

Whistleblowing Disclosures

1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

Introduction

The Children's Commissioner is named in the Prescribed Persons Order 2014 as someone to whom whistle-blowers can raise concerns relating to the rights, welfare and interests of children. Whistle-blowing arrangements offer a framework of protection against victimisation or dismissal for workers who blow the whistle on criminal behaviour or other wrongdoing.

The Children's Commissioner's role as a prescribed person is to provide those working with children with a mechanism to make their public interest disclosure to an independent body. The Children's Commissioner is not a regulatory body and does not have enforcement powers, but will consider concerns, ensure they are passed to the responsible bodies and will seek reassurance that the correct processes have been followed.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner's [OCC] whistle-blowing procedures are consistent with the Public Interest Disclosure Act and have been in place throughout 2019-20.

The OCC receives whistleblowing disclosures in letters, emails and via our advice helpline (Help at Hand). Sometimes, the information is provided anonymously. We always discuss anonymity and confidentiality with whistle-blowers and we never close a case until we are sure that the necessary safeguarding action has been taken.

Sometimes we are the first people that the whistle-blower has raised the concern with and sometimes they have raised it many times before and felt no one was listening. The Employment Tribunal may also refer claims to us when they feel we are the relevant prescribed person.

We have policy and guidance for whistleblowers published on our website - <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/cco-whistleblowing-policy-guidance.pdf>

The Office of the Children's Commissioner recognises, in accordance with established protocols that whistleblowing as an important avenue for those with genuine concerns about an organisation and its conduct towards children to raise such concerns without fear and in such a way as to be able to address those concerns without that individual being concerned for their employment or position.

Activity in 2019/20

The OCC in the year received **eleven** whistle-blowing concerns from a variety of people including employees of children's services and residential schools and care settings.

Several different types of concerns have been raised and these include failures in safeguarding procedures and restraint in schools and residential children's homes.

Breakdown of disclosures received from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

Service the disclosure relates to	Number of Disclosures Received
Children's Homes	4
Local Authority Children's Services	2
Residential Schools	2
Nursery	0
Other	3
Total	11

Action taken in the reporting period	Number of Disclosures Received
All concerns were sent to the appropriate bodies including the local authority, police and Ofsted	8
Not taken forward: closed through lack of engagement/ information from the whistle-blower	3

Summary of the overall categories under which the whistleblowing disclosure were classified	Number of Disclosures Received
Concerns that a specific child or children may be at risk of harm	2
Concerns that there are wider or systematic failures in safeguarding practice	9