



OPEN LETTER

Sent by email:

9 September 2025

Dear Secretary of State for Business and Trade,

As NGOs from around the world interested in whistleblowing, we urge you to accept the House of Lords' amendment to the [Employment Rights Bill](#) (now new clause 29) currently before your Parliament as a first step to improving the UK's law and strengthening whistleblower protections. The amendment would require your government to extend the circumstances in which an employee is considered unfairly dismissed for whistleblowing and would require employers of 50 or more staff to take reasonable steps to investigate any disclosure made to them. This would ensure that vital public interest concerns are addressed, and organisations are held to account for how they handle concerns at a much earlier stage.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 was a pioneering law that led the way in Europe and around the world in recognising the value and importance of whistleblowing to deter wrongdoing, stop damage and ensure good governance across all sectors. Many of the elements in the UK law remain international best practices today and have been replicated in international and regional standards around the world. The UK law has also evolved to address shortcomings that were only understood once it had been in force for a number of years. These have included ensuring police officers and NHS job applicants are included as categories of protected persons and removing 'good faith' as a prerequisite legal test on the individual whistleblower to ensure the focus remained on the public interest in the information disclosed.

However, the current law has one important and serious Achilles heel which has rendered it less effective than it should be in protecting individuals who raise credible concerns at an early stage. This is the fact that the onus in whistleblowing cases remains solely on the individual to bring a claim if they are treated badly and **places no requirements on employers to investigate or address concerns**. This needs to change.

Protect reports that this results in 40 per cent of the whistleblowers contacting them being ignored, and leads to serious individual, organisational and public costs which could be

avoided. While the original law was enacted to address such tragic but ultimately foreseeable disasters such as the [Piper Alpha oil rig](#), [the Zeebrugge Ferry disaster](#) and the collapse of [the international bank BCCI](#), the UK has experienced serious scandals and tragedies since that have ruined lives and cost the public purse millions, such as the Grenfell Tower disaster and [the scandal at the Post Office](#). Without requirements made on employers to implement safe and effective channels for staff to report concerns at an early stage and to ensure the information is assessed and investigated, organisations all too often respond to whistleblower claims as individual claims to defend against, rather than as an early warning signal that something might be going wrong.

The UK is a signatory to the 2023 Resolution of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption [on the protection of reporting persons](#) which had widespread international support. Under the resolution the UK should “develop appropriate measures to fully and effectively provide protection against unjustified treatment” of reporting persons and “establish and strengthen confidential complaint systems and protected internal reporting systems that are accessible, diversified and inclusive to facilitate timely reporting of corruption.”

Following the adoption of the EU Directive 2019/1937 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law (“the Whistleblowing Directive”) all Member States have updated their national laws to include, at the very least, common minimum standards for employers to establish internal reporting channels. All enterprises with 50 or more workers must have a range of methods for whistleblowers to report breaches of the law, and the employer must follow up within prescribed timeframes. The Directive encourages smaller organisations to do the same.

Similar laws operate around the world. In Australia, there is a duty on public sector officials to investigate all but frivolous or vexatious concerns, while large private sector bodies must have a policy setting out how the company will investigate disclosures. Japan has updated its whistleblowing law which includes duties on larger employers.

We urge you to adopt Clause 29 “Regulations to Protect Whistleblowers” in the Employment Rights Bill and to place a legal requirement on employers to investigate concerns - this will help to close the gap between the purpose of the law and its application in practice.

Yours sincerely,

Protect, and

Whistleblowing International Network

Undersigned supporting organisations:

GlobaLeaks (International)
The Signals Network (US/France)
African Centre for Media & Information Literacy (Nigeria)
Centre for Free Expression (Canada)
Human Rights Law Centre's Whistleblower Project (Australia)
Blueprint for Free Speech (Germany)
Transparency International Italia (Italy)
Oživení - Whistleblowing center (Czech republic)
Pištaljka (Serbia)
Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa (PPLAAF)
Climate Whistleblowers (International)
Parrhesia Incorporated (UK)
UK Anti-Corruption Coalition (UK)
[Psst.org](https://psst.org) (USA, UK, Europe)
Can't Buy My Silence (UK)
Transparency International (Bulgaria)
Spotlight on Corruption (UK)

Protect is a registered charity in England and Wales, Charity No.1025557.

Whistleblowing International Network is an incorporated charity registered in Scotland, SC048595.