager	21%	13%	30%	32%	4%
Specialist	50%	33%	17%	0%	0%
Regulator	43%	57%	0%	0%	0%
Independent body	14%	0%	57%	29%	0%
Grievance	21%	29%	50%	0%	0%
Union rep	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Unknown	0%	10%	50%	40%	0%

Table 3.2 Responses from management per recipient at second attempt (in %)

Recipient (N=176)	Informal 21 (12%)	Blocking 27 (15%)	Formal 69 (39%)	Dismissed 51 (29%)	Support 8 (5%)
% in table to be compared with % at top of columns					
Wrongdoer	50%	0%	0%	50%	0%
Line manager	22%	19%	25%	28%	6%
Higher manager	6%	21%	42%	25%	6%
Specialist	25%	19%	31%	19%	6%
Regulator	15%	15%	54%	16%	0%
Independent body	9%	5%	48%	33%	5%
Grievance	0%	5%	40%	55%	0%
Union rep	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Unknown	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%

Table 3.3 Responses from management per recipient at third attempt (in %)

Recipient (N=54)	Informal 3 (6%)	Blocking 3 (6%)	Formal 27 (50%)	Dismissed 18 (32%)	Support 3 (6%)
% in table to be compared with % at top of columns					
Wrongdoer	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Line manager	0%	25%	50%	25%	0%
Higher manager	0%	0%	36%	43%	21%
Specialist	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%
Regulator	0%	0%	75%	25%	0%
Independent body	25%	12%	38%	25%	0%
Grievance	9%	9%	55%	27%	0%
Union rep	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Unknown	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

- Of all recipients, raising the concern with the wrongdoer is more likely to result in informal reprisal. The likelihood of dismissal increased significantly from first attempt (11%) to second attempt (50%).
- Of all recipients, raising the concern with a specialist channel was more likely to result in informal reprisal and blocking resources, but led less to formal reprisal and dismissal.



- Raising a concern with a regulator at the first attempt was more likely to result in informal reprisal and blocking resources, but less likely to result in formal reprisal and dismissal. If the concern was raised with a regulator further on however, this tended to result in formal reprisal whilst the likelihood of dismissal remained lower than with other recipients.
- Of all recipients, raising a concern through a grievance led to blocking resources and formal reprisal at the first attempt, and to dismissal at the second attempt.
- Support was most likely to come from the line manager at the start, and later on from higher management. Raising the concern with the line manager at the second attempt tended to lead to informal reprisal but less to formal reprisal than with other recipients. This is in contrast with raising the concern with higher management, which tended to result in the whistleblower being dismissed at the first attempt and in blocking resources or formal reprisal at the second attempt.

How we understand these findings:

It seems as though a whistleblower is most likely to receive support if they raise a concern initially with line management and then escalate their concern to higher management. It is worth re-iterating at this point that in only 40% of cases did whistleblowers mention a response from management, suggesting that in 60% of cases management’s response is not of significance to the whistleblower when they contact us for advice.

Raising a concern with the wrongdoer is most likely to result in informal reprisal for the whistleblower. The response probably mirrors the informal way in which the concern was raised. The higher likelihood of dismissal at the second attempt could be because the wrongdoer is the manager or owner of the organisation.

Raising a concern with specialist routes and regulators early on seems less likely to result in formal reprisal and dismissal. This shows that with internal or regulatory oversight, managerial behaviour may be moderated. This does not mean that the whistleblower’s position at work is any easier, as they are more likely to be subjected to informal reprisal or see their resources blocked. This more formal approach to whistleblowing produces a clearer paper trail and the response of management could be linked with fear of litigation.

Raising a concern with a regulator at a later stage however, is more likely to lead to formal reprisal short of dismissal. This shows that the more attempts to raise a concern the more at risk the position of the whistleblower becomes.

This could be linked with the whistleblower’s inability to raise a concern anonymously or confidentially with the regulator at this stage if they have already raised a concern internally, or perhaps the employer feels undermined by the whistleblower or fears a cover-up may be exposed.

Raising a concern as a grievance has poor consequences for the whistleblower as there is a higher chance of formal reprisal and dismissal. Mixing personal grievances with whistleblowing detracts from the concern itself. It may imply that there are other issues in question which contribute to the increased chance of serious negative reprisal. This is in part due to the fact that the grievance process is usually invoked at a later stage when an individual has felt ignored or victimised, due to breakdown in relationships or using the wrong means to raise a concern. It may also relate to the impact of using this formal process in a whistleblowing context.

This indicates a need for more public education on this issue and for unions to emphasise that a grievance is not the best means to raise a concern as it places an individual in the position of having to prove their case rather than relay the information as a witness. For employers, to avoid the use of grievances where the individual is using the process to complain about how they have been treated as a whistleblower, more will need to be done to ensure that whistleblowers are properly supported and protected from victimisation.

e. Does the whistleblower’s position make a difference in how management responds?

Our findings suggest it does. For whistleblowers who have experienced reprisal, the patterns differ depending on their position as the journey unfolds.

Table 3.4 Managerial responses per whistleblower’s position, at first attempt (N=297)

WB power	Informal	Blocking	Formal	Dismissal	Support
	65 (22%)	44 (15%)	97 (33%)	71 (24%)	20 (7%)
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns				
Unskilled	24%	4%	56%	12%	4%
Skilled	25%	14%	28%	26%	7%
Admin	21%	16%	42%	16%	5%
Professionals	21%	21%	27%	25%	6%
Managers	21%	13%	32%	30%	4%
Executives	0%	14%	14%	29%	43%

Table 3.5 Managerial responses per whistleblower’s position, at second attempt (N=176)

WB power	Informal	Blocking	Formal	Dismissal	Support
	21 (12%)	27 (15%)	69 (39%)	51 (29%)	8 (5%)
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns				
Unskilled	26%	7%	41%	26%	0%
Skilled	4%	20%	43%	27%	6%
Admin	25%	13%	37%	25%	0%
Professionals	10%	13%	42%	29%	6%
Managers	8%	21%	30%	33%	8%
Executives	20%	20%	20%	40%	0%

Table 3.6 Managerial responses per whistleblower’s position, at third attempt (N=54)

WB power	Informal	Blocking	Formal	Dismissal	Support
	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	27 (50%)	18 (33%)	3 (6%)
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns				
Unskilled	0%	0%	40%	60%	0%
Skilled	7%	7%	50%	22%	14%
Admin	20%	0%	20%	60%	0%
Professionals	7%	0%	64%	22%	7%
Managers	0%	20%	50%	30%	0%
Executives	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Executives and managers

From looking at the first two times the whistleblower tries to raise a concern, we found that the more senior the whistleblower, the more likely they are to be dismissed. In analysing the first two attempts to raise a concern (as the third attempt had low numbers) a whistleblower higher up in the organisational hierarchy is more likely than others to be dismissed when first raising a concern. If they are not immediately dismissed in the first instance, they are more likely than others to experience harassment or blocked resources. This pattern is consistent in the second attempt.

Professionals

Conversely, professionals are more likely to have their resources blocked on their first attempt to raise a concern.

Unskilled, skilled and administrative

Unskilled and, skilled and administrative staff usually experience formal reprisal at an early stage.

IN ORGANISATIONS WHERE WHISTLEBLOWERS ENCOUNTER REPRISAL, WHISTLEBLOWERS WHO ARE LOWER IN THE HIERARCHY TEND TO BE TOLERATED LONGER, WHILE WHISTLEBLOWERS WITH A HIGHER POSITION TEND TO BE DISMISSED MUCH EARLIER.

How we understand these findings:

In organisations where whistleblowers encounter reprisal, whistleblowers who are lower in the hierarchy tend to be tolerated longer, while whistleblowers with a higher position tend to be dismissed much earlier. This may be because they are deemed more of a threat due to an expectation that they will do more to expose the wrongdoing.

f. What was the response from co-workers?

We distinguished the following common responses from colleagues:

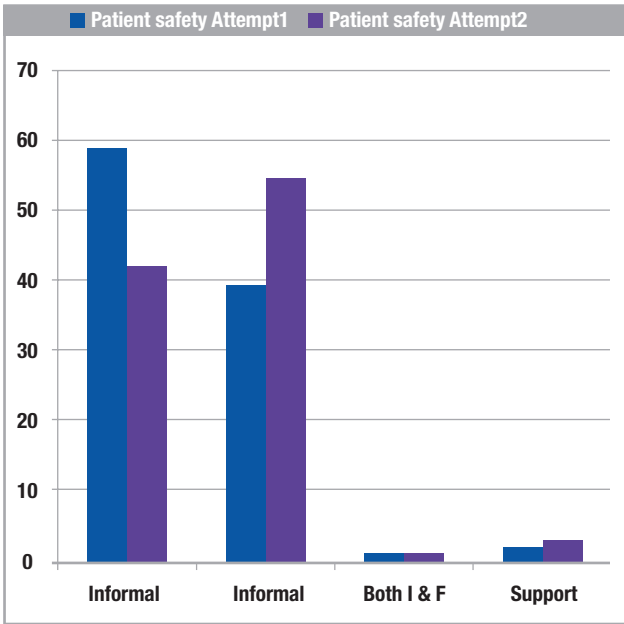
- Informal - where the whistleblower is bullied, harassed or ostracised.
- Formal - where the whistleblower has a formal accusation or a grievance entered against them.
- Support - where the whistleblower experiences support from colleagues on a wider basis than raising the concern with others.

As with the responses from management, we coded whether the response was expected, feared, threatened or whether the response has actually happened. Responses were noted each time the whistleblower raised a concern.

- 20% (200) of our sample mentioned specific responses from colleagues. We assume that the remaining 80% received no subjectively significant response from colleagues.
- Of these 200:
  - 9% expected a response in the first instance, 14% in the second instance;
  - 2% received a threat in the first instance, 2% in the second instance; and
  - 89% received an actual response in the first instance, 84% in the second instance.

Actual reprisals are probably a driving factor for whistleblowers to seek advice from PCaW.

**Fig 3.11** Overall actual responses from co-workers (% of N1=178, N2=81)



THE WHISTLEBLOWER IS LIKELY TO SUFFER FORMAL REPRISAL WHERE THE WRONGDOER IS A CO-WORKER AND THEY ARE AWARE OF THE IDENTITY OF WHISTLEBLOWER. THIS COULD BE A GRIEVANCE FOR BULLYING OR HARASSMENT OR A COUNTER ALLEGATION OF SOME DESCRIPTION.

**Table 3.7** Responses from co-workers per recipient at first attempt (in %)

Recipient (N=178)	Informal 104 (58%)	Formal 69 (39%)	Both informal & formal (I&F) 1 (1%)	Support 4 (2%)
% in table to be compared with % at top of columns				
Wrongdoer	63%	31%	0%	6%
Line manager	65%	35%	0%	0%
Higher manager	48%	46%	2%	4%
Specialist	100%	0%	0%	0%
Regulator	0%	100%	0%	0%
Independent body	0%	100%	0%	0%
Grievance	75%	25%	0%	0%
Union rep	50%	50%	0%	0%
Unknown	0%	0%	0%	100%

**Table 3.8** Responses from co-workers per recipient at second attempt (in %)

Recipient (N=81)	Informal 34 (42%)	Formal 44 (54%)	Both informal & formal (I&F) 1 (1%)	Support 2 (3%)
% in table to be compared with % at top of columns				
Wrongdoer	0%	100%	0%	0%
Line manager	41%	53%	0%	6%
Higher manager	50%	47%	3%	0%
Specialist	63%	37%	0%	0%
Regulator	25%	50%	0%	25%
Independent body	44%	56%	0%	0%
Grievance	0%	100%	0%	0%
Union rep	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unknown	0%	100%	0%	0%

How we understand these findings:

If there are reprisals from co-workers, these are most likely to be informal reprisals (58% across recipients) and they are most likely to happen when raising a concern with the line manager (65%) or specialist channels (100%). Formal reprisal by co-workers seem most likely when a concern is raised with higher management (46%). There was also some support from co-workers (2%) when raising a concern with higher management.

As the whistleblowing path continues, formal reprisal from co-workers become more likely (at second step 54% compared to 42% informal), and is most likely to come from co-workers when raising a concern with an independent body (56%), through a grievance (100%), or to line management (53%).

The more often an individual raises a concern the more likely they are to suffer formal reprisal from co-workers.

The whistleblower is likely to suffer formal reprisal where the wrongdoer is a co-worker and they are aware of the identity of the whistleblower. This could be a grievance for bullying or harassment or a counter allegation of some description.

g. What is the importance of organisational culture?

The culture of the organisation is coded according to the individual's perception and is drawn from the narrative of the case. We coded how systemic the wrongdoing is by looking at whether the wrongdoer is: a corrupt individual; a corrupt group; or a corrupt organisation. A whistleblower may expressly state or implicitly indicate

the culture of the organisation. This was coded by looking at who perpetrated the wrongdoing and how the concern was received, e.g. where responses from management were indicative of complicity or cover up.

We had information on this variable for 979 of the cases in our sample.

- 33% indicated they had concern about wrongdoing in their organisation where a corrupt individual was involved;
- 25% indicated a corrupt group within the organisation was involved; and
- 42% indicated they perceived the whole organisation as corrupt.

Our findings also suggest that organisational culture goes together with different patterns of how management responds to people raising a concern. Figure 3.11 shows responses from management regardless of organisational culture. Figures 3.12 to 3.14 show responses by management per organisational culture (N1=291, N2=169, N3=51).

**Table 3.9** Response from management per organisational culture at first attempt (N=291)

Org Culture	Informal 63 (22%)	Blocking 44 (15%)	Formal 94 (32%)	Dismissed 70 (24%)	Support 20 (7%)
% in table to be compared with % at top of columns					
Corrupt individual	30%	12%	27%	22%	9%
Corrupt group	24%	20%	35%	12%	9%
Corrupt organisation	16%	14%	34%	32%	4%

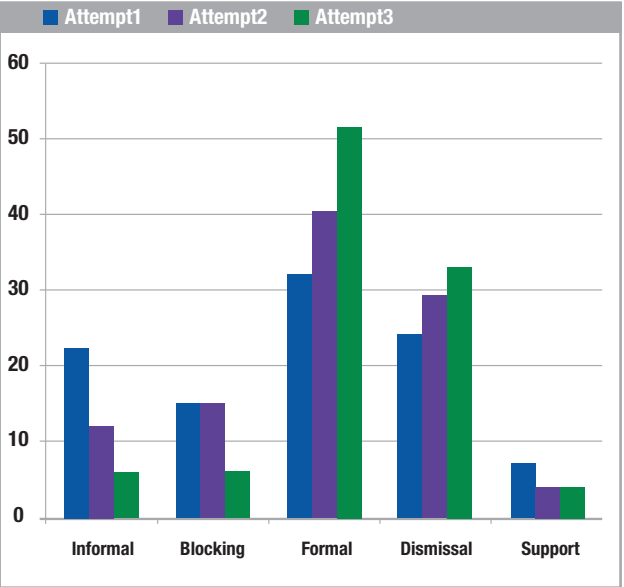
**Table 3.10** Response from management per organisational culture at second attempt (N=169)

Org Culture	Informal 20 (12%)	Blocking 26 (15%)	Formal 68 (40%)	Dismissed 49 (29%)	Support 6 (4%)
% in table to be compared with % at top of columns					
Corrupt individual	9%	9%	42%	36%	4%
Corrupt group	15%	12%	52%	15%	6%
Corrupt organisation	11%	22%	31%	35%	1%

**Table 3.11** Response from management per organisational culture at third attempt (N=51)

Org Culture	Informal 3 (6%)	Blocking 3 (6%)	Formal 26 (51%)	Dismissed 17 (33%)	Support 2 (4%)
% in table to be compared with % at top of columns					
Corrupt individual	11%	0%	45%	22%	22%
Corrupt group	0%	22%	45%	33%	0%
Corrupt organisation	6%	3%	55%	36%	0%

**Fig 3.12** Responses from management – regardless of organisational culture (in %)



**Fig 3.13** Responses from management where wrongdoing involved a corrupt individual (in %)

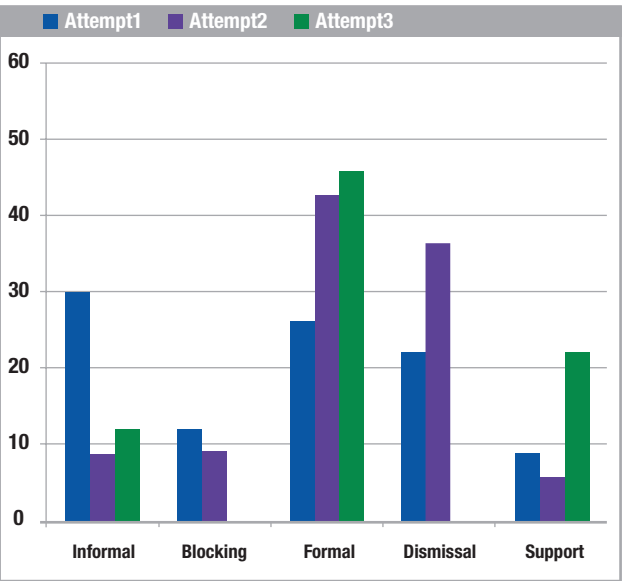
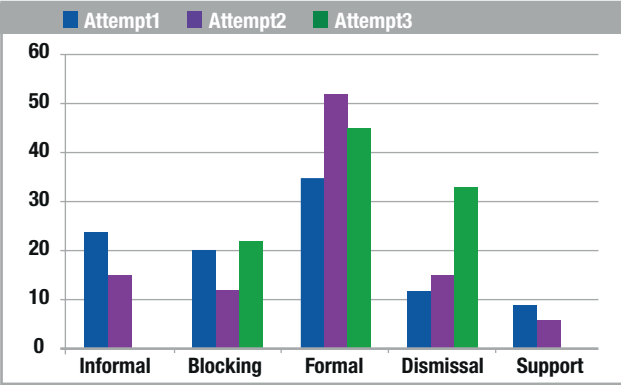


Fig 3.14 Responses from management where wrongdoing involved a corrupt group (in %)



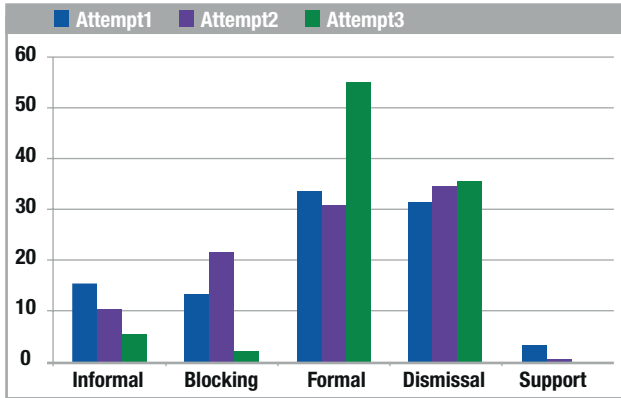
How we understand these findings:

Perhaps obviously, when the wrongdoing is perceived to involve a corrupt organisation, there is less support on any attempt to raise a concern. Initially support is expected more than twice as much when a perceived corrupt group is involved (10%) than when a perceived corrupt individual (3%) or perceived corrupt organisation (4%) is involved. However, support is just as likely to be given when the wrongdoing involves a perceived corrupt individual or group (both 9%), but half as likely when the whole organisation is perceived as corrupt (4%).

An impact can also be seen for reprisal: if a whistleblower perceives the organisation as corrupt they are more likely to be dismissed at any attempt to raise a concern. If the organisations did not dismiss them straight away, they block their resources. When the wrongdoing involves a perceived corrupt group, the whistleblower was more than in other cases, retaliated against first by blocking resources, and later on with informal and formal reprisal. There were fewer dismissals.

Surprisingly there were not fewer dismissals when the wrongdoing involved a perceived corrupt individual. These whistleblowers tended to be either dismissed or met with informal reprisal along their journey.

Fig 3.15 Responses from management where wrongdoing involved a corrupt organisation (in %)



# 4. CALLING PCAW FOR ADVICE

a. When and how many times does the whistleblower call PCaW?

These statistics are made up of two different variables, looking at how many times the whistleblower raises a concern and when they contact PCaW. The first four attempts were coded.

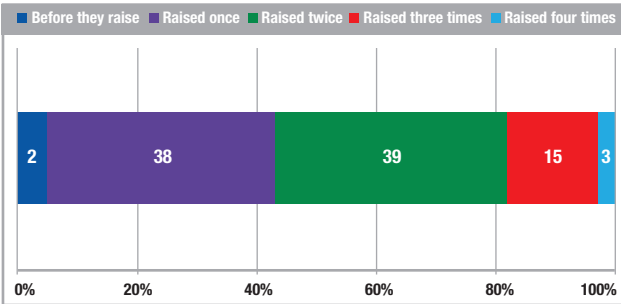
- 5% called before any wrongdoing took place and before they raised a concern. This would be where they anticipated wrongdoing or identified a risk.
- 38% called after raising or intending to raise their concern for a first time.
- 39% after raising or intending to raise their concern a second time.
- 96% called the advice line up to 4 times, with 44% calling twice, and 10% calling three times.

Table 4.1 Time of first call

Before they raise concern	51 (5%)
Raised once	377 (38%)
Raised twice	388 (39%)
Raised three times	149 (15%)
Raised four times	35 (3%)

We had this information for our total sample (N=1,000)

Fig 4.1 Time of first call



Please note that figures differ from table 2.1 as the figures in table 4.1 include additional numbers where the caller expressed an intention to raise a concern, but may not have done so already, when they called.

How we understand these findings:

A small percentage of whistleblowers call us before they have raised a concern when they anticipate wrongdoing or first identify a risk. This could be due to lack of awareness of PCaW or the fact that at first instance many whistleblowers do not identify that they are whistleblowing until they encounter a difficulty. The majority of those who contact PCaW will be calling because something has already gone wrong.

Many whistleblowers had already embarked on a whistleblowing journey before they contacted us or sought other support. 38% of whistleblowers called us after they had raised a concern once and 39% called us after they had raised concern twice. This shows a persistence to see the concern addressed before seeking support. More needs to be done to raise awareness of what might constitute whistleblowing in the workplace and the advice and support that we offer as an organisation so that employees contact us at an early stage for advice.

b. Length of service

We coded the length of time the whistleblower had been working at the organisation when they contacted PCaW.

Table 4.2 Length of time the whistleblower had been working in the organisation

Less than 2 years	277 (39%)
Between 2 and 5 years	235 (33%)
Between 5 and 10 years	87 (12%)
More than 10 years	118 (16%)

We had this information for 717 cases in our sample (N=717)

- 39% have been working less than two years with their employer.
- 33% have been working between two and five years.
- 72% have been working for their employer for less than five years.

How we understand these findings:

Of our sample 72% of whistleblowers have worked for their employer for less than five years. Almost four out of 10 have worked with their employer for less than two years indicating that new staff are more willing to speak up. This is a cautionary note for businesses who will want to consider how to ensure that staff are aware of arrangements for speaking up as part of induction procedures and that whistleblowing arrangements are regularly refreshed. This is particularly the case for businesses that have high staff turnover.

New employees may well be more likely to speak up because they are less likely to accept poor or illegal practices. Complex relationships, sensitivity to the working culture or wilful blindness can prevent long term employees from speaking up. Another factor we have observed on the advice line that may prevent long term staff from speaking up, is where they have been aware of the wrongdoing for some time and remained silent: this creates a sense of ‘guilt by association’. However the most common reason why individuals do not speak up is the fear that nothing will be done. This may be an ingrained sense in long term employees who are basing this on their own previous experience or how they have observed problems in the workplace being addressed historically.

There has been a concern that the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) is misused by those who do not have other employment rights as they do not have the requisite length of service. However, as these statistics demonstrate, the most significant demographic of whistleblowers we hear from tend to have worked at their organisation for less than two years. Our top five concerns (ethical, financial malpractice, work safety and patient safety) are all in the public interest as opposed to private employment matter. This demonstrates the value of PIDA acting as a day one right.

c. Health of the whistleblower

Of the 164 callers who told us they had a health problem, we also noted who was still at work and who was off sick. This may or may not be as a result of raising a concern. Common illnesses we hear about are work related stress, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Table 4.3 Whistleblowers with health problems

Health problem but still at work	32 (20%)
Health problem and on sick leave	132 (80%)



- 16% of individuals (164 people) indicated that they had a health problem.
- This means across all industries of those who indicated they had a health problem, 20% are still at work and 80% are on sick leave.
- In the top six industries, comparatively more whistleblowers with a health problem are on sick leave (around nine out of 10), except for education.

How we understand these findings:

A small, but worrying, percentage of whistleblowers experience health problems. It is likely that individuals will seek support when they have taken sick leave as they will have removed themselves from the immediate source of stress and will be looking for advice and solutions. However the vast majority of whistleblowers who experience a negative impact on their health will go on sick leave demonstrating that one of the many negative implications of not handling whistleblowing well is the possibility of increased staff absences in either the long or short term.

5. IMPACT ON THE WHISTLEBLOWER AND THE WRONGDOING

We coded both what happened to the whistleblower and the wrongdoing throughout the journey and, where we had the data, the final outcome; see section 6.

We looked at how outcomes for the whistleblower and wrongdoing throughout the journey differ depending on the industry and position of the whistleblower.

a. For the whistleblower

Where the whistleblower commented on a change to their position following each attempt to raise a concern, we coded it accordingly. This was commented on in 327 cases at first attempt suggesting that in 68% of cases the whistleblower's position was not affected when they first attempted to raise a concern.

We had five categories:

- No change – where the whistleblower directly indicated that nothing had happened to worsen or improve their personal position, for example where the whistleblower is ignored.
- Worsened – where the whistleblower directly indicated that their personal position changed for the worse after they raised a concern, for example where the whistleblower suffers reprisal.
- Improved – where the whistleblower directly indicated that something happened to improve their personal position, for example where the whistleblower is rewarded.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HEALTH DEPARTED FROM THE OVERALL PATTERN, WITH A CONTINUAL DECLINE OF THE WHISTLEBLOWER'S SITUATION.

- Silent – where the whistleblower felt unable to speak up again.
- Resigned – where the whistleblower decided to resign.

By industry

Table 5.1 Changes to whistleblower at first attempt for top six industries (N=327)

	No change 13%	Worsened 69%	Improved 1%	Silent 7%	Resigned 10%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns				
Care	15%	68%	0%	8.5%	8.5%
Health	15%	67%	0%	7%	11%
Education	17.5%	70%	2.5%	2.5%	7.5%
Charities	18%	69%	0%	3%	10%
Local Government	22%	69%	0%	0%	9%
Finance	0%	81%	0%	9.5%	9.5%

Table 5.2 Changes to whistleblower at second attempt for top six industries (N=216)

	No change 13%	Worsened 68%	Improved 1%	Silent 6%	Resigned 12%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns				
Care	15%	66%	2%	0%	17%
Health	14%	73%	0%	5%	8%
Education	4%	68%	0%	14%	14%
Charities	16%	74%	0%	10%	0%
Local Government	17%	75%	0%	0%	8%
Finance	0%	62%	0%	23%	15%

Table 5.3 Changes to whistleblower at third attempt for top six industries (N=58)

	No change 9%	Worsened 67%	Improved 2%	Silent 7%	Resigned 15%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns				
Care	8%	50%	0%	0%	42%
Health	18%	73%	0%	0%	9%
Education	0%	60%	0%	20%	20%
Charities	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%
Local Government	0%	67%	0%	0%	33%
Finance	0%	50%	0%	25%	25%

How we understand these findings:

These findings show that overall, the situation of the whistleblower worsened less at the third attempt, with more whistleblowers resigning as their journey continues. Industries that jump out of the overall pattern are financial services, where the starker decline in situations worsening is explained by a pronounced increase in whistleblowers remaining silent.

Local government and health departed from the overall pattern, with a continual decline of the whistleblower's situation. Whistleblowers in local government tend to resign after their third attempt, more than in other sectors. In finance, individuals are likely to state their position has worsened after the first attempt to raise a concern, 81%. Thereafter they are more likely to resign or stay silent than workers in other sectors, 25% at the third attempt. Care workers are unlikely to feel silenced, though they are also more likely than other sectors to resign, 42% at the third attempt, and move on at early and later stages.

By position

Table 5.4 Change to whistleblower at first attempt (N=327) per whistleblower's position

	No change 13%	Worsened 69%	Improved 1%	Silent 7%	Resigned 10%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns				
Unskilled	11%	75%	0%	5%	9%
Skilled	14%	68%	0%	7%	11%
Admin	13%	79%	0%	4%	4%
Professional	12%	68%	1%	7%	12%
Management	16%	71%	0%	10%	3%
Executive	0%	50%	0%	20%	30%
Unknown	13%	64%	3%	10%	10%

Table 5.5 Changes to whistleblower at second attempt (N=216) per whistleblower's position

	No change 13%	Worsened 68%	Improved 1%	Silent 6%	Resigned 12%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns				
Unskilled	10%	71%	2%	0%	17%
Skilled	13%	69%	2%	5%	11%
Admin	22%	57%	0%	7%	14%
Professional	12%	71%	0%	10%	7%
Management	12%	64%	0%	9%	15%
Executive	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Unknown	27%	55%	0%	9%	9%

Table 5.6 Changes to whistleblower at third attempt (N=58) per whistleblower's position

	No change 9%	Worsened 67%	Improved 2%	Silent 7%	Resigned 15%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns				
Unskilled	0%	60%	0%	0%	40%
Skilled	14%	57%	0%	7%	22%
Admin	0%	83%	0%	0%	17%
Professional	14%	65%	0%	7%	14%
Management	9%	73%	9%	9%	0%
Executive	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
Unknown	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%

How we understand these findings:

Unskilled workers (9%), administrative workers (4%) and management (3%) are less likely to resign in the first instance. Unskilled workers are the least likely to stay silent throughout the journey. However, executives are much more likely to resign (30%): where they do not, their position worsens as matters progress, and they are eventually silenced (50%) or move on (50%). This is unsurprising given that executives are likely to be raising issues that may challenge the overall leadership of an organisation and may feel obliged to leave the organisation if the matter cannot be resolved.

b. For the wrongdoing

We coded at each attempt to raise a concern, how the whistleblower perceived the impact of raising the concern on what the organisation was doing about the wrongdoing. Coding categories were:

Nothing is done – where the whistleblower expresses that no action has been taken, for example where the whistleblower has been ignored or the wrongdoing is denied.

Investigation (low expectations) – where the recipient of the information is conducting an investigation but the whistleblower lacks confidence in the investigation, for example where the investigation is being headed by someone the whistleblower does not trust or fears that there will be a whitewash.

Investigation (high expectations) – as above but where the whistleblower has confidence in the investigation.

Stopped – where the wrongdoing is stopped.

Changes to wrongdoing overall and by sector

Table 5.7 Changes to wrongdoing at first attempt (N=637) for top six industries

	Nothing is done 74%	Investigation (low expect) 10%	Investigation (high expect) 10%	Stopped 6%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns			
Care	65%	8%	16%	11%
Health	74%	7%	11%	8%
Education	66%	17%	11%	6%
Charities	76%	10%	10%	4%
Local Government	75%	14%	7%	4%
Finance	65%	14%	16%	5%

Table 5.8 Changes to wrongdoing at second attempt (N=309) for top six industries

	Nothing is done 63%	Investigation (low expect) 12%	Investigation (high expect) 19%	Stopped 6%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns			
Care	54%	13%	26%	7%
Health	62%	15%	15%	8%
Education	58%	15%	24%	3%
Charities	65%	16%	19%	0%
Local Government	79%	13%	4%	4%
Finance	53%	6%	29%	12%

Table 5.9 Changes to wrongdoing at third attempt (N=71) for top six industries

	Nothing is done 44%	Investigation (low expect) 18%	Investigation (high expect) 34%	Stopped 4%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns			
Care	38%	8%	46%	8%
Health	50%	33%	17%	0%
Education	33%	17%	50%	0%
Charities	33%	0%	67%	0%
Local Government	20%	40%	20%	20%
Finance	50%	50%	0%	0%

How we understand these findings:

Overall the most common response is that nothing is done about the concern. However, this decreases over time as the likelihood of any investigation (low and high expectation combined) increases significantly from the first attempt (20%) to the third attempt (52%). By the third attempt the likelihood of an investigation with high expectation it is greater than three times more likely than at first attempt.

In finance there is a much greater likelihood that action is taken, either in the form of an investigation trusted by the worker (16% at first attempt, 29% at second) or the wrongdoing is stopped at the second attempt (12%). This however collapses at the third attempt, though these statistics are based on only four cases (financial services at third attempt).

In care there is a high expectation that there will be a good investigation (16%) or the wrongdoing will be stopped (11%) at an early stage.

EXECUTIVES SEEM TO BE MOST SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING THEIR ORGANISATIONS TO INVESTIGATE THEIR CONCERN. UNSKILLED WHISTLEBLOWERS ARE THE LEAST SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING THEIR CONCERNS TAKEN SERIOUSLY AND EVEN AT THEIR THIRD ATTEMPT ORGANISATIONS REMAINED INERT.

In local government more individuals said nothing was done to address the concern and low expectations of a good investigation is more likely in this sector throughout the process of raising a concern.

Changes to wrongdoing by whistleblower’s position

Table 5.10 Changes to wrongdoing at first attempt (N=637) per whistleblower’s position

	Nothing is done 74%	Investigation (low expect) 10%	Investigation (high expect) 10%	Stopped 6%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns			
Unskilled	80%	4%	10%	6%
Skilled	73%	12%	9%	6%
Admin	70%	11.5%	11.5%	7%
Professional	75%	9%	10%	6%
Management	70%	14%	14%	2%
Executive	63%	12%	19%	6%
Unknown	79%	13%	4%	4%

Table 5.11 Changes to wrongdoing at second attempt (N=309) per whistleblower’s position

	Nothing is done 63%	Investigation (low expect) 12%	Investigation (High expect) 19%	Stopped 6%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns			
Unskilled	65%	12%	17%	6%
Skilled	60%	10%	23%	7%
Admin	55%	15%	15%	15%
Professional	63%	12%	20%	5%
Management	68%	9%	21%	2%
Executive	50%	25%	25%	0%
Unknown	65%	20%	10%	5%

Table 5.12 Changes to wrongdoing at third attempt (N=71) per whistleblower’s position

	Nothing is done 44%	Investigation (low expect) 18%	Investigation (High expect) 34%	Stopped 4%
	% in table to be compared with % at top of columns			
Unskilled	80%	0%	20%	0%
Skilled	31%	23%	38%	8%
Admin	28.5%	28.5%	43%	0%
Professional	46%	25%	29%	0%
Management	44%	11%	39%	6%
Executive	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unknown	50%	0%	25%	25%

How we understand these findings:

Across the board whistleblowers feel that nothing is being done to address the wrongdoing. However, this sentiment generally decreases the more the whistleblower persists in raising the concern suggesting that whistleblowers become more successful in getting their concern investigated as they pursue their journey.

Executives seem to be most successful in getting their organisations to investigate their concern.

Unskilled whistleblowers are the least successful in getting their concern taken seriously and even at their third attempt organisations remained inert.

Administrative staff had consistently low expectations in investigations (11.5% climbing to 28.5% at the third attempt), with those in more senior positions, management (14%) and executives (19%), expressing more confidence in investigations.

Overall, those who said that the wrongdoing stopped were in the minority. While this is worrying, it must be remembered that this section maps outcomes after each attempt to raise the concern and is not the final outcome.

# 6. FINAL OUTCOMES

## a. For the whistleblower

To conclude the inside story, we looked at what happened to the whistleblower, the wrongdoer and the concern at the end of their journey.

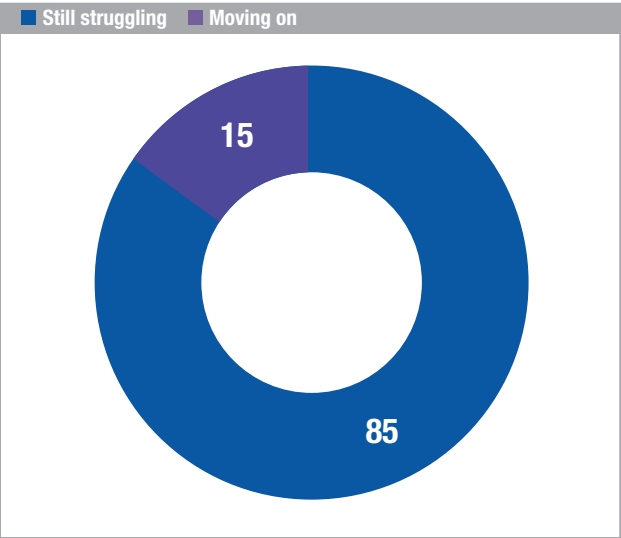
While undertaking this study, we knew that there would be limited information for final outcomes in the PCaW client database. This is due to the way we take information from callers. Our advice is tailored to help individuals to raise a concern during their journey. We offer support and guidance along the way and advise on the law. This means that while we have a lot of information about the circumstances which cause individuals to raise a concern and what effect this has on them and their working lives, we rarely hear about when things go well or if the situation is resolved at the end of the process. Individuals tend to continue to contact the advice line while they are struggling. Sometimes we act as a conduit for individuals and are involved in raising the issue, seeking feedback and are aware of final outcomes. However it is more likely that we encourage an individual to raise a concern directly and let us know the outcome. We are unable to follow up in many cases due to the high number of cases we receive and the resource limitations of PCaW.

Table 6.1 Final outcomes for the whistleblower

Still struggling	53 (85%)
Moved on	9 (15%)

Our case files included this information for 62 cases (N=62)

Fig 6.1 Final outcome for the whistleblower (in %)



The overwhelming majority of whistleblowers are still struggling, this includes where they have not received feedback, are unhappy with the investigation, continue to receive detrimental treatment at work or where they have lost their jobs are still trying to see the concern addressed. It is important to note however, this is based on a small percentage of our sample.

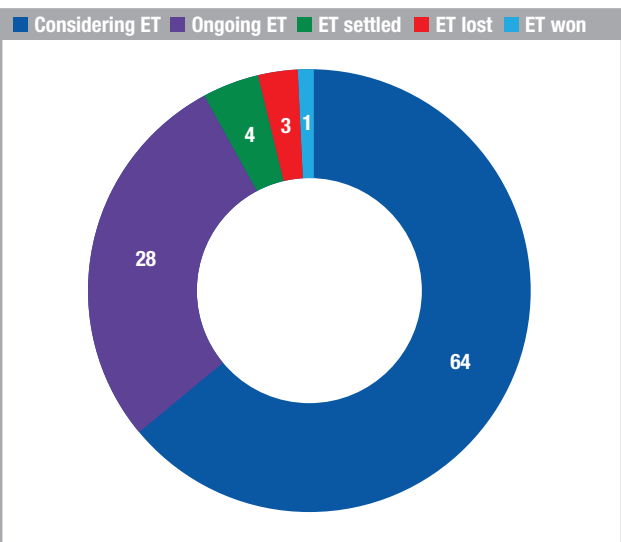
Table 6.2 Employment Tribunal status

Considering ET	ET ongoing	ET settled	ET lost	ET won
142 (64%)	63 (28%)	8 (4%)	7 (3%)	2 (1%)

## b. How many individuals make a claim?

For the cases that lead to an Employment Tribunal (ET) and where the whistleblower was still in contact with us, the case files would include information on the ET status. This was the case in 222 cases (N=222).

Fig 6.2 Employment Tribunal status (in %)



Of our sample, 222 individuals mentioned taking a claim to an ET. The numbers are much higher than other final outcomes. The majority of those we speak to at the end of their journey are considering taking a claim. This denotes the final outcome for the individual. The number could be higher for two reasons. First, the individual is acutely aware of the outcome of their situation, whereas this may not be the case for the outcome of the concern or the wrongdoer. Second, as PCaW is a legal advice centre, and we provide advice on PIDA, we receive a lot of calls where individuals are also seeking advice around their legal rights.

IT IS OF COURSE IMPORTANT THAT ORGANISATIONS IMPLEMENT OPERATIONAL CHANGES TRIGGERED BY STAFF RAISING A CONCERN.

## c. For the wrongdoer

Table 6.3 Outcomes for the wrongdoer

No change	11 (38%)
Warning	2 (7%)
Transferred	2 (7%)
Resigned	2 (7%)
Dismissed	12 (41%)

Our case files included information on this for 29 cases (N=29)

The outcomes in this section are mixed. 41% of our sample (N=29) said that the wrongdoer was dismissed and 38% said that nothing changed. However the data is based on small numbers.

## d. For the wrongdoing

Table 6.4 Outcomes for the wrongdoing

Unchanged	15 (38%)
Reduced	2 (5%)
Temporarily stopped	1 (3%)
Stopped	21 (54%)

Our case files included information on this for 39 cases (N=39)

Where we know the final outcome of the wrongdoing, it had stopped in 54% but remained unchanged in 38% of cases. Again, the data is based on small numbers.

Fig 6.3 Final outcome for the wrongdoing (in %)

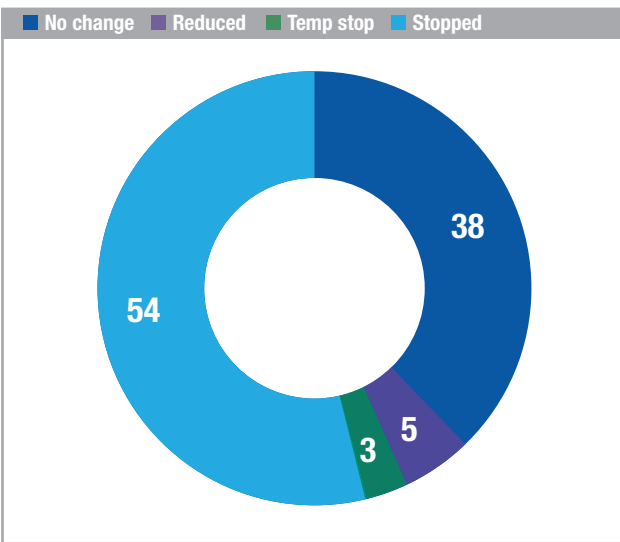
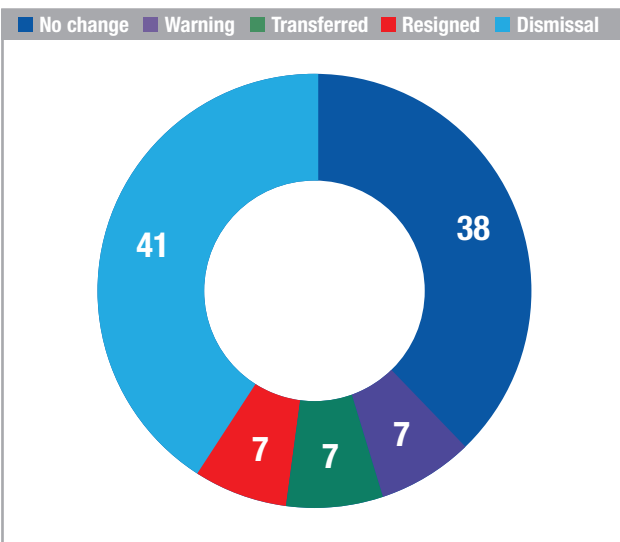


Fig 6.4 Final outcome for the wrongdoer (in %)



## How we understand these findings:

When comparing the figures above, we see a striking difference in outcomes for the whistleblower, the wrongdoing, and the wrongdoer. Successful whistleblowing encompasses both no harm to the whistleblower, and correction of the wrongdoing.

Our findings suggest that organisations seem to be better at correcting wrongdoing than at safeguarding the whistleblower from harm. Whereas 85% of those who told us the outcome indicated they were still struggling, only in 38% of cases where we had this information the wrongdoing was not acted upon. With regard to the wrongdoer, again in only 38% of cases there had not been any sanction.

It is of course important that organisations implement operational changes triggered by staff raising a concern. This leads to better performing organisations and is in no doubt in the public interest. However, correcting wrongdoing without proper attention to the people management aspect of this will not create better organisational cultures, and will make it harder for organisations to detect wrongdoing at an early stage in the future.



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Please note that figures differ from 2.1 as the figures in 4.1 include where the caller expressed an intention to raise a concern when they called.



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