

NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline Annual Report 2024/2025

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 2014 ([Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - GOV.UK](#)). 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 is not 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 does not have clear safeguarding procedures to follow
- The professional thinks the concern will not be dealt with properly or may be covered up
- The professional has raised a concern, but it has not 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 2024 to 31 March 2025 inclusive.

Part 2: Statement on Confidentiality

If a professional contacts the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline, they will be connected to a child protection specialist. 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 act on the concerns 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 2024/25 the Whistleblowing Helpline responded to 385 contacts, a 3% increase on the levels seen in the previous year. 306 (79%) of the total contacts handled were classified as child welfare contacts and went on to receive a response from a child protection specialist. This is a higher proportion than the previous year where 72% of contacts received a response from a child protection specialist. In 24/25 79 of the contacts were handled by the Helpline Adviser team and classified as enquiries.

Outcome of Contact	Total
Advice	223
Referral	61
Referral Update	22
Enquiry	79
Total Enquiry and Child Welfare Contacts	385

Of the 306 contacts handled directly by the Helpline service, 83 (27%) 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 (58%) received advice from the service with no referral made. It is worth noting that some contacts may relate to the same ‘case’, particularly where communication is by email.

Child Welfare Contacts Main Concerns

The table below shows the main child welfare concerns discussed by contacts to the Whistleblowing Helpline during 2024/25 and the outcome of these.

Main Concern	Advice	Referral / Referral Update	Total	%
School/Education problems	65	21	86	28%
Neglect	34	13	47	15%
Agencies/Crime/Legal	25	14	39	13%
Domestic Abuse	36	2	38	12%
Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (Contact)	20	12	32	10%
Physical Abuse	10	12	22	7%
Safeguarding Concern (No details provided)	15	3	18	6%
Child Mental/Emotional Health	4	2	6	2%
Emotional Abuse	3	3	6	2%
Parent/Adult Health/Behaviour	3	1	4	1%
Bullying NOT ONLINE	3	0	3	1%
Family Relationships	2	0	2	1%
Online Sexual Abuse/Exploitation	2	0	2	1%
Online Harm & Safety	1	0	1	0%
Total	223	83	306	100%

The highest proportion of overall contacts related to School / Education problems at 28% of the total, followed by Neglect at 15%. Agencies / Crime / Legal was the third most prevalent concern, accounting for 13% of contacts. Where a referral (or referral update) was made, School / Education problems was also the highest recorded concern with 25%, followed by Agencies / Crime / Legal with 17%.

School/Education problems saw a decrease in this reporting year, down from 96 to 86 this year. There was also a decrease in concerns about Agencies / Legal / Services, down from 44 in 2023/24 to 39 in 2024/25. An increase of note was in the reporting of Neglect as a main concern, where this increased from 26 to 47 contacts this year.

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	%
Nationwide	54	34%
East Midlands	22	14%
East of England	18	11%
South East	16	10%
London	14	9%
North West	13	8%
Yorkshire & the Humber	9	6%
West Midlands	7	4%
Scotland	3	2%
North East	2	1%
South West	2	1%
Total	160	100%

There were 160 referrals sent to external agencies in 2024/25. The greatest proportion of referrals were sent to Children's Services at 59%, accounting for 95 individual referrals.

34% of referral were sent to a nationwide agency such as OFSTED or the Department for Education for the regulation of independent schools.

Referrals were sent to agencies in Scotland and all regions of England. No referrals were made to agencies in Wales, Northern Ireland or the Isle of Man.

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	%
Children's Services	95	59%
Education	53	33%
Police	11	7%
Other	1	1%
Adult Services	0	0%
Total	160	100%

Themes

Where information about the relationship of the referrer to the child is provided, relationship role is provided below against the outcome of the contact. This information was available for 134 of the 306 child welfare contacts. For the remaining contacts, the role status and relationship to child data is blank, in these instances contacts largely received advice only. Where a referral has been made relationship data is more complete.

Relationship of Referrer to Child	Advice	Referral / Referral Update	Total CW Concerns	%
Professional	54	70	124	92%
Adult Member of the public	1	4	5	4%
Adult - Other Family Member	0	3	3	2%
Parent/Carer	1	0	1	1%
Unknown / Not disclosed	0	1	1	1%
Total	56	78	134	100%

Overall, where data was provided, 92% of concerns were raised by professionals, with education professionals accounting for 63% of these. 4% of contacts were recorded as 'Adult Member of the public'. While the Whistleblowing Helpline is intended for professionals, members of the public contact the service as well. This is often when a member of the public wants to 'whistle blow' on perceived poor practices within an organisation, such as a school.

Referrals made referenced 95 individual children. For 50 of those, age was provided. Below is a breakdown of the ages of young people included ¹ in referrals:

Age of Child	Total Children in Referrals	%
2	1	2%
3	2	4%
4	1	2%
5	5	10%
6	1	2%
7	1	2%
8	1	2%
9	6	12%
10	3	6%
11	4	8%
12	4	8%
13	3	6%
14	2	4%
15	2	4%
16	8	16%
17	6	12%
Total	50	100%

Where we know the age of the child, 58% of children in referrals are high school or sixth form age (11-18) 36% primary school age (4-10) and 6% under 4 years old.

Alongside the 'Main Concern', 'Sub-concerns' are selected by the Helpline professional as part of the recording process to further detail the nature of the concern. Each contact can have several 'sub-

¹ The age of the young people is based on the assumptions of the referrers

concerns' selected under one main concern. The top five 'Sub -concerns' for child welfare contacts made to the Whistleblowing helpline are found below.

Sub concern	Main Concern	Advice	Referral / Referral Update	Total CW Contacts	%
Whistleblowing (Reporting Employers Only)	<i>Agencies/Crime/Legal</i>	21	14	35	
	<i>Domestic Abuse</i>	35	2	37	
	Total	56	16	72	16%
Safeguarding Concerns	<i>School/Education problems</i>	44	18	62	14%
Unhappy with school procedures/ response	<i>School/Education problems</i>	41	13	54	12%
Problems with teacher/school staff	<i>School/Education problems</i>	35	14	49	11%
Basic Care Needs	<i>Neglect</i>	24	3	27	6%

Part 4: Summary of findings

Below are some of the issues discussed in contacts to the Whistleblowing Helpline:

- Concerns raised for the conduct of a professional who has a position of trust with children in a pre-school setting, and the senior leadership's actions in relation to safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Referrer raised concerns in relation to the safeguarding practices at an Academy that related to peer on peer physical and emotional abuse, and the way the safeguarding team addressed incidents.
- Concerns raised about two teachers in a free school in relation to their ability to safeguard children.
- Caller raised concerns of bullying towards children by a coach at a local football club.
- Concerns raised by a support worker about potential safeguarding concerns at a Summer Camp.
- Allegations made about improper care of a child with SEN needs at a primary school, and failure to follow safety protocols or offering appropriate training to staff.
- Referrer contacted the Helpline with concerns for children at an Academy in relation to staff conduct and possible unsafe recruitment.
- Allegations made that three children are subjected to emotional abuse by care staff in a children's residential home.
- Concerns raised about a teacher's conduct towards a pupil with special educational needs and the school's inability to carry out appropriate safeguarding investigations.

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.

