

Whistleblowing Disclosures

1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

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 2023- 24.

The CCo receives whistleblowing disclosures in letters, emails, via the advice helpline (Help at Hand) and employment tribunal claims, that are sent to the CCo when a claimant states they want CCo 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 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 2023/24

During 2023/24 the Children's Commissioner's office received 13 whistle-blowing concerns. This is down from 26 last year (we received 17 in the year before that).

Breakdown of disclosures received from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Service the disclosure relates to	Number of disclosures received
Children's homes	1
Local authority children's services.	2
Health service or setting (eg care agency)	2
Education setting (school, AP etc)	4
Supported living provider	1
Early years provider	0
Other	3
Total	13

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, or matter had already been investigated	5

Of the 5 instances where no referrals were made by CCO, two did not provide enough information for us to take action and did not engage with us, two had already made the necessary referrals; and one was referred to a more relevant "prescribed person". All whistleblowers are provided with information and signposting.