

Covid Crisis, Helpline Special Report 4.
When The Silence Wins

Whistle- blowing During The Crisis

By Eileen Chubb@

Many will have seen the article in last week's Guardian [Covid 19 whistleblowers sacked](#) which highlighted the story of 5 Whistleblowers who had contacted our help-line.

Since our last helpline data special report, there have been **31** new calls to our helpline as of 5th May 2020.

We continue to be updated and to provide ongoing support to previous callers.

The new cases continue to be predominantly from residential Care Homes (Homes Without Nurses)

From **31** cases,

16 Residential Care Homes
6 Care Agency's
9 Nursing Homes.

From March 19th to May 5th, helpline data in total

108 Residential Care Homes
23 Care Agency's
42 Nursing Homes

This special report is on the emerging theme of Whistleblowing, all information is anonymised as usual for obvious reasons. All the employers involved are fully compliant with whistleblowing law and have adequate whistleblowing arrangements in place, however such measures do **not** protect whistle-blowers.

Apart from the Compassion in Care UK helpline data we have included crucial information given to us by Care workers in Spain, this information paints a very different picture to the events in Spanish care facilities and gives us a true understanding of events as they unfolded. This evidence and these facts have never before been reported.

During this crisis I have experienced the whistleblowing process moving at unprecedented speed, at such a high-volume and involving whistleblowing issues that are without exception extremely serious.

What is emerging from these cases is a lack of action by employers in response to genuine concerns. Whilst I have gathered robust evidence for two decades proving that whistleblowing compliance policies always have; and always will be entirely ineffective in protecting whistle-blowers, the Covid 19 crisis has laid bare the true cost of compliance friendly whistleblowing law, that cost is avoidable loss of life and suffering on a scale that is unprecedented.

The working conditions of staff are horrendous, the toll on physical and mental health is massive. The fear that is involved in going into work every day with little or all too often no PPE at all is corrosive on health and trust.

Voices From The Front Line

The below extracts are all from separate individuals.

“When I came home from work, I watched the news seeing what was happening abroad, I have lost count of the times I went to the owners and said this Covid thing is coming here, we need masks you should already buy them”

“When I went into a local shop the owner said you work in that care home, we don’t want you coming in

here spreading it. People are clapping for the NHS, but care staff, we are treated like dirt by our employers and even in the local community we are treated like lepers. People have no idea how hard it is, your working with staff who don't care, or who do care but are too frightened to say anything. Anyone who breaks ranks they are in big trouble”

“I kept saying look what the NHS staff are wearing, we have nothing to protect us, I told them again and again, this is whistleblowing, why are you ignoring this? I really thought that if I kept flagging this up, they would do something”

“We have no nurses here how are we supposed to care for people? We have X people here who are sick, they should have someone with them at least but there is not enough of us, at best we have a quick look at them. It feels like the only thing we are doing for people is checking to see if they are still alive. That's not care at all. I could not take it anymore, I kept saying this is wrong...”

“There are no nurses here we have to look after people, people are distressed, they cannot get enough air, it's just awful, we do not have the time to hold their hand, I loved working here but I hate it now, I am ashamed of the care when I used to be proud of it, they do not listen to us staff”

“I knew this place got rid of people who whistle blew, I have seen it happen. I really thought about it before opening my mouth but how can you not say something people are suffering; this can't be right”

“The first few days I think we were all running on adrenaline, then people got sick, I do not know what I expected but not this, these people need nursing, they need to be in hospital. We are looking after people with no PPE. We only have gloves and they are running out. I thought this company was alright until I whistle blew, they said I was letting the team down

moaning about this, they told all the other staff I was complaining about them, that's not true I reported proper concerns about that people should be sent to hospital and staff were at risk with no PPE, I felt I had no choice but to leave, it was so horrible"

"There are not enough staff, lots are of sick and sometimes we have agency cover but mainly we don't, I reported how people were not being cared for, there is not enough of us, no one could cope with this. The people we care for can't do anything like pick up a drink, we have to do it and we can't get to everyone, one person has not had a drink all day not since 7 in the morning, lots more like that every day people calling, help me, help me. I hate myself for having to walk past them, I hate this company for making me do this, I hate them for not listening to us, I love the people I care for but I have had my shifts cut and am on a zero hours contract, they call it bank staff. I had no choice but to say what was wrong, but I will always feel guilty about that because it meant I had to leave the people"

"This is not the place I used to work in, its changed so much the job is changed, It was always hard work but now it's punishing because all I can think of is all the people I have been forced to neglect. The company treat the staff like shit on their shoes. They know what is going on they do not care at all. I am out of here because I don't want to work for people like that, Risk your life going to work with no PPE for a company who treat you like shit"

" Whistleblowing is safe that is what all their leaflets say but when you do it you're not safe, I thought it was dangerous working without PPE, I reported this politely, no response from them (Employer) 4 times I told them, the manager was phoned and told I was kicking up a fuss. People are going to die here not just residents but staff,

that's not making a fuss that's reporting serious things, You would think I had done something terrible not something right. The atmosphere was really very bad, I don't want to work for them it's not worth it"

"There are no nurses here, we have no PPE and the only advice is from a GP on a video link, that's not medical care. The people who are sick are really suffering, they can't take a drink they need to be on a drip, they are so thirsty, and they need help to breathe. This is like a war zone in here. They need to be in hospital I keep reporting this but am told leave it alone, yes people have died from lack of medical care, I feel so useless they won't listen to me"

"How can I explain it, it's like all of a sudden you whistle blow and because of that you discover that you are working like a slave and risking your life with no PPE and you are doing it for the shittiest company in the country"

"After telling them about the things that were so wrong, I feel vulnerable, I can't explain it, but things have changed, how management speak to me now its different, they are on guard. I won't leave the people but as soon as this whole thing is over, I am out of here and will never work in another care job not after this nightmare"

"I never really had any contact with the company I never thought about them, I was happy in this home and doing this job, the residents are lovely, most of the staff are lovely, really caring it was a great team of people. I must have been mad now that I have blown the whistle about everything (lack of PPE and staffing levels leading to serious neglect) It's like I must have been stupid or something to think the company was bothered about us, you work yourself into the ground and as soon as you say something is not right you are treated so badly, I feel so angry about

what has happened because I will never ever trust anyone again, I can't work here and I can't walk away from the residents who need me"

"We really did everything to keep people safe in here then they told us someone with Covid 19 was coming in here, they said we should barrier nurse them, what with no nurses and a pair of rubber gloves? I would like to see fucking Matt Hancock come in here and do it, yes, I blew the whistle and said it was not right. Not right for the person coming in and not right for the people living here. All the staff feel the same but the fear of saying anything, they know it will cost them their job, it cost me mine"

"I am not a whistle-blower because I only told the company I never told the press (Is a whistle-blower) They never sacked me I left because they made me feel so bad, There was really bad feeling against me because of saying about what was wrong"

"Staff would be there one minute and gone the next it was like the Bermuda triangle or something, when you asked you would be told they had gone and snitched about the PPE and people being sick in the home. Its dreadful here, good caring staff have gone, lots of staff have zero hours contracts its so easy to get rid of us. That must have been so hard for them staff they love the residents; we have all been told to get on with it and keep quiet about what's going on"

"I told them again and again but it pointless they just don't give a monkeys about the people in there or the staff. I am going to work at x supermarket, they have PPE and you don't have to keep crying at the thought of going to work"

" First it was all ok they said we would have PPE, they told everyone we had this but we did not, first the staff who were saying, this is wrong, would be there one shift and then gone and when you asked if they were sick you would be told no, then there were

other staff who were sick, more and more patients got sick, some would be found dead because no one knew if they were dead or alive, no one was checking there were too many sick patients and too few staff, the papers say staff fled and left people but most of the staff were screaming for help, for protection for such a long time, most did not flee they were pushed out for caring and they broke” (Former Care worker Spanish care facility)

“ My neighbours, friends even some of my family they all say to me that, I am a bad person because I leave all those people to die alone, they were not there, they do not understand, lots of staff said no this is wrong, they were treated very badly for saying this, these staff kept the place going, when they go for speaking about the bad things then more bad things, staff got sick, too many people sick, no one to care for them, very quick after that so many die. It’s so bad but no one writes in the papers about staff who care, who say help us this is not right, we are all judged bad people, but the bad people are the ones who did not listen” (Former care worker Spanish facility)

“All you read is the staff left these people without care, that’s not what occurred, we did our best, so many people were sick and not enough staff to work because so many were sick too. We were so afraid, but we kept saying help us and no one was listening, we did not abandon people. The staff said things are very bad, those staff were not wanted and then only staff who were not good were left, it was all broken so quickly” (Former care worker Spanish facility)

Summary

There is so much more staff eyewitness evidence showing similar patterns but there was neither time nor space to list every experience in this report.

I would like to thank all those staff who have contacted us and told us about their experiences.

I have worked with whistle-blowers for two decades, supporting over eight thousand people to date. I know the fate of people who have courage and integrity.

The past few weeks are the hardest I have ever experienced running a help-line, many of the most traumatic details of suffering and inhumanity have been omitted from this report mainly because the details would identify individual whistle-blowers.

Many of the staff have been told not to speak of events or they could be sanctioned legally, they have given us evidence in the hope that their stories could be told without placing them in further danger.

11 members of staff were told in particular not to speak to Compassion In Care, I take this as evidence that this charity is so effective at exposing abuse and wrongdoing that we are feared by those who stand on the wrong side.

For two decades I have fought for whistle-blowers to be legally protected, I continue that fight more determined.

The events of the last 6 weeks have shown us the cost of ignoring whistle-blowers.

Because I know the full details of the extent of the suffering involved and the injustice to individuals who cared about that suffering, I would highlight the following,

. All those who have and continue to make billions out of "The Care Industry" who have left staff with no PPE or support and who even now are asking shamelessly for even more public money.

(With the exception of those small homes who kept their residents & staff safe at the expense of profit)

I feel absolute contempt for those who have tried to hijack whistleblowing law for their own benefit.

Most of all I feel rage that so many vulnerable people are considered expendable, that so many staff could be screaming out for help to save people and yet they were and continue to be ignored.

I hope this report is a voice for the vulnerable and Whistleblowers because they are the last people being heard in parliament.

Bad things happen when good people are not heard, never has this been truer,

Eileen Chubb 5th May 2020

Embargoed