

Whistleblowing Disclosures

1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

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 Children's Commissioner's Office (CCO) whistle-blowing procedures are consistent with the Public Interest Disclosure Act and have been in place throughout 2022-23.

The CCO receives whistleblowing disclosures in letters, emails, via the advice helpline (Help at Hand) and employment tribunal claims, that are sent to when a claimant states they want us to be alerted. Sometimes, the information is provided anonymously. The office always discusses anonymity and confidentiality with whistle-blowers and staff never close a case until we are sure that any necessary safeguarding action has been taken.

Sometimes the Children's Commissioner's office is the first organisation that the whistle-blower has raised their concerns with and on other occasions they have raised them many times before and felt no one was listening, and so approach the office as a final resort.

The Children's Commissioner's office 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.

The Children's Commissioner office has published [policy and guidance for whistleblowers](#) on their website.

Activity in 2022/23

During 2022/23 the Children's Commissioner's office received 26 whistle-blowing concerns; this is an increase from the year before when CCO received 17.

The largest category this year has been disclosures relating to supported living providers. These providers often accommodate children in care and children open to children's services who are over 16 and care leavers up to the age of 24. They are not currently regulated. The second largest category related to Local Authority children's services. An example would be a social worker employed by a local authority emailing the Children's Commissioner's Office to say that children were not receiving safe care because of high case loads and poor management. In response to these concerns the Children's Commissioner's Office would make representations to the relevant Director of Children's Services and Ofsted, who regulates children's services.

There were 8 referrals that ended in no action beyond advice. An example from the last year was when we received concerns about a nursery but those concerns has already been passed to Ofsted and the nursery had been closed down.

Breakdown of disclosures received from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Service the disclosure relates to	Number of Disclosures Received
Children's Homes	1
Local Authority Children's Services.	5
Health service or setting	3
School	4
Supported living provider	6
Early years provider	2
other	5
Total	26

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	18
Not taken forward: closed through lack of engagement/ information from the whistle-blower or matter already been investigated	8