NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline - Analysis of Contacts 2020/21

The whistleblowing advice line was established in February 2016 to give advice and support to people with concerns that an organisation might be putting children at risk. This report provides data around use of the commissioned helpline between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021. It is worth noting that whilst the NSPCC helpline made some operational changes to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic the Whistleblowing advice line remained available throughout. Whilst data is not directly comparable with 2019/2020 as a result of the pandemic, it is worth noting that in 19/20, a total of 390 contacts were responded to by the Helpline.

In 2020/21 the whistleblowing helpline responded to 230 contacts, 59% of levels in the previous year. 150 of the total contacts handled were classed as child welfare contacts and went on to receive a response from a helpline practitioner. 80 contacts were handled by the Helpline Adviser team and classified as enquiries.

Outcome of Contact	Total
Advice	**110**
Referral	**37**
Referral Update	**3**
Enquiry	**80**
Total Enquiry and Child Welfare Contacts	**230**

Of the 150 contacts handled directly by the Helpline service 27% (40) resulted in a referral being made to an external agency (or an update to an existing referral) these ranged from national agencies such as OFSTED, local authority Children's Services teams, LADOs' or the police. The biggest proportion of contacts (73%) received advice from the service.

Child Welfare Contacts Main Concerns

The table below shows the main child welfare concerns discussed by contacts to the whistleblowing helpline and the outcome of the contact during 2020/21.

Main Concern	Advice	Referral/ Referral Update	Total	%
Bullying NOT ONLINE	7		7	5%
Code Does Not Exist	14	2	16	11%
Crime/Legal/Services	22	8	30	20%
Disability/SEN/Health		1	1	1%
Emotional Abuse	4	2	6	4%
Family Relationships	2		2	1%
Living in Care/LAC Issue	2		2	1%
Neglect	6	3	9	6%
Online Sexual Abuse/Exploitation	2		2	1%
Parent/Adult Health/Behaviour	5	3	8	5%
Physical Abuse	13	10	23	15%
School/Education problems	24	3	27	18%
Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (Contact)	9	6	15	10%
Suicidal		2	2	1%
Total	**110**	**40**	**150**	100%

The highest proportion of overall contacts related to Crime/Legal/Services at 20% of the total, followed by School/Education problems at 18%. Physical Abuse was third most prevalent accounting for 15% of contacts. Where a referral (or referral update) was made Physical abuse was the highest recorded concern. This contrasts with 19/20 where School/Education problems was the highest concern at 19%, followed by services/support/legal at 17%.

Referrals by the region of the agency referred to

Where a referral is made we can identify the location of the referred to agency as follows;

Please note that one contact can result in multiple referrals to different agencies based in different areas. Therefore, the total number of referrals by area is higher than the total number of contacts that resulted in a referral being made.

Agency Region	Total Agency Referrals	%
East Midlands	7	10%
East of England	11	15%
London	5	7%
North West	10	14%
South East	10	14%
South West	2	3%
Wales	1	1%
West Midlands	2	3%
Yorkshire & the Humber	12	16%
Nationwide	13	18%
Total	**73**	**100%**

18% of cases were referred to a nationwide agency such as OFSTED or CEOP.

Referrals by the type of agency referred to

Please note that one contact can result in multiple referrals to different agencies based in different areas. Therefore, the total number of referrals by agency is higher than the total number of contacts that resulted in a referral being made.

Agency Type	Total Agency Referrals Sent	%
Adult Services	1	1%
Children's Services	48	66%
Education	11	15%
Other	1	1%
Police	12	16%
Total	**73**	**100%**

The greatest proportion of referrals were sent to Children's Services at 66%.

Themes

Where information about the relationship of the referrer to the child is provided, relationship role by contact type is provided below. Information was available for 55 of the 150 contacts. With many contacts, the role status and relationship to child data is blank, however this is mainly for contacts ending in advice only.

Relationship of Referrer to Child	Advice	Referral/Referral Update	Total CW Contacts	%
Adult - Other	4	12	16	29%
Father		1	1	2%
Grandparent (Maternal)	1	1	2	4%
Member of the Public		4	4	7%
Mother		3	3	5%
Neighbour	1	1	2	4%
Non Family Member -Adult Female		1	1	2%
Not Known / Not Given		1	1	2%
Professional - Other	2	3	5	9%
Professional - Teacher/Education Professional	6	8	14	25%
Professional -Social/Care Worker		2	2	4%
Professional -Sports Coach/Club Leader		1	1	2%
Teacher / School Staff / Youth Worker / Childcare	1	2	3	5%
Total	**15**	**40**	**55**	100%

The most frequent relationship role is Professional – Teacher/Educational Professional at 25%. Where a referral was made, Adult – Other was the most frequent relationship role.

Below is a breakdown of the ages of young people (where correct data provided) in referrals:

Age of Child	Total Children in Referrals	%
0	1	3%
1	1	3%
2	6	15%
4	2	5%
5	4	10%
6	2	5%
7	2	5%
8	4	10%
9	3	8%
11	1	3%
13	2	5%
14	3	8%
15	6	15%
16	1	3%
17	1	3%
Total	**39**	100%

Where we know the age of the child, 36% of children in referrals are high school and sixth form age, 44% primary school age and 21% under 4 years old.

'Sub-concerns' are selected by the Helpline professional as part of the recording process and each contact can have a number of 'sub-concerns' selected under one main concern. The top five 'Sub - concerns' for child welfare contacts made to the Whistleblowing helpline are found below (excluding "No relevant sub concerns"):

Subconcern	Advice	Referral/Referral Update	Total CW Contacts	%
Whistleblowing	14	8	22	12%
Contact with a person who poses a physical abuse risk	8	6	14	8%
Problems with teacher/school staff	9		9	5%
Contact with a person who poses a sexual abuse risk	2	5	7	4%
Basic Care Needs	5	1	6	3%

Below are some of the key issues discussed in contacts to the whistleblowing helpline:

- Contact uncomfortable about how children's services management dealing with Covid-19
- Concerns about a non-education professional being of potential risk to children
- Staff concerned about management practice in relation to reporting child protection concerns
- Concerns about Supported Accommodation staff not adequately protecting vulnerable young resident
- Concerns about the conduct of ex headmaster and safeguarding policies and procedures of the school
- Concerns about inappropriate behaviour of sports coach and club's safeguarding measures in relation to this
- Concerns raised in relation to the behaviours and safeguarding measures taken by the principle and governing body of an SEN school
- Concerns about inappropriate behaviour of residential carer and management's safeguarding measures in relation to this
- Staff at nursery unhappy about how management deal with safeguarding concerns
- Failure of management in a residential home to escalate safeguarding concerns correctly