

Protect Impact Report

2025

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Introduction

The work of Protect remains critically important in 2025, as the world faces unprecedented challenges with growing political divisions and increasingly common rule-breaking behaviours putting pressure on traditional values, ethics and culture.

Whistleblowing underpins organisational accountability and public safety, and it is vital that there are strong legal protections for individuals who expose wrongdoing. Protect operates as the UK's leading whistleblowing charity, offering free, confidential legal advice to workers facing ethical dilemmas in the workplace and supporting them through complex decisions. Our services help ensure that legitimate concerns about misconduct, harm and risk are raised safely and appropriately, and that whistleblowers understand their legal rights. We also work directly with employers to improve their accountability, helping them create safe workplaces for speaking up and for addressing whistleblowing concerns.

One of the central reasons Protect's work matters is that whistleblowers frequently face significant retaliation. In 2025 71% of callers to our legal Advice Line reported being victimised, bullied, or pushed toward resignation after raising concerns. Without expert guidance, many capable and conscientious workers would either remain silent or face severe personal and professional consequences. Protect's Advice Line helps individuals understand their rights under whistleblowing law and identify appropriate reporting channels so that their concerns are addressed, reducing the isolation and risk that whistleblowers often face.



"I just wanted to say that your advice on the phone yesterday was invaluable. It is clear to me that you are very knowledgeable, a great communicator and all round, brilliant at what you do. I am so grateful to have had your support."

A Year of Campaigning for Better Whistleblowing Protection

In 2025, Protect continued to drive broader systemic impact through research and policy influence. Our report on “The Cost of Whistleblowing Failures” highlighted how failures to act on disclosed concerns in high-profile UK scandals cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of pounds, underscoring the economic as well as ethical value of effective whistleblowing systems. Our research shows whistleblowing is a mechanism not just for individual justice or good employment practice but for preventing harm at scale and costs to the general public. Our research on Generational Attitudes to Whistleblowing helped inform employers about the approaches they need to take to ensure speak up channels are accessible for all.

We campaigned for better whistleblowing protection in the Employment Rights Bill as it passed through Parliament. The Employment Rights Act now includes a change to whistleblowing law, making it explicit that sexual harassment can be raised as a whistleblowing concern. We also intervened in two important court cases, advancing public interest arguments that would not otherwise have been put forward and helping shape how whistleblowing law is interpreted.

“Whistleblowing failures in scandals such as the Post Office Horizon IT failure have cost taxpayers more than £400 million, a report has found. The report, by the charity Protect, calculated that the failure to act on whistleblower reports in three big scandals — Horizon, the collapse of the outsourcing group Carillion and the Lucy Letby case — cost the government at least £426 million.”

The Times

Shaping Every Workplace

Alongside our support for individuals, we help drive long-term change by working with employers to strengthen their whistleblowing arrangements. Through consultancy, training and the Protect Benchmark, we support organisations to build cultures where speaking up is encouraged, and concerns are handled fairly and properly investigated.

Our combined work - individual legal support, employer consultancy, policy, advocacy and impactful research - contributed to making whistleblowing more accessible, safer, and better understood in 2025. This not only protects individuals but promotes organisational cultures where wrongdoing is less likely to go unchallenged and where public interest disclosures lead to improved accountability and societal well-being.



Our impact in numbers



3,589

Total new
cases



19,645

Interactions
(email/phone)



1.5 million

People reached through
our work with employers

Protect's Advice Line: a one-of-a-kind service

Protect's Advice Line is the only service of its kind in the UK, helping workers raise public interest concerns safely and effectively. We don't just give legal advice - we provide practical, real-world guidance on how to speak up and navigate difficult workplace situations.

Anyone can contact our advisers by phone during opening hours or submit a webform through our website to receive free, confidential support. This means we hear from all sectors and from people at all stages of their careers, and from the most casual workers in the gig economy to Chief Executives and Board members.

As the figures below show, our service is vital for those on low incomes who cannot otherwise afford legal advice at a stressful and difficult time of their lives: 44% of those who gave details are earning well under the median UK income. We have a larger proportion of workers who identify as disabled compared with the national working population, and many of those who call us have mental ill-health as a result of their whistleblowing.



What we saw from our cases: numbers continue to climb

In 2025, demand for our Advice Line continued to grow. We supported 3,589 new cases, an 8% increase on the previous year. The rise reflects the growing pressures faced by workers and the critical need for trusted support when things go wrong.

The Private Sector is our largest sector

In 2025, 42% of our cases came from the private sector, 23% came from the public sector and 25% from the charitable sector.

Our largest industries continue to be health and social care (27%) and education (13%), both of which continue to generate the highest number of concerns raised by workers. Government and the financial services sector also featured strongly in our calls.

Behaviour and Governance remain top concerns

Issues relating to workplace culture continue to dominate.

- Governance and staff conduct accounted for 17% of caller concerns - up from 14% in 2024.
- Bullying, harassment and discrimination remained steady at 14%.

This reflects a wider recognition - including by regulators in sectors such as financial services - that non-financial misconduct is a public-interest issue, not merely an internal HR matter.

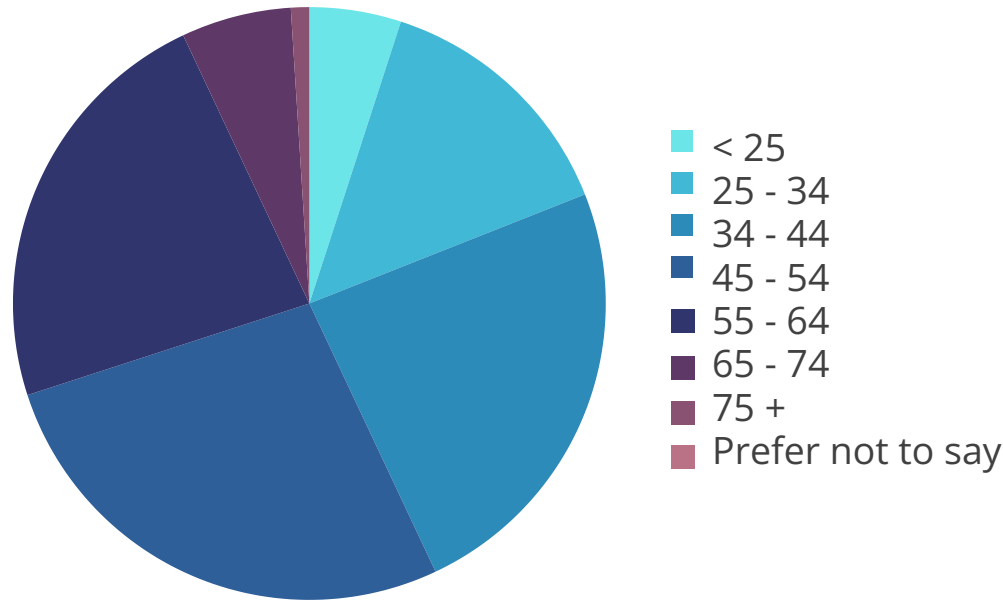
Our other top concerns were financial malpractice and compliance/regulatory issues.

38% of whistleblowers said their concerns were **ignored**, a figure that has dropped 2% since 2024.

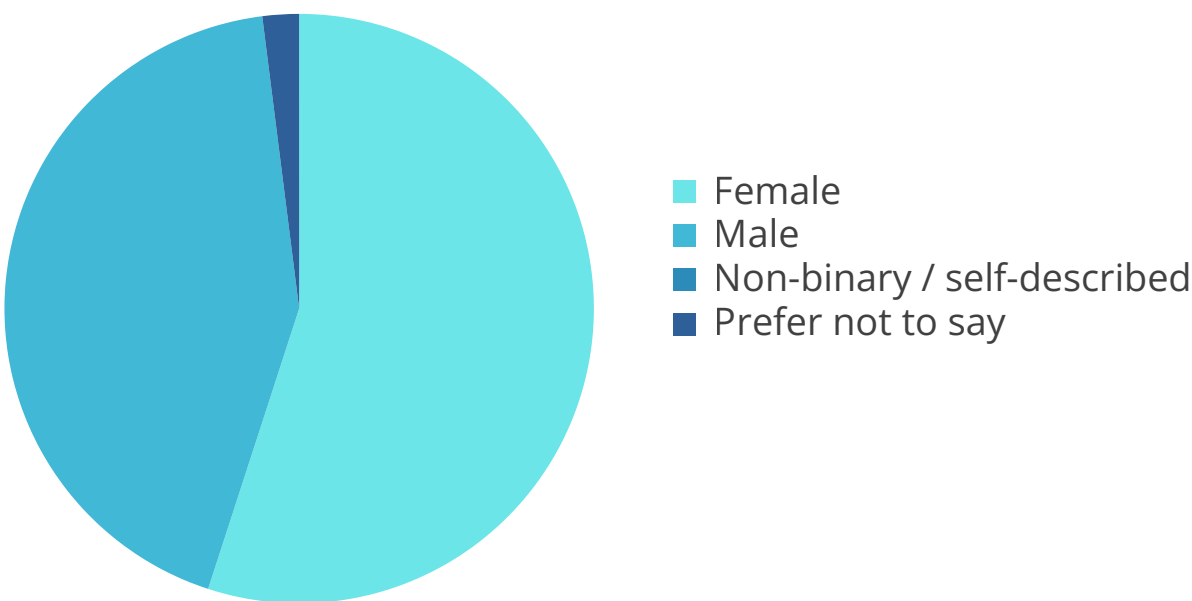
71% of whistleblowers tell us they are victimised, suspended, dismissed or forced to resign after speaking up.

Who we advised

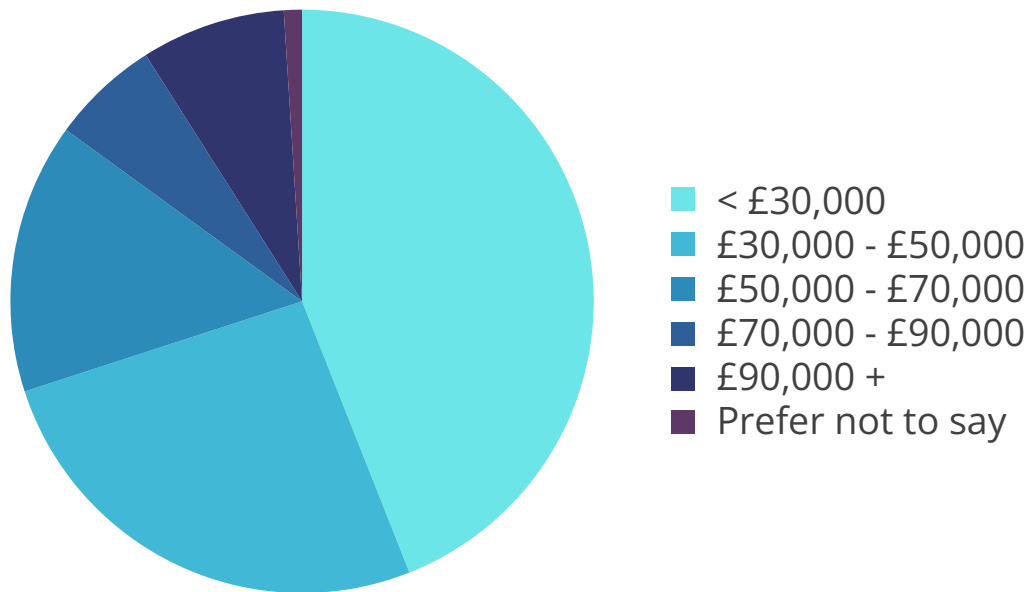
Age



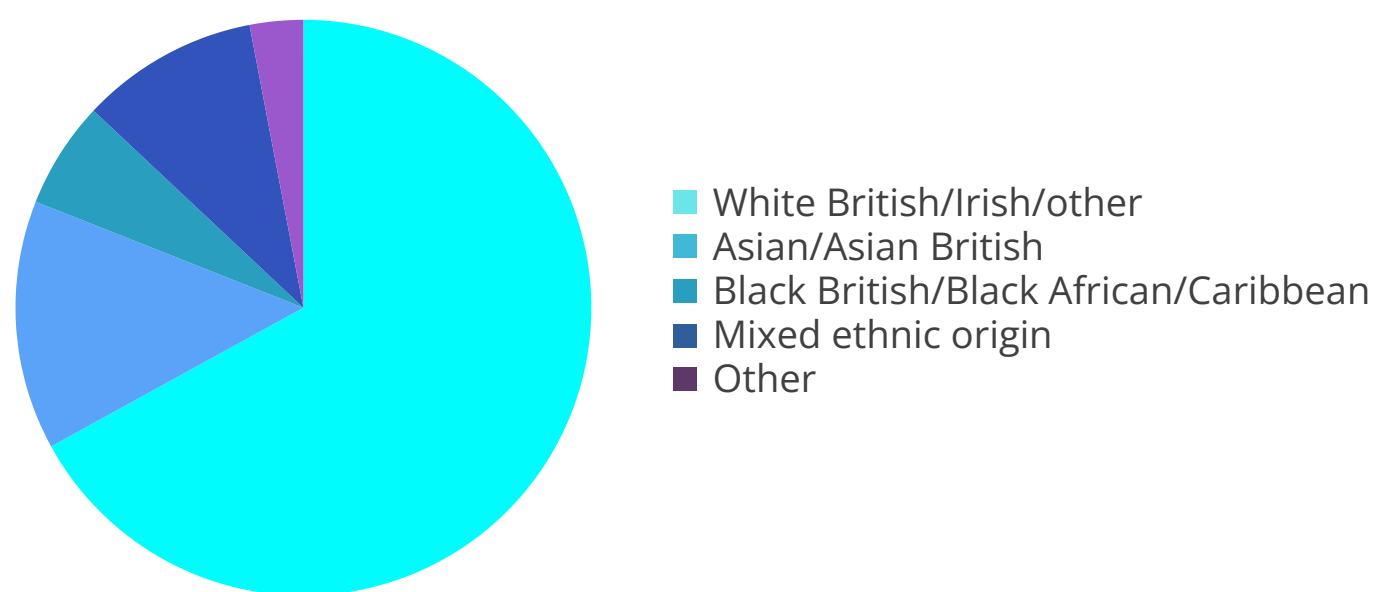
Gender



Annual income



Ethnicity



Caller concern



Feedback – measuring the impact of our support to whistleblowers

The Advice Line continues to seek feedback to help us improve.

Improving the feedback project

Although the feedback is consistently positive, the number of responses remains small compared with the thousands of people we support each year. In 2026, we are taking actions to increase the size of our sample so we can be even more confident in the quality and consistency of our service.

96%

of people using our Advice Line said they would recommend the service.

89%

of people said they better understood their rights and options after talking to a legal adviser.

84%

of people said they found the advice helpful or very helpful.

How we helped Georgia

*"I would like to convey my profound appreciation for the information you provided and the guidance you offered regarding my case... It was a significant source of comfort for me. I extend my heartfelt gratitude for all your support." - Georgia**

Georgia* had been working in luxury retail for less than a year when she noticed her manager overcharging a customer and keeping the extra money. Wanting to act responsibly, she reported what she had seen through her employer's internal whistleblowing channel and made a clear request for her identity to remain confidential.

Instead of protecting her confidentiality the company invited her to a meeting with HR — and the very manager she had named. With confidentiality breached, Georgia was asked to repeat the full details of her report in front of him. The next day, she was dismissed without notice.

Losing a job she loved so abruptly left Georgia shocked and distressed. Convinced she had been dismissed for speaking up, she appealed the decision, but her appeal was ignored. She then began Early Conciliation with Acas, hoping that the process might lead to a fair settlement without going to tribunal. At first, her employer appeared willing to negotiate, but communication soon stopped. As the deadline to bring an Employment Tribunal claim approached, Georgia began to worry she might run out of time. At that point, she contacted Protect for advice.

During our call, Georgia explained everything she had already done. We advised her that, in addition to her automatic unfair dismissal claim, she could also bring whistleblowing detriment claims against the individuals responsible — the manager who dismissed her and the HR professional who breached her confidentiality. Using Protect's template, she prepared a Schedule of Loss to guide her negotiations. With this support, Georgia went on to secure a substantial five-figure settlement.

*Name changed at the individual's request.

Voices of our callers

"Protect offers clear, empathetic, and legally grounded advice that empowers whistleblowers to navigate complex situations with confidence."

"I'm really grateful for the assistance from [Protect]. I have now had to escalate my situation to the Care Quality Commission and did not think (prior to my contact with Protect) that this was an option for me."

"I just wanted to say that your advice on the phone yesterday was invaluable. It is clear to me that you are very knowledgeable, a great communicator and all round, brilliant at what you do. I am so grateful to have had your support."



"You guided me to the next steps I needed to take. I never wanted to end up in litigation or be known as someone who took an employer to court - but your guidance, your patience, even the tone of your voice, made such a difference. I felt listened to, and that matters. I used your template to challenge my appeal, and it was absolutely spot on."

Whistleblowers Changing the World



Josie Stewart

In a judgment that may have repercussions for the civil service at large, the Employment Tribunal ruled in February 2025 that it can be lawful for a civil servant to share unauthorised information directly with the media. In the first case of its kind, Josie Stewart, the former Foreign Office whistleblower, won a claim for whistleblower detriment and unfair dismissal over her disclosures to the BBC about the UK evacuation from Afghanistan. Josie received support from the Advice Team for many years and is now a member of Protect's Advisory Council.



Rowaa Ahmar

Rowaa Ahmar joined Drax expecting to steer public affairs, not to uncover a brewing storm. After Panorama exposed troubling truths about Drax's biomass practices, Rowaa attempted to verify the allegations and revealed evidence that the company had misled the public, government and Ofgem. Senior leaders resisted transparency, sidelining her and exposing her identity when she raised concerns. Protect advised Rowaa on her legal rights under the whistleblowing law, and how to bring a whistleblowing claim to the Employment Tribunal, leading eventually to settlement between Drax and Rowaa.

Standing up for whistleblowers in the courts

As the UK's national whistleblowing charity, Protect steps in as an independent voice when court cases raise public policy issues for whistleblower rights. We bring what we see every day on our Advice Line into the courtroom- helping judges understand the real-world experiences of workers who speak up. Alongside our work in Parliament, these interventions are one of the key ways we shape stronger whistleblowing law. In 2025, we intervened in two important cases.

Protecting job applicants who blow the whistle

In April, the Court of Appeal confirmed that people applying for jobs (other than roles in the NHS) currently do not have whistleblowing protection.

We intervened in the case of Sullivan v Isle of Wight Council [2025], EWCA Civ 379 because we know from our callers that many whistleblowers find themselves effectively blacklisted after speaking up - unable to get work in their field again.

Right now, the law is inconsistent. NHS job applicants are protected if they blow the whistle. Applicants anywhere else are not. We argued this gap leaves thousands of people exposed. The Court said this was something Parliament must fix.

Our intervention was made possible thanks to pro bono support from Matrix Chambers and Farrer & Co.

Halting attempts to weaken protection for whistleblowers

We also intervened in the Court of Appeal in the combined case of Rice v Wicked Vision Ltd and Barton Turns Developments Ltd v Treadwell [2025] EWCA Civ 1466, a case that challenged a long-standing protection for whistleblowers. The case before the Court was determining whether employees who are dismissed may also bring a detriment claim against the individual who decided to dismiss them (just like workers). This principle was previously confirmed in the case Timis v Osipov, in which Protect also intervened.

The Court has - for now - confirmed the status quo but has explicitly stated it was bound by the earlier Court of Appeal decision, Timis v Osipov, even though it disagreed with the reasoning. The case has now been referred to the Supreme Court (we're now in the process of applying once again to intervene at this critical stage). Our intervention was supported pro bono by Cloisters Chambers and solicitors CM Murray.

Protect recognised by the legal community

In 2025 Protect won Employment Team of the Year at the LexisNexis UK Legal Awards, recognising the outstanding impact of its in-house legal team. The award celebrates the team's dedication to providing free, confidential legal advice to workers who raise concerns about wrongdoing, as well as its work supporting employers to strengthen whistleblowing arrangements through training and audits. Judges highlighted the team's creativity, resilience and growing influence, alongside its contribution to legal reform aimed at improving whistleblower protection across the UK.

Protect thanks the Legal Support Network for their continued support

Protect benefits from the expertise of a dedicated network of pro bono solicitors and barristers. They provide occasional one-off support to our clients, including help with drafting, merits assessments, and specialist input on complex matters. They also act as mentors to our legal advisers and contribute to our public policy work.

When we intervene in cases before the Court of Appeal or Supreme Court, we do so with the invaluable pro bono assistance of these legal experts - both barristers and solicitors - who help ensure whistleblowers' voices are heard at the highest levels.



Whistleblowing impact in advocacy and research: the winding road of strengthening legal protection

2025 saw a significant step forward for our legal reform campaign, with a win in the House of Lords for our cross-party amendment to introduce stronger requirements on employers to investigate whistleblowing concerns. The “Hillsborough” Bill will place a legal duty on public authorities to tell the truth and take accountability for failures.

For Protect’s policy team, the focus of the year was the Employment Rights Bill. Despite intense lobbying and cross-party efforts, the final Employment Rights Act 2025 hasn’t included everything we wanted: the hard-won amendment in the House of Lords was overturned when the Bill returned to the Commons. However, as the Bill made its way through Parliament, these debates created new opportunities to build alliances and deepen understanding among parliamentarians. In both Houses, we saw a growing willingness to engage in the case for strengthened whistleblowing protection.

The year also brought clear gains. We welcomed the clarification in the Employment Rights Act that sexual harassment can qualify as a whistleblowing matter, a critical step forward for workplace safety and clarity. The Government has admitted that the current whistleblowing law does not work as well as it could do, and in their Anti-Corruption Strategy the Government has committed to looking at opportunities to reform whistleblowing law by 2027.

The “Hillsborough” Law

In September the long-awaited Public Office (Accountability) Bill commonly known as the “Hillsborough” bill was published and started its way through Parliament. The Government set out a clear ambition: to end the culture of institutional cover-ups and ensure public bodies act with transparency, accountability, and honesty. The Bill places a Duty of Candour on public authorities, requiring them to tell the truth and cooperate fully with investigations. While we support the bill, we campaigned in 2025 for protection for whistleblowers and a legal duty on public sector employers to investigate whistleblowing concerns.



Anti-Corruption Work

Thanks to the generosity of the Joffe Charitable Trust we have a dedicated workstream to address corruption in society and put whistleblowing front and centre. Through this workstream we strengthened relationships with the UK Anti-Corruption Coalition and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Anti-Corruption and Fairer Taxation, amplifying our impact across Whitehall and Westminster.

We played an active role working with the Joint Anti-Corruption Unit on the government's new Anti-Corruption Strategy, which was published in December. We continue to engage with senior officials and parliamentarians to push for more ambitious reforms. Whistleblowers are often the first - and sometimes the only - line of defence against corruption. They must be properly protected.



A year in research

This year we released two new pieces of research:

The Cost of Whistleblowing Failures

Supported by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, we examined the financial impact of whistleblowing failures across three major national scandals:

- the Post Office Horizon IT scandal,
- the Countess of Chester Hospital / Lucy Letby case, and
- the collapse of Carillion.

In each case, we found whistleblowers were ignored or too scared to come forward. We then carried out a financial calculation to determine the impact in real-money terms - to central government, and by default, the taxpayer - including the costs of public inquiries, police investigations, delays to essential building projects and compensation payments. We held a launch event at the House of Lords attended by politicians, whistleblowers, policy makers and others to discuss the research and the vital importance of investigating whistleblowers' concerns.

£177,967,265

The Cost of the Post Office Horizon IT scandal

£209,091,973

The Cost of the collapse of Carillion

£39,279,222

The Cost of the Lucy Letby Scandal

£426,338,460

Overall cost to the public purse across all three scandals

Attitudes to Whistleblowing from Baby Boomers to Gen Z

We marked a successful World Whistleblowers Day with the release of new research exploring generational attitudes to speaking up. We are grateful to Lloyds Banking Group for funding the research and hosting our launch event at their central London offices. We brought together business leaders, practitioners, and advocates to deepen understanding and raise awareness of the vital role whistleblowers play. The day not only highlighted the importance of creating environments where all generations feel safe to speak up but also reinforced the collective commitment to strengthening protections for those who do.

The research showed Gen Z (those aged 18–24) are **less likely to blow the whistle** to their employer compared to older generations. Across every area of potential wrongdoing – from health and safety to fraud and bullying – **Gen Z were less likely to raise a concern with their employer compared to every other generation.**

Supported by:



“Attitudes to whistleblowing, a study by charity Protect, looked into generational differences in whistleblowing across the UK. It found 61% of people, across all age groups, would opt to speak to their line manager or supervisor if they witnessed wrongdoing or malpractice in the workplace but ‘some generations were more willing to speak up than others’.”



Support for Employers: Whistleblowing Expertise in Practice

Working with employers is an important part of how Protect operates and a key source of income, but it's also crucial that we encourage employers to put best-practice whistleblowing arrangements in place. If an organisation's workforce is the best early warning system, then employers need to have the right processes in place to act on these warning signs. The work we do with employers from all sectors and industries is fundamental to the public interest, protecting lives and livelihoods, preventing risks and harm and safeguarding employers against reputational damage and financial losses.

Training and Capacity Building

2025 was another year where the training of boards, managers and staff led to a more informed workforce both in terms of how to speak up about wrongdoing, but crucially how to respond when staff do speak up, and how senior leaders can create whistleblowing arrangements that work well in practice.

In 2025 we:

- Delivered 47 training sessions in total (31 in-house sessions; 16 scheduled open sessions).
- Average attendance of ~17 delegates per session, reaching almost 800 delegates overall.
- Our training courses are highly regarded and consistently achieve strong satisfaction scores. On average, delegates rated their understanding as 7 out of 10 before the training and 9 out of 10 afterwards. When asked how likely they were to recommend Protect's services to a friend or colleague, the average score was 9 out of 10.

"Excellent presentation, knowledgeable team, focused delivery. There is a reason why Protect is the industry standard! Absolutely superb."

Varadarajan Viswanathan, Compliance Director & MLRO, Punjab National Bank International Limited

"Our experience with Protect was excellent. The benchmarking survey process was seamless and easy to complete, and the insights we received were incredibly valuable. The follow-up meeting to discuss feedback was very helpful, and the team demonstrated exceptional knowledge throughout. The practical hints and tips were a welcome addition, giving us clear points to consider. Overall, the support and expertise were excellent."

Julie Sadler, Risk & Compliance Director - Group Functions, Quilter plc

"Content of the course was very reflective of the roles our organisation carries out, and the training was catered to suit this. This also gave our advocates real life relatable examples that they can use and relate to if a concern is raised with them."

Darren Sessions, Complaints & Whistleblowing Manager, Health and Social Care Northern Ireland

Employer Engagement and Membership Growth

Key to our ability to help shape an employer's whistleblowing culture is Protect's Membership programme. This gives organisations access to an array of expert advice and tools. Crucially, it is also a community of fellow employers, who can help strengthen any organisation's whistleblowing system through the mutual sharing of best practice and real-life challenges.

Christopher Foy – Head of Financial Crime, United Trust Bank says:

"United Trust Bank decided to become a member of Protect in January 2025 after we heard Protect's Chief Executive, Elizabeth Gardiner deliver an excellent presentation on whistleblowing at an industry event and afterwards reviewed the benefits of Protect membership.

"As part of our engagement, Elizabeth delivered a one-hour 'Lunch and Learn' whistleblowing awareness briefing to our senior management and wider team, with a particular focus on fraud.

"Overall, the quality of the delivery and the relevance of the content reinforced the value of our membership. We would strongly recommend Protect's services to organisations seeking authoritative, engaging, and practical whistleblowing expertise."



75

New employers engaged with in 2025.

218

Current members.

Edel McKenna - Chief Executive, Children's Court Guardian Agency for Northern Ireland says:

"We engaged Protect this year to support us with a staff awareness briefing on whistleblowing and to provide access to their core training programmes, and the experience exceeded our expectations at every stage.

"Utilising places on Protect's core training courses - Essentials, Investigations, and Preventing Victimisation - proved to be invaluable. The sessions strengthened our internal capability, particularly around handling concerns appropriately, conducting robust investigations, and understanding the risks and realities of victimisation.

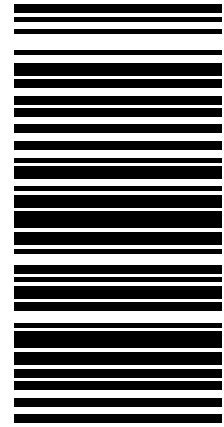
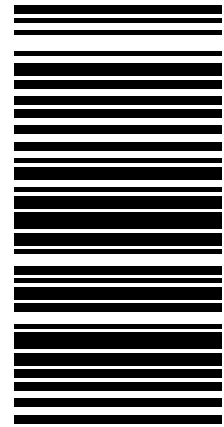
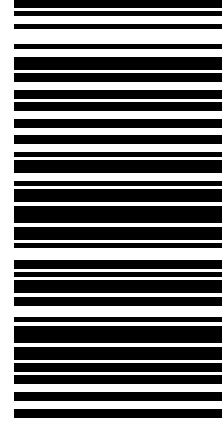
"Overall, Protect brought a rare combination of legal expertise, practical experience, and engaging delivery. Their support has had a tangible impact on our organisational culture and confidence in managing whistleblowing issues. We would not hesitate to recommend Protect to any organisation seeking high-quality, credible, and impactful whistleblowing training and advice."

Collectively, these activities strengthened organisational capability, expanded Protect's reach among employers, and translated research and best practice into tangible improvements in whistleblowing frameworks and communications across multiple sectors.



Events and Thought Leadership

Our unique place in the whistleblowing landscape is shaped by providing advice to whistleblowers, campaigning for better whistleblowing protection and our work with employers. This means our expertise can shape the way businesses think, feel and act when it comes to their own whistleblowing systems. We host regular events and opportunities, engaging numerous organisations, in 2025 with over 100 individual attendees and 300+ online attendees.

	World Whistleblowers Day event: Generational Attitudes to Whistleblowing
	Roundtable with Mayer Brown: Failure to Prevent Fraud offence
	Breakfast Briefing for Charities : “Top Ten Things Charities Get Wrong”

Protect Event - Reframing Speak Up Culture

In July 2025, Protect and the law firm Mayer Brown held a roundtable with leaders from legal, ethics, and compliance teams across several sectors, including construction and financial services. Representatives from the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) and the National Crime Agency (NCA) also took part.

Held under the Chatham House Rule the event discussed how the new Failure to Prevent Fraud offence is changing organisations' responsibilities around fraud, whistleblowing, and speaking up.

The event generated insights and practical ideas for tackling weaknesses in whistleblowing systems across society, which Protect is now exploring further, and we are bringing together a panel of employers interested in working on solutions together.

We will continue this work into 2026, leading follow-up projects on benchmarking, building inclusive speak up cultures, and creating shared learning opportunities to help organisations respond to the changing legal and cultural environment.



Law Society Guidance for In-house Lawyers

We were proud to produce on behalf of the Law Society new whistleblowing guidance for in-house lawyers. This formed part a suite of guidance and resources on ethics for in-house lawyers developed with the Law Society and IDEA Leeds.

It addresses the ethical tension faced by in-house solicitors - balancing their duties to the client with their responsibilities to the public interest - which is a defining challenge for the profession. Unlike those working in private practice, in-house solicitors sit inside the very organisations whose wrongdoing they may need to report.



The
Royal
Courts
of
Justice

How We Fund Our Work

Protect is a charity, and although we generate most of our income through our training and consultancy with employers, we are also reliant on charitable donations and grants to carry out our work.

We would like to give a special thank you to the following funders for their generous support of our work in 2025:

- A B Charitable Trust
- The City of London Solicitors' Company Charitable Fund
- The Joffe Charitable Trust
- The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

It is not only organisations that support us; throughout 2025 we received many donations from generous individuals wanting to make whistleblowing safer and more effective. Their support is greatly appreciated. We also received a significant legacy left to us by someone in their will. Protect's staff raised funds for the charity by taking part in the London Legal Walk 2025. This walk was organised by The London Legal Support Trust and our thanks go to everyone who took part or sponsored us.

Thank you to everyone who funded our work in 2025. Your contributions help us support whistleblowers and protect the public from harm. If you would like to support our work with a grant or donation, please contact funding@protect-advice.org.uk or click the Donate button on our website www.protect-advice.org.uk.



From our funders

"The Joffe Trust is delighted to fund Protect's important work. They are leading the way in building support in parliament and beyond for much needed, practical improvements in the UK's whistleblowing regime."

Alex Jacobs (Director), The Joffe Charitable Trust

"JRCT are glad to support Protect, the leading national charity supporting whistleblowers, recognising that whistleblowing is an important accountability tool for uncovering malpractice in the workplace. We support their efforts in advocating for whistleblowers' needs and ensuring that national policies provide better protection for those who expose harms, recognising that the issues raised can be of national public interest and failure to act can cause substantial costs to the public purse."

Katharine Knox (Programme Manager, Power and Accountability), The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust



Protect is the UK's leading whistleblowing charity.

Our aim is to protect the public interest by helping workers to speak up to stop harm and wrongdoing. We support whistleblowers by providing free and confidential legal advice. We support employers to implement effective whistleblowing arrangements. We campaign for legal and policy reform to better protect whistleblowing.



Contact details:

For press queries email press@protect-advice.org.uk

For business and employer queries email info@protect-advice.org.uk

[For free confidential legal advice call 020 3117 2520](tel:02031172520)

Protect (Whistleblowing Advice) Limited is a registered charity (No. 1025557) and a company limited by guarantee (No. 02849833).

