

NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline Annual Report 2021/2022

Section A:

1: Summary of Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers because of disclosing information which is considered to be in the public interest. NSPCC is a 'prescribed person' as defined under the Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 2014.

The NSPCC has been a prescribed whistleblowing body for child welfare and protection since 2001 ([Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016](#)). This means any worker who has child protection or welfare concerns can make a disclosure to us and we can seek to protect them against unfair treatment at work.

2: The NSPCC Reporting Duty

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline is required to report on the disclosures received. Whistleblowing is the term used when someone provides information concerning perceived wrongdoing relating to how a child welfare concern was handled by their own organisation. This is known as a whistleblowing disclosure.

The NSPCC are required to report the following each year:

- The number of disclosures received.
- The number of these disclosures where further action was taken.
- A summary in relation to all disclosures.

3: NSPCC Reason for Reporting

The Whistleblowing Advice Line was commissioned by the Home Office. It is a direct response to the recommendation for 'a new whistleblowing national portal for child abuse related reports' set out in the Government's Tracking child sexual exploitation report ([HM Government, 2015](#)).

The Whistleblowing Advice Line isn't intended to replace any current practices or responsibilities of organisations working with children. We encourage professionals to raise concerns about a child to their own employer in the first instance.

Section B:

Part 1: NSPCC functions, objectives and powers

The NSPCC are the leading children's charity in the UK, specialising in child protection and dedicated to protecting children today to prevent abuse tomorrow. The NSPCC are the only UK children's charity with statutory powers, which means they can take action to safeguard children at risk of abuse.

Part 2: Importance of Whistleblowing

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line should be contacted if:

- The organisation the professional works for doesn't have clear safeguarding procedures to follow
- The professional thinks the concern won't be dealt with properly or may be covered-up
- The professional has raised a concern, but it hasn't been acted upon
- The professional is worried about being treated unfairly

A professional can contact the Whistleblowing Advice Line about an incident that happened in the past, is happening now or is believed may happen in the future.

The Advice Line can be contacted by calling 0800 028 8025 or by email to help@nspcc.org.uk

Section C:

Part 1: Dates of the Reporting Period

The reporting period for this report is 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 inclusive.

Part 2: Statement on Confidentiality

If a professional contacts the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline, they will be connected to a trained practitioner. They will discuss the concerns and:

- Talk through the whistleblowing process
- Take details of the concern raised
- Explain the protection available if needed
- Get relevant agencies and authorities to take action on the concern raised

The caller does not have to tell us who they are – they can remain anonymous. If a name is given and contact details, the professional can ask the NSPCC not to share these with other agencies.

Part 3: Summary of the contacts to and action taken by NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline in response to disclosures

In 2021/22 the whistleblowing helpline responded to 190 contacts, 83% of levels in the previous year. 146 of the total contacts handled were classed as child welfare contacts and went on to receive a response from a helpline practitioner. 44 contacts were handled by the Helpline Adviser team and classified as enquiries.

Outcome of Contact	Total
Advice	108
Referral	35
Referral Update	3
Enquiry	44
Total Enquiry and Child Welfare Contacts	190

Of the 108 contacts handled directly by the Helpline service 35%, (38) 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, LADO or the police. The biggest proportion of contacts (57%) 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 2021/22.

Main Concern	Advice	Referral/ Referral Update	Total	%
Bullying NOT ONLINE	2		2	1%
Child Mental/Emotional Health		1	1	1%
Crime/Legal/Services	21	5	26	18%
Domestic Abuse	1		1	1%
Emotional Abuse	1	1	2	1%
Neglect	8	3	11	8%
Other	17		17	12%
Parent/Adult Health/Behaviour	2		2	1%
Physical Abuse	13	8	21	14%
School/Education problems	38	18	56	38%
Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (Contact)	5	2	7	5%
Total	108	38	146	100%

The highest proportion of overall contacts related to School / Education problems at 38% of the total, followed by Crime/Legal/Services problems at 18%. Physical Abuse was third most prevalent accounting for 14% of contacts. Where a referral (or referral update) was made, School / Education problems was the highest recorded concern with 47%, followed by Physical Abuse with 21%. This contrasts with 20/21 where Physical abuse was the highest concern.

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	8	11%
East of England	3	4%
London	12	16%
North East	1	1%
North West	6	8%
South East	10	14%
South West	4	5%
West Midlands	8	11%
Yorkshire & the Humber	2	3%
Nationwide	20	27%
Total	74	100%

20% 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	3	4%
Children's Services	38	51%
Education	19	26%
Other	1	1%
Police	13	18%
Total	74	100%

The greatest proportion of referrals were sent to Children's Services at 51%.

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 63 of the 146 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	5	11	16	25%
Father	0	1	1	2%
Member of the Public		2	2	3%
Mother	1	2	3	5%
Neighbour	1	2	3	5%
Not Known / Not Given		1	1	2%
Professional - Other		1	1	2%
Professional - Teacher/Education Professional	12	13	25	40%
Professional – Health professional	1	0	1	2%
Professional – Other Professional	1	1	2	3%
Professional -Social/Care Worker	1	1	2	3%
Professional – Youth Worker	2	2	4	6%
Teacher / School Staff / Youth Worker / Childcare	1	1	2	3%
Total	25	38	63	100%

The most frequent relationship role is Professional – Teacher/Educational Professional at 40%. Where a referral was made, Professional – Teacher / Education professionals was also 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	4%
1	1	4%
2	1	4%
3	1	4%
5	1	4%
7	1	4%
8	1	4%
9	2	7%
11	8	29%
12	6	21%
15	2	7%
17	3	11%
Total	45	100%

Where we know the age of the child, 68% of children in referrals are high school and sixth form age, 18% primary school age and 14% under 4 years old.

'Sub-concerns' are selected by the Helpline professional as part of the recording process and each contact can have several '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"):

Sub concern	Advice	Referral / Referral Update	Total CW Contacts	%
Dissatisfied with Services	7	0	7	3%
Problems with teacher/school staff	20	11	31	13%
Safeguarding concerns	23	17	40	17%
Unhappy with school procedures/response	28	12	40	17%
Whistleblowing	16	3	19	8%

Part 4: Summary of findings

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

- Concerns raised about an alleged lack of adherence to safeguarding policy in a school
- Concerns raised regarding concerns for behaviours and safeguarding measures taken by a director at a children's care home
- Staff concerned about inconsistent advice in relation to recording and reporting child protection concerns within a school setting
- Concerns alleged that staff at a nursery are failing to follow appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures
- Concerns raised in relation to potential organisational safeguarding concerns within a youth club setting

- Staff at a school raising concerns of a culture for not addressing child protection concerns that had been reported
- Concerns raised about behaviours and practices of staff at an SEN school
- Information shared about concerns for the safeguarding behaviour of staff at a school and any potential impact on the emotional well-being and safety on the children
- Concerns raised in relation to the safeguarding practices of a nursery

Section D:

Impact on Disclosures on Ability to Perform Duties

This is a summary of the contacts to the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline and those contacts where concerns have been raised about how child protection concerns have been handled in other agencies. As a result, this is information shared with other organisations and does not impact on the NSPCC's ability to perform its duty as a direct result of the disclosures made to the Helpline.