**NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline Annual Report 2022/2023**

**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](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/502773/BIS-16-79-blowing-the-whistle-to-a-prescribed-person.pdf)). 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](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408604/2903652_RotherhamResponse_acc2.pdf)).

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 2022 to 31 March 2023 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 2022/23 the whistleblowing helpline responded to 339 contacts, a 78% increase in the levels seen in the previous year. 233 of the total contacts handled were classed as child welfare contacts and went on to receive a response from a helpline practitioner. 106 contacts were handled by the Helpline Adviser team and classified as enquiries.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Outcome of Contact** | **Total** |
| Advice | **159** |
| Referral | **60** |
| Referral Update | **14** |
| Enquiry | **106** |
| **Total Enquiry and Child Welfare Contacts** | **339** |

On further investigation whilst there has been an increase in contacts received via email which generally involve multiple contacts relating to one concern there has also been an increase of 51% in the number of unique ‘cases’ being received. Of the 233 (69%) contacts handled directly by the Helpline service, 74 (32%) 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 (47%) 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 2022/23.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Main Concern** | **Advice** | **Referral/ Referral Update** | **Total** | **%** |
| **Bullying NOT ONLINE** | 2 | 1 | **3** | 1% |
| **Crime/Legal/Services** | 23 | 7 | **30** | 13% |
| **Domestic Abuse** | 4 | 0 | **4** | 2% |
| **Emotional Abuse** | 3 | 6 | **9** | 4% |
| **Neglect** | 20 | 5 | **25** | 11% |
| **Parent/Adult Health/Behaviour** | 3 | 2 | **5** | 2% |
| **Physical Abuse** | 14 | 18 | **32** | 14% |
| **Safeguarding Concern** | 4 | 0 | **4** | 2% |
| **School/Education problems** | 55 | 26 | **81** | 35% |
| **Sexual Abuse & Exploitation (Contact)** | 21 | 4 | **25** | 11% |
| **Suicidal** | 1 | 2 | **3** | 1% |
| **Other[[1]](#footnote-1)** | 9 | 3 | **12** | 5% |
| **Total** | **159** | **74** | **233** | 100% |

The highest proportion of overall contacts related to School / Education problems at 35% of the total, followed by Physical Abuse at 14%. Crime/Legal/Services was third most prevalent accounting for 13% of contacts. Where a referral (or referral update) was made, School / Education problems was the highest recorded concern with 35%, followed by Physical Abuse with 24%. This is consistent with the previous reporting year.

Compared to the previous year, we have noted a significant increase in concerns about sexual abuse, increasing from 7 last year to 27 this year. Physical abuse also increased in the reporting year, up from 21 to 32 this year. A similar increase was noted in school/ education problems where this increased by 26, representing a 46% increase.

We also noted contacts relating to main concerns that had not been reported on in the previous year. These included Safeguarding concerns, self-harm, and suicidal.

**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 | 5% |
| East of England | 10 | 7% |
| London | 12 | 9% |
| North East | 3 | 2% |
| North West | 14 | 10% |
| South East | 8 | 6% |
| South West | 16 | 12% |
| West Midlands | 9 | 7% |
| Yorkshire & the Humber | 8 | 6% |
| Nationwide | 48 | 36% |
| **Total** | **74** | **100%** |

36% of cases were referred to a nationwide agency such as OFSTED or Department for Education – Independent Schools.

**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 | 74 | 55% |
| Education | 48 | 36% |
| Other | 0 | 0%? |
| Police | 12 | 9% |
| **Total** | **74** | **100%** |

The greatest proportion of referrals were sent to Children’s Services at 55%.

**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 133 of the 233 339 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 Concerns** | **%** |
| Adult - Other | 20 | 28 | 48 | 36% |
| Foster Carer |   | 1 | 1 | 1% |
| Member of the Public |   | 1 | 1 | 1% |
| Mother | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3% |
| Professional - Other | 7 | 3 | 10 | 8% |
| Professional - Teacher/Education Professional | 16 | 17 | 33 | 25% |
| Professional -Other Professional | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3% |
| Professional -Social/Care Worker | 10 | 5 | 15 | 11% |
| Teacher / School Staff / Youth Worker / Childcare | 5 | 12 | 17 | 13% |
| **Total** | **62** | **71** | **133** | **100%** |

The most frequent relationship role is Adult – Other at 36%. Where a referral was made, Adult - Other 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** | **%** |
| 1 | 1 | 3% |
| 2 | 1 | 3% |
| 6 | 3 | 10% |
| 7 | 1 | 3% |
| 8 | 1 | 3% |
| 10 | 1 | 3% |
| 11 | 2 | 6% |
| 12 | 3 | 10% |
| 13 | 5 | 16% |
| 14 | 3 | 10% |
| 15 | 4 | 13% |
| 16 | 5 | 16% |
| 17 | 1 | 3% |
| **Total** | **31** | **100%** |

Where we know the age of the child, 74% of children in referrals are high school and sixth form age, 19% primary school age and 6% 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** | **%** |
| **Safeguarding concerns** | 43 | 24 | 67 | 20% |
| **Unhappy with school procedures/response** | 35 | 17 | 52 | 16% |
| **Problems with teacher/school staff** | 19 | 11 | 30 | 9% |
| **Whistleblowing** | 21 | 0 | 21 | 6% |
| **Basic Care Needs** | 13 | 0 | 13 | 4% |

**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 health & safety at a play centre, along with allegations of staff not being DBS checked
* Concerns raised regarding concerns for behaviours of members of staff at a pre-school
* Staff concerned about head teacher and their comments about some of the children. There were also concerns around the number of Designated Safeguarding Officers leaving the school.
* Concerns raised by teacher at a primary school teacher who alleged the owner shouts at the children and fails to inform parents of their children’s behaviour or wellbeing accurately.
* Concerns raised in relation to lack of adequate training for staff for at a residential care facility for children and young people who are on the autistic spectrum. Concerns also raised about recruitment does not include any specific experience in supporting children with additional needs.
* Concerns have been raised for children in relation to the professional conduct of staff at a private tuition centre.
* Parent raised concerns about their child’s school and the inability to get in touch with the designated safeguarding officer following an incident with their child.
* Allegations made that a member of staff at a residential care home discusses their substance misuse in front of children and provides them with cigarettes on a regular basis.
* Parent raised concerns about inadequate safeguarding practices following threatening child on child behaviour

**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.

1. Other includes the Main Concerns of Child Mental/Emotional Health, Disability/SEN/Health, Online Harm & Safety, Online Sexual Abuse/Exploitation, Runaway/Homeless/Missing and Self Harm. Each of these Main Concerns and low numbers and have been put together for ease of reporting. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)