# NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline Annual Report 2025/2026

## 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 2025 to 31 March 2026 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 2025/26 the Whistleblowing Helpline responded to 570 contacts. 466 (82%) 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 79% of contacts received a response from a child protection specialist. In 25/26, 104 of the contacts were handled by the Helpline Adviser team and classified as enquiries.

| Outcome of Contact | Total |
|---|---|
| Advice | **361** |
| Referral / Referral Update | **105** |
| Enquiry | **104** |
| **Total Enquiry and Child Welfare Contacts** | **570** |

Of the 570 contacts handled directly by the Helpline service, 105 (18%) 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 (63%) 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 2025/26 and the outcome of these.

| Main Concern | Advice | Referral / Referral Update | Total | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **School/Education problems** | 93 | 27 | **120** | 26% |
| **Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (Contact & Online)** | 76 | 22 | **98** | 20% |
| **Neglect** | 55 | 21 | **76** | 16% |
| **Agencies / Crime / Legal** | 59 | 16 | **75** | 16% |
| **Safeguarding Concern** | 37 | 3 | **40** | 9% |
| **Physical Abuse** | 23 | 9 | **32** | 7% |
| **Emotional Abuse** | 8 | 2 | **10** | 2% |
| **Disability / SEN / Health** | 3 | 1 | **4** | 1% |
| **Parent / Adult Health / Behaviour** | 2 | 2 | **4** | 1% |
| **Runaway / Homeless / Missing** | 1 | 1 | **2** | 1% |
| **Ethnicity / Religion / Culture** | 1 | 1 | **2** | 0% |
| **Bullying – Not Online** | 1 | 0 | **1** | 0% |
| **Sex, Relationships & Puberty** | 1 | 0 | **1** | 0% |
| **Total** | **361** | **105** | **466** | **100%** |

The highest proportion of overall contacts related to School / Education problems at 26% of the total, followed by Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (Contact & Online) at 20%. Neglect was the third most prevalent concern, accounting for 16% of contacts. Where a referral (or referral update) was made, School / Education problems was also the highest recorded concern with 26%, followed by Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (Contact & Online) with 21%.

School/Education problems saw an increase in this reporting year, up from 86 to 120 this year. There was also an increase in concerns about Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (Contact & Online), up from 34 in 2024/25 to 94 in 2025/26. An increase of note was in the reporting of Neglect as a main concern, where this increased from 47 to 76 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 | 59 | **31%** |
| South East | 39 | **20%** |
| London | 28 | **15%** |
| West Midlands | 14 | **7%** |
| East Midlands | 14 | **7%** |
| North West | 10 | **5%** |
| East of England | 8 | **4%** |
| South West | 7 | **4%** |
| Wales | 4 | **2%** |
| Yorkshire & Humberside | 3 | **2%** |
| Scotland | 3 | **2%** |
| North East | 2 | **1%** |
| **Total** | **191** | **100%** |

There were 191 referrals sent to external agencies in 2025/26. The greatest proportion of referrals were sent to Children's Services at 54%, accounting for 103 individual referrals.

31% 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, Wales and all regions of England. No referrals were made to agencies in 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 | 103 | 54% |
| Education | 56 | 29% |
| Police | 25 | 13% |
| Other | 5 | 3% |
| Adult Services | 2 | 1% |
| **Total** | **191** | **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 314 of the 466 child welfare contacts. For the remaining contacts, the role status and relationship to child data is blank, in these instances contacts 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 | 174 | 90 | 264 | 84% |
| Adult Non-Family member – Other | 28 | 6 | 34 | 11% |
| Adult – Subject of Request / Victim / Complainant /Survivor | 3 | 4 | 7 | 2% |
| Parent/Carer | 6 | 0 | 6 | 2% |
| Adult Member of the Public | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1% |
| **Total** | **212** | **102** | **314** | **100%** |

Overall, where data was provided, 84% of concerns were raised by professionals, with education professionals accounting for 69% of these. 11% of contacts were recorded as 'Adult Non-Family member – Other'. 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 99 individual children. For 44 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 | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 2% |
| 2 | 4 | 9% |
| 3 | 4 | 9% |
| 4 | 2 | 5% |
| 5 | 4 | 9% |
| 6 | 1 | 2% |
| 7 | 4 | 9% |
| 8 | 3 | 7% |
| 10 | 4 | 9% |
| 11 | 1 | 2% |
| 13 | 3 | 7% |
| 14 | 3 | 7% |
| 15 | 5 | 11% |
| 16 | 3 | 7% |
| 17 | 2 | 5% |
| **Total** | **50** | **100%** |

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

Where we know the age of the child, 39% of children in referrals are high school or sixth form age (11-18) 41% primary school age (4-10) and 20% 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-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 | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Safeguarding Concerns** | *School/Education problems* | *57* | *21* | *78* | 12% |
| **Whistleblowing (Reporting Employers Only)** | *Agencies / Crime / Legal* | 57 | 15 | 72 | 11% |
| **Problems with teacher / school staff** | *School/Education problems* | 41 | 14 | 55 | 8% |
| **Adult – Grooming & Exploitation (Contact)** | *Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (Contact* | 44 | 10 | 54 | 8% |
| **Unhappy with school procedures / response** | *School/Education problems* | 38 | 11 | 49 | 7% |

## Part 4: Summary of findings

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

- Concerns raised for a teaching assistant and their purported concerning behaviours. Concerns were raised with the school, but the referrer felt they were not addressed satisfactorily.
- Allegations made by an NHS member of staff, who was believed to not have acted in line with clinical procedures.
- Caller is a football coach and felt that the organisation he works for have been slow to provide clear direction on a safeguarding issue.
- Caller raised concerns about a headteacher at a special needs college, where they work. Caller alleged the headteacher may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children and they were seeking advice on how to proceed.
- Allegations made about colleague and assistant safeguarding lead, who was alleged to have inappropriate behaviours and an over-friendly approach with students. An apparent fear of raising concerns within the school, by staff and pupils, were also a concern to the caller.
- Concerns raised about a colleague within a police force. The colleague worked in the sexual offences unit and brought their 12-year-old daughter into the workplace for a full shift, potentially exposing them to sensitive and harmful discussions.
- Concerns raised about the conduct within a children's care home, where concerns raised by children were alleged to not be treated appropriately. Caller felt the concerns were not reported to the appropriate agencies or logged as a safeguarding concern.
- Caller alleged a male teacher at a secondary school was getting too close to a pupil, although was unaware of any inappropriate language or touching.

## 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.