

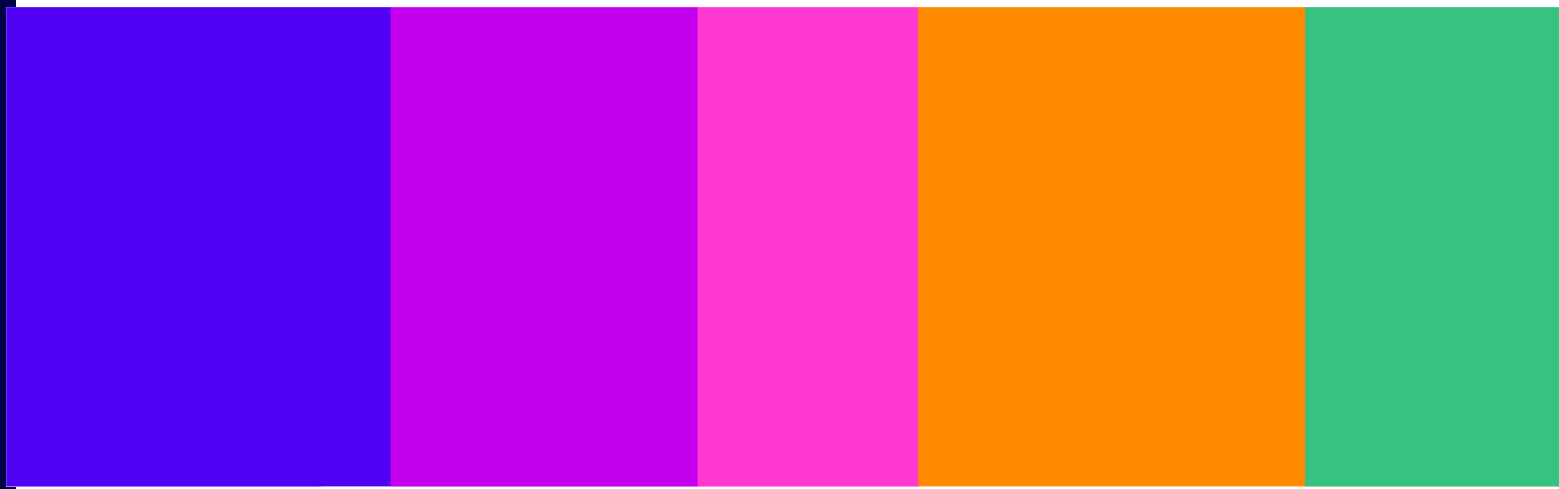
Annual whistleblowing report 2024-25

Ofcom's approach to managing external whistleblowing disclosures and a summary of disclosures in 2024-25

[Welsh version available](#)

Report

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Contents

1. Overview	3
2. Background	5
3. Whistleblowing disclosures	8
4. Conclusion	11

1. Overview

Background

Ofcom is the independent regulator, concurrent competition authority and designated enforcer of consumer law for the UK communications industries. We regulate fixed-line and mobile telecoms, premium rate services, TV, radio, on-demand services, online services, postal services, UK-established video-sharing platforms and the airwaves used by wireless devices.

We are independent of Government and the companies we regulate, and our duties are set out in statute, making us accountable to Parliament.¹

Our principal duty is 'to further the interests of citizens in relation to communications matters, and to further the interests of consumers in relevant markets, where appropriate by promoting competition'.²

About this report

This is Ofcom's 2024/25 report on whistleblowing disclosures made to Ofcom as the relevant 'Prescribed Person'.³ Ofcom has been designated as the 'Prescribed Person' for whistleblowing disclosures on matters relating to:

- the provision of electronic communications networks and services, and the use of the electromagnetic spectrum;
- broadcasting and the provision of television and radio services;
- the regulation of video-sharing platforms services under Part 4B of the Communications Act 2003;⁴
- the regulation of regulated services under the Online Safety Act 2023;
- postal services regulation;
- media ownership and control; and
- competition in communications markets.

This report covers the number of whistleblowing disclosures we have received for the reporting period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. This report has been prepared in accordance with the Prescribed Persons (Reports on Disclosures of Information) Regulations 2017 and covers the cases that Ofcom reasonably believes that are qualifying disclosures within the meaning of section 43B of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and which fall within the matters in respect of which Ofcom is so prescribed. It also includes the number of cases that were carried forward from the previous year,

¹ Ofcom operates under a number of Acts of Parliament including the Communications Act 2003, the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006, the Broadcasting Acts 1990 and 1996, the Digital Economy Acts 2010 and 2017, the Postal Services Act 2011 and the Online Safety Act 2023.

² Section 3(1) Communications Act 2003.

³ [The Public Interest Disclosure \(Prescribed Persons\) Order 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\), as amended and in force. Relevant amendments to Ofcom were: The Public Interest Disclosure \(Prescribed Persons\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Order 2022 and The Public Interest Disclosure \(Prescribed Persons\) \(Amendment\) Order 2023.](#)

⁴ Please note that the Video Sharing Platforms regime has been repealed in July 2025 and all in scope VSPs are now regulated in full under the Online Safety Act - [The UK's Video-Sharing Platforms regime – A retrospective - Ofcom.](#)

wider disclosures that Ofcom has received and assessed in the relevant period, as well as disclosures that were passed on to another Prescribed Person.

Ofcom has reported annually on the number of whistleblowing disclosures since the beginning of the 2014-15 financial year in the Ofcom Annual Report and Accounts.

2. Background

Obligations under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (“PIDA”)⁵, which amended the Employment Rights Act 1996, provides legal protection to employees who disclose information in the public interest from suffering a detriment or being unfairly dismissed on the grounds of having made a protected disclosure. Ofcom is a ‘Prescribed Person’ under PIDA,⁶ which means that individuals may benefit from the PIDA protections by making their whistleblowing disclosure to Ofcom on matters relating to:⁷

- a) the provision of electronic communications networks and services and the use of the electro-magnetic spectrum;
- b) broadcasting and the provision of television and radio services;
- c) the regulation of video sharing platforms services under Part 4B of the Communications Act 2003;
- d) the regulation of online safety services under the Online Safety Act 2023;
- e) postal services regulation;
- f) media ownership and control; and
- g) competition in communications markets.

We discuss the wider disclosure provisions under PIDA on page 8. Ofcom has no role in ultimately deciding whether the PIDA protections apply (this would be a matter for an Employment Tribunal) and does not become involved in the employment aspects of whistleblowing disclosures.

Ofcom has a number of obligations as a Prescribed Person, including an annual reporting obligation, and the requirement to act in a manner that preserves the confidentiality and anonymity of the individual making the disclosure.⁸ Often, a whistleblower will want to protect their identity because they feel vulnerable raising the issue with their employer; or perhaps they have already raised the issue internally and they consider that it has not been handled appropriately.

About information we receive

Information about whistleblowing is available on the Ofcom whistleblowing web page⁹ and whistleblowers can make disclosures to Ofcom through an online web form¹⁰ or by writing to the following address:

⁵ [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#), which has amended the Employment Rights Act 1996.

⁶ Prescribed Person - Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy – [Schedule 1 of Public Interest Disclosure \(Prescribed Persons\) Order 2014/2418 as amended and in force \(see footnote no.3 above\)](#).

⁷ Section 43F of the Employment Rights Act 1996, inserted by Section 1 of the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/23/section/1>

⁸ [The Prescribed Persons \(Reports on Disclosures of Information\) Regulations 2017](#).

⁹ [Whistleblowing: Making a protected disclosure to Ofcom - Ofcom](#).

¹⁰ [Whistleblowing: Making a protected disclosure to Ofcom - Ofcom](#).

Consumer Contact Team (Whistleblowing)
Ofcom
Riverside House
2a Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 9HA

Whistleblowing disclosures help us regulate the sectors within our regulatory remit. The information we receive can provide valuable information about the relevant organisations and the industry sectors in general. This could influence future policy decisions and/or could also lead to an enforcement investigation.

We have various options as how to respond to information provided by whistleblowers. Upon receiving a disclosure from a whistleblower, we will make an initial assessment of whether the disclosure raises concerns about a company's compliance with its regulatory or competition obligations that Ofcom should investigate further, in line with our Enforcement Guidelines.¹¹

There are a range of possible steps/outcomes. We may:

- **seek to gather further information** before reaching a decision on whether to investigate. This may involve contacting the organisation or individual that is the subject of the allegations. We would not disclose the whistleblower's identity or contact details without their consent.¹²
- **address the allegations without opening a formal investigation.** This may involve writing to the organisation or individual to remind them of any relevant regulatory requirements. In other cases, we can use the information provided by a whistleblower to support other projects and monitoring activities.
- **pass whistleblower information to a more appropriate regulator**, for example if the behaviour relates to a sector Ofcom doesn't regulate.
- **decide not to investigate further.** Ofcom is not legally required to investigate every disclosure received. When deciding whether to investigate, we consider how well we are using the resources at our disposal to protect the public interest.
- **decide to open an investigation.** We would follow the normal procedures set out in our Enforcement Guidelines, which include publishing an opening announcement on our website. We may decide to open an investigation where we consider the information provided raises credible concerns about a company's compliance with its regulatory or competition obligations.

We do not offer advice to whistleblowers about what protection is offered to them. Whilst we cannot offer legal advice, there are other sources of support, such as:

- [Protect](#), the whistleblowing charity
- [ACAS](#)
- [Citizens Advice](#)
- Whistleblower's own trade union, if you are a member.

The whistleblowing provisions under PIDA protect any 'worker' who makes a 'protected disclosure' of information, from being dismissed or penalised by their employer because of the disclosure. This is enforceable through an Employment Tribunal. Ofcom cannot ultimately determine whether a disclosure qualifies for protection or intervene in employment relations. Whistleblowers are advised

¹¹ [Regulatory Enforcement Guidelines for Investigations](#).

¹² We cannot guarantee anonymity, as an employer may independently identify a whistleblower.

to seek advice from one of the bodies mentioned above if they have any specific concerns. Whistleblowers may also seek legal advice from a suitably qualified person, such as a solicitor.

We will treat any information given to us sensitively and responsibly. We will restrict knowledge of a whistleblower's identity to a very small number of people, and we would not divulge that information unless we were legally obliged to do so, for example by a judge in a court of law. But even if we do our utmost to protect a whistleblower's identity, we cannot guarantee anonymity, as an employer may identify them independently.

3. Whistleblowing disclosures

Summary of the 54 whistleblowing disclosures we received in 2024-25:

- 51 new whistleblowing disclosures that Ofcom reasonably believed were qualifying and fell within Ofcom's scope as a Prescribed Person
- 3 of these disclosures were passed to another Prescribed Person
- 0 wider disclosures

Of the 54 whistleblowing disclosures received:

- 0 were still being assessed at the end of the year;
- 54 were closed during 2024-25; and
- 0 enforcement investigations were carried out as a result of a disclosure in 2024-25.

All 10 of the carried over whistleblowing disclosures from 2023/24 have been closed.

There were no wider disclosures received, or closed, in 2024-25.

Types of whistleblowing disclosures

Whistleblowing disclosures to Prescribed Persons

In order for a disclosure to a Prescribed Person to be protected, the worker must make the disclosure in good faith and must reasonably believe that both:

- the wrongdoing falls within any description of matters in respect of the Prescribed Person; and
- the information disclosed and any allegation contained in it are substantially true.¹³

Wider disclosures

In order for a wider disclosure to be accepted, the worker making the disclosure will also need to show (amongst other things), that they have previously disclosed substantially the same information to their employer or to a Prescribed Person, or they reasonably believed that they would have otherwise suffered a detriment or that material evidence would have been destroyed.¹⁴

Whilst the assessment criteria Ofcom must undertake to accept a wider disclosure is different, the protection offered by Ofcom in terms of confidentiality and anonymity is the same as a whistleblowing disclosure made to Ofcom in its role as a Prescribed Person. Also, the protections

¹³ Section 43F of the Employment Rights Act 1996, inserted by Section 1 of the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/23/section/1>

¹⁴ Section 43G of the Employment Rights Act 1996, inserted by Section 1 of the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/23/section/1>

under PIDA for the whistleblower are the same for a wider disclosure as for a disclosure to a Prescribed Person.¹⁵

Number of whistleblowing disclosures

Ofcom received 54 new whistleblowing disclosures in 2024-25:

- 51 whistleblowing disclosures that Ofcom reasonably believed that were qualifying and fell within Ofcom's scope as a Prescribed Person;
- 0 wider disclosures; and
- 3 of these whistleblowing disclosures were passed to another Prescribed Person.

Qualifying disclosures received by Ofcom as Prescribed Person categorised by action taken

In 2024-25, we received fifty-one whistleblowing disclosures and closed sixty-one (all fifty-one cases from cases received in 2024-25 and the ten cases brought forward from the previous year). After an initial assessment, most of these cases were closed without requiring engagement with the whistleblower's employer. No whistleblowing disclosures were still being assessed as of 31 March 2025.

Table 1: Action taken for whistleblowing disclosures in 2024-25.

Whistleblowing disclosure cases	Action taken	Whistleblowing disclosures by action taken
Open cases	Ongoing enquiries	0
	Ongoing Enforcement Investigation	0
Closed cases	No contact with employer – no action required	28
	Direct contact with employer – no further action after Initial Assessment	1
	Direct contact with employer – further action taken after Initial Assessment but no enforcement action	0
	Active monitoring	32
	Enforcement Investigation – no regulatory breach found	0
	Enforcement Investigation – regulatory breach found	0
TOTAL		61

¹⁵ To be treated as a 'protected disclosure' under PIDA, whistleblowing disclosures (whether they are made to a Prescribed Person or under PIDA's wider disclosures provisions), will need to qualify for protection. Qualifying disclosures are defined in section 43B of the Employment Rights Act 1996 as inserted by the PIDA (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/23/section/1>).

Qualifying disclosures received by Ofcom as Prescribed Person categorised by industry sector

Of the fifty-one protected whistleblowing disclosures we received in 2024-25, eighteen originated from the postal sector, twenty-seven originated from the communications sector, four from the broadcasting sector, one from spectrum and one in other category.

Table 2: Whistleblowing disclosures by sector in 2024-25.

	Whistleblowing disclosures by sector
Broadcasting	4
Communications	27
Competition Law	0
Spectrum	1
Online Safety	0
Post	18
Video Sharing Platforms	0
Other	1
TOTAL	51

Number of wider disclosures

We received no wider disclosures in 2024-25.

Number of whistleblowing disclosures passed to another Prescribed Person

We received three whistleblowing disclosures in 2024-25 that we identified as being appropriate to pass onto another Prescribed Person.

4. Conclusion

Whistleblowing disclosures can be an important source of information that supports our principal duty “to further the interests of citizens and consumers in relation to communications matters, where appropriate by promoting competition.”¹⁶

This year the communications sector was the largest area where we received whistleblowing disclosures in the 2024-25 financial year, and the postal sector moved down to become the second largest area.

This report shows that during the 2024-25 financial year we carried out a number of assessments on whistleblowing disclosures but did not open an enforcement investigation or take specific action against an employer. However, we use the information provided to make more informed policy decisions, and, where appropriate, take wider enforcement action.

Finally, we note that none of the disclosures had an impact on our ability to perform our regulatory functions or meet our objectives during the reporting period.

¹⁶ [Statement: Ofcom’s Plan of Work 2025/26](#), para 2.1.