

Helpline

What we do and why

When someone is in a dilemma about whether or how to raise a concern about malpractice, be it a fraud or a danger or other wrongdoing, we offer them free, confidential advice on how best to proceed. We concentrate on the practical options - looking at the risk and the wider picture, with the law and the Public Interest Disclosure Act in the background. Our aim is to increase the chances that any public concern can be raised in a constructive way, so that any danger or wrongdoing can be effectively addressed while minimising any actual or perceived risk to the client.

While we do not litigate ourselves, we are also approached for advice by employees where they have raised a whistleblowing concern and feel they have been victimised as a result. Such approaches for help on the whistleblowing law also come from the managers, union advisers and lawyers of those involved.

Between January 2005 and October 2007 we handled over 2,500 calls for confidential advice on whistleblowing or public concerns. The helpline, which is free to callers, is actively promoted by enlightened organisations which pay a modest annual subscription to the helpline.

In this section, we summarise some of the concerns raised with us.

Below we set out key data from 2005/6 about these concerns (with 2003/4 data in brackets).

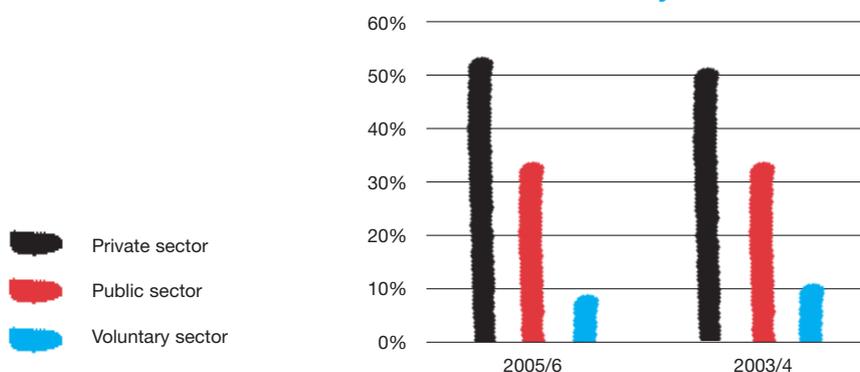
Concern Type

Safety	33%	(34%)
Financial malpractice	28%	(30%)
Miscellaneous	27%	(22%)
Abuse in care	12%	(14%)

Source of contact

Internet	34%	(31%)
Workplace	33%	(30%)
Advice agencies	13%	(17%)
Regulator	8%	(8%)
Other	12%	(14%)

Public concerns by sector



Helpline feedback

We approached all those clients in 2005 and 2006 who had left telephone details, seeking feedback on our service. We successfully contacted 450 who agreed to participate. The results were that:

- 94% said the advice was clear and easy to understand
- 87% said they would recommend the service to someone with a public concern

The following quotes are from letters and emails sent by clients:

"I was able to come to a decision which I felt totally comfortable with, based on the sound knowledge and advice I had been given.I am very grateful to PCaW for the time they gave me and would encourage anyone who has a concern at work to contact them."

DW, 23 Nov 2006

"I found your common sense approach to my current position very helpful – you were not there just dishing out advice 'book verbatim' but gave me all the options open to me in my difficult employment situation in a sensitive way."

FC, 8 June 2006

"If I had heard of PCaW before I blew the whistle things would have been different with my case. But thanks for listening to me when I was on my own. That was very important for my wife and me."

MM, 27 Feb 2007

"As a whistleblower (I don't acknowledge 'former-whistleblower' as a useful term!) I fully expected my wider career to be somewhat curtailed by my actions. I wanted to let you know of my appointment [as Deputy Medical Director] because it illustrates how whistleblowing need not impede the further career of the individual. When asked in the interview for what I would identify as my greatest achievement in medicine I said the whistleblowing – because I acted when no-one else would and was, with supportive testimony from others, eventually vindicated. I truly believe this was in the best interests of patients and, as such, I feel I succeeded, ultimately, in the role of the doctor by safeguarding patients."

Finally I do believe that Anna's advice and her ear at timely intervals through my experience were very important in maintaining my confidence and gave me great support."

NH, 18 Oct 2006



How we help individuals

We operate a confidential helpline that provides clients with free impartial advice on how to raise a whistleblowing concern in a way that best enables the concern to be properly addressed by those in charge while minimising any risk the client may fear. Because of the clear public interest in such a service, this legal advice is free to all individuals.

For the first ten years of its operation, the helpline's costs were met by charitable funds. As our second decade gets underway, its costs are covered by modest subscriptions taken out by employers, small and large, from across the private, public and voluntary sectors.

During 2003/4 our helpline received over 1500 calls about whistleblowing issues, of which 14% came from people who said they worked for organisations that subscribed to the helpline. These calls can be analysed as follows -

Concern

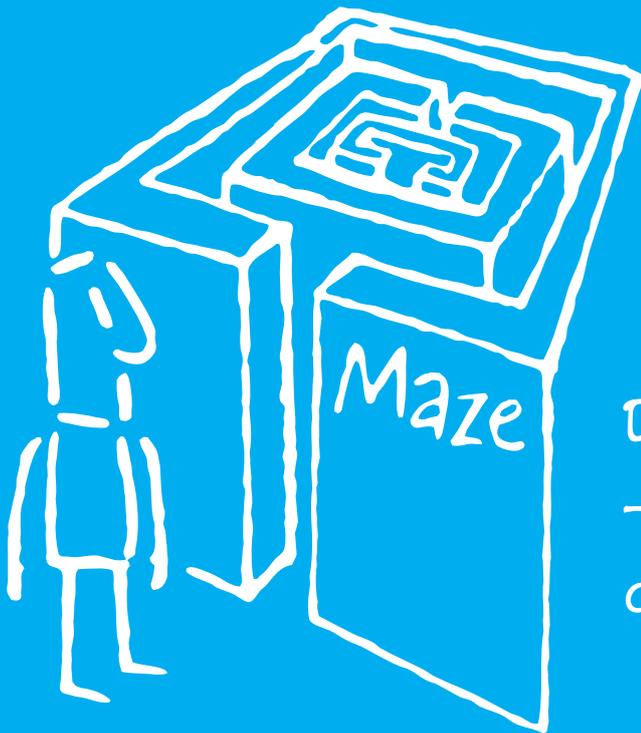
- 34% Safety
- 30% Financial malpractice
- 22% Misc. (trading, consumer, environment, discrimination)
- 14% Abuse in care

Sectors

- 53% Private sector
- 35% Public sector
- 12% Voluntary sector

Source of contact

The two main ways people now find out about our helpline are from the Internet (31%) and from information provided in their workplace (30%). This contrasts with a decade ago when the main sources were advice agencies (51%) and the media (29%).



Don't get lost
- give us a call
on 020 7404 6609

Our approach

We have no doubt that our support and advice is of greater value the earlier we are contacted for three reasons. First, once something has got off on the wrong foot it is much harder for everyone to focus on the message. Secondly, as people are not taught to question suspect conduct in a constructive way, they will often underestimate their ability to influence events. Thirdly, a good many people – unwittingly or otherwise – can confuse public and private interests without early independent advice.

Does it work?

We approached all those clients who had left telephone details seeking feedback on our service. We successfully contacted 377 and they all agreed to give feedback. The results were that:

- 95% said the advice we gave was clear
- 90% said they would recommend us
- 79% said the advice was helpful

The following two written thanks give an idea of the approach we take and why some people say they value it.

“Thank you all for all the help that you gave to me. It is an experience I would not want to repeat but I was very impressed with the support that I received.”

and...

“Our conversation yesterday was immensely valuable...I know that the others will appreciate your time and thought as much as I do. I feel secure in the view that there is now nothing sensible to be done but to move on.”