The cost of blowing the whistle

A recent Employment Tribunal case in Leeds highlights the potential costs for employers if they fail to properly manage whistle-blowing claims at work.

Carol Lingard was a prison officer at Wakefield Prison in Yorkshire where Ian Huntley, the Soham murderer, is held. She “blew the whistle” on her colleagues alleging that one prison officer gave a Hitler salute to an Austrian inmate; that another attempted to plant images of naked children in a sex offender’s cell and that prisoners were being bullied.

Ms Lingard subsequently complained that she was badly treated by her employers for having raised her concerns. She subsequently resigned from her post and claimed unfair constructive dismissal, complaining that she was forced to resign for having blown the whistle.

The Leeds Employment Tribunal found in her favour and held that she had been unfairly dismissed and awarded her over £470,000 in compensation.

Employers’ need to be aware of this complex area of law. Failure to have an understanding of what the law expects can, as you can see from this case, be extremely costly. For some employers an award of this scale could put them out of business.

On Thursday 8 September 2005 (at 5pm) and Tuesday 13 September 2005 (at 12.00pm), we will be conducting a workshop on whistle-blowing and what employers’ should know to help avoid claims. The sessions, as always, are free to all of our clients and there is a minimal cost to non-clients. We are in the process of preparing our invitations but, in the meantime, if you would like to register for either of these dates, then please let Sejal Raja or Lara Crane know by telephone or email. Sejal’s contact details are: telephone 0207-227-7410; sejal.raja@rlb-law.com; Lara’s contact details are: telephone 0207-227-7478; lara.crane@rlb-law.com.

© RadcliffesLeBrasseur
6 July 2005