



Home Office



Department
for Education

21 December 2015

To: Chief Executives of local authorities; Directors of Children's Services; The Children's Commissioner; Ofsted; Care Quality Commission.

Planned launch by NSPCC of a national whistleblowing helpline for employees wishing to raise concerns about a child at risk of abuse

We are pleased to write to you today to highlight the planned launch of a new, national whistleblowing helpline for employees wishing to raise concerns about a child at risk of abuse. The line will be launched by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in January 2016.

As you will recall, the whistleblowing helpline was a firm commitment made by Government in our response to the chronic failures to protect children from sexual exploitation we witnessed in Rotherham and the Government's subsequent *Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation* report, which was published in March 2015,

(www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation--2).

As a prescribed body for matters in relation to child welfare and protection and a recognised and universal brand, the NSPCC is well placed to handle calls across all employment sectors in England, working closely, as they do now with other relevant investigatory and prescribed bodies in this area.

We want to assure you that this initiative will not alter or replace any of your current practices or responsibilities in this area. The communications for the new helpline will stress that in the first instance employees should raise any concerns through internal routes where possible. The purpose of the helpline is to add value to the existing landscape by establishing another route for employees to blow the whistle alongside existing mechanisms via an easily accessible, national whistleblowing portal for any employee. A child abuse concern will be referred by NSPCC to a local authority's Designated Officer for investigation or action, as now under the statutory guidance.

Historically, the numbers of whistleblowing cases regarding child abuse have been very low. We believe that the national helpline will make it easier for an employee to raise their concern, but we do not anticipate any significant new burdens for Local Authorities beyond their current remit.

We know you and your staff will support NSPCC fully in these new arrangements and ensure that, collectively, we can continue the vital work to tackle child abuse. To that end, we have also asked NSPCC to work collaboratively with all the prescribed bodies in this area and all regions to help us better spot emerging trends.

If you wish to raise any points, or there is anything more you wish to know, about the new helpline and how this will help to strengthen further our safeguarding arrangements, please do not hesitate to contact John Cameron, Head of Helplines at the NSPCC (john.cameron@nspcc.org.uk) or our officials.

Yours sincerely



Karen Bradley MP

Minister for Preventing Abuse
and Exploitation



Edward Timpson MP

Minister of State for Children and Families

Cc: Police and Crime
Commissioners, Chairs of Local
Safeguarding Children Boards.