

Raising Concerns and Whistleblowing

Supporting guidance for the Architects Code of Conduct
and Practice

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Introduction

The Architects Registration Board (ARB) has developed this guidance to support architects in complying with their professional obligations under the Architects Code of Conduct, including acting with integrity, in the public interest, and reporting concerns where appropriate.

The Code explains that architects will meet these Standards when they take steps to raise and escalate concerns about serious risks, unlawful activity, or breaches of the Code – including, but not limited to, matters of building safety, discrimination, or professional misconduct.

This guidance is not mandatory, but any architect departing from it must be prepared to justify why they did so, after using their professional judgment.

Issues relating to whistleblowing and workplace concerns may also be governed by legal protections and obligations. This guidance does not restate that law, and architects should seek advice from legal advisors or other relevant professionals where appropriate.

An Architects' Duty to Raise Concerns

Architects have a professional obligation to act in the public interest and must not ignore the behaviour or actions of others that may break the law or compromise health and safety.

Standard 1 of the Architects Code requires architects to act with honesty and integrity and says that they should report to ARB where they or another architect may have fallen significantly short of the Standards within this Code.

Standard 2 of the Architects Code requires architects to act in the public interest and says that they should report others to an appropriate authority where there are risks to people or the environment.

Architects should use their own discretion in deciding whether to escalate their concerns. Issues that are more likely to require reporting to ARB or another appropriate authority will include:

- Unlawfulness
- Discrimination, bullying or harassment
- Unsafe building design or site practices
- Dishonest or misleading conduct
- Unjustifiable damage to the environment
- Bribery or fraud

Concerns should be raised even if the architect is not directly affected.

How to Raise a Concern

How an architect should raise a concern will depend on their circumstances. They may need to self-report an issue, or report a concern about a colleague, another architect, or an individual with whom they do not have an existing relationship.

If the concern is about a colleague at work, then the architect should follow their whistleblowing or complaints procedure, where possible, or raise the issue with a senior person or HR department.

Architects are not required to raise the issue internally if the issue requires immediate action, or they believe it will not be taken seriously or lead to reprisals.

Concerns should be recorded in writing, and a record kept of any discussions.

Serious concerns about the conduct of another architect should be raised with ARB at professionalstandards@arb.org.uk

Issues related to health and life safety, particularly on construction sites, should be raised with the Health & Safety Executive; or a failure to comply with Building Regulations should be reported to the local Building Control Authority.

Where the concern may involve criminal conduct, architects should in the first instance contact the police.

Contact details are provided at the end of this guidance.

Legal Protections for Whistleblowers

The [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#) protects workers who report certain types of wrongdoing in the public interest. If architects raise a concern about health and safety, criminality, legal breaches or cover-ups, they are protected from dismissal or detrimental treatment.

[The Worker Protection \(Amendment of Equality Act 2010\) Act 2023](#) provides legal protection from retaliation against anyone making a disclosure of sexual harassment, where that disclosure has been made in good faith.

Fostering a Speak Up Culture

All architects should help create and maintain a professional culture where concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal, and issues are dealt with constructively and confidentially.

If an architect is unsure whether to raise a concern, or how to do so, they may want to speak to a trusted colleague or supervisor or can seek advice from ARB. They can also seek confidential advice from whistleblowing organisations such as [Protect: Speak up, stop harm](#).

Raising a concern in good faith is not only a legal right – it is a professional responsibility. Architects should be prepared to challenge wrongdoing and act in the public interest.

Useful Contacts

Protect: Speak up, stop harm (<https://protect-advice.org.uk/>)

Health & Safety Executive (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/tell-us-about-a-health-and-safety-issue.htm>)

Building Safety Regulator (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/contact-the-building-safety-regulator>)

Find your local council (<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>)