**Whistleblowing Disclosures**

1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

**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 2020-21.

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 is an important avenue for those with genuine concerns about an organisation and its conduct towards children to raise such concerns so that they can be addressed without that individual being concerned for their employment or position.

**Activity in 2020/21**

During 2020/21 the Office of the Children’s Commissioner received **ten** whistle-blowing concerns from a range of sources including employees of children’s services and residential schools and care settings.

Several kinds of concerns have been raised, includingfailures in safeguarding procedures and restraint in schools and residential children’s homes.

**Breakdown of disclosures received from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Service the disclosure relates to** | **Number of Disclosures Received** |
| Children’s Homes | 2 |
| Local Authority | 2 |
| NHS service | 1 |
| School | 2 |
| Unregulated setting | 1 |
| Care Provider (non residential) | 1 |
| Care Provider (residential) | 1 |
| Total | 10 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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 | 9 |
| Not taken forward: closed through lack of engagement/ information from the whistle-blower | 1 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Summary of the categories under which the whistleblowing disclosures were classified [[1]](#endnote-1)** | **Number of Disclosures Received** |
| Concerns that a specific child or children may be at risk of harm | 3 |
| Concerns that there are wider or systematic failures in safeguarding practice | 9 |
| Unable to classify – insufficient information | 1 |

1. Some disclosures raised both concerns a specific child or children may be at risk of harm and concerns that there are wider or systematic failures in safeguarding practice [↑](#endnote-ref-1)