

Whistleblowing Service - Frequently Asked Questions

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the term used when a member of staff (or a volunteer) passes on information concerning wrong-doing. The wrong-doing will typically (although not necessarily) be something they have witnessed at work.

To be covered by whistleblowing law, a worker who makes a disclosure must reasonably believe two things:

1. That they are acting in the public interest. This means in particular that personal grievances and complaints are not usually covered by whistleblowing law.
2. That a worker must reasonably believe is that the disclosure tends to show past, present or likely future wrong-doing falling into one or more of the following categories:
 - criminal offences (this may include, for example, types of financial impropriety such as fraud)
 - failure to comply with an obligation set out in law
 - miscarriages of justice/ unfair treatment
 - endangering of someone's health and safety
 - damage to the environment
 - covering up wrong-doing in the above categories

Whistleblowing law is covered in the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998). It provides the right for a worker to take a case to an employment tribunal if they have been victimised at work or they have lost their job because they have 'blown the whistle'.

N.B. Personal grievances are not covered by whistleblowing law, unless the particular case is in the public interest. Personal grievances should be raised in the first instance through the Grievance Resolution Policy, which can be found on inside.barnardos ([here](#)).

What is the difference between whistleblowing and a grievance?

The difference between the two can be difficult to discern. Protect-advice.org.uk have produced a table as a guide between the two processes (see below):

Whistleblowing	Grievance
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- ✓ Risk to others – whistleblowing is about raising concerns relating to wrongdoing risk or malpractice that you witness in the workplace.
- ✓ Public interest – these concerns should be in the public interest, and unlike grievances, the concerns may not even affect you at all, but will have wider implications on the public.
- ✓ Process – there is no set process for investigating whistleblowing concerns however there is good practice guidance. There is also no right to be accompanied to a meeting with your employer to discuss your concerns.
- ✓ Confidentiality – your employer should respect your wish for confidentiality.
- ✓ Feedback – you may never know the outcome of a whistleblowing concern, for example, if your employer investigates the behaviour of another individual and disciplines them as a result, that would be confidential information between the employer and that other individual.
- ✓ Appeal – there is no general right to appeal if you are unhappy with how your employer deals with your whistleblowing concerns, however this is where you may want to consider escalating your concerns

- ✓ Risk to self – grievances are typically issues about how you exclusively are being treated and not the treatment of others.
- ✓ Types of issues – grievances can be raised about things you are asked to do about your job, if your employer has breached your employment rights or your contract of employment, and the way you are personally being treated at work – this is not an exhaustive list.
- ✓ Process – ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) has set out Codes of Practice in relation to discipline and grievance procedures. You can find more information about how to raise a grievance on the ACAS website.
- ✓ Support – you have the right to be accompanied at a grievance hearing where the complaint is about your employer breaching a term of your employment contract.
- ✓ Outcome – grievances come to a legal determination on the issue that you raise. The ACAS Codes provide for employees to be given the outcome of their grievance e.g. an apology, a payment due or a change to the working practices.
- ✓ Appeal – you should be given the opportunity to appeal should you feel unsatisfied with the outcome.

(but check their policy to see if they have one).	
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Who is Safecall?

Safecall is a completely independent company that operates a confidential reporting service for many global businesses and it is available 24 hours a day and is staffed by highly skilled professional call handlers. Their offices are based in the UK and you can reach them 24/7 365 days of the year via the Freephone number listed below.

What can be reported?

The Whistleblowing service is available to receive reports about a concern in the public interest of wrong-doing at Barnardo's, this could include for example:

- Fraud
- Security issues
- Health and Safety
- Data Breaches
- Bribery
- Corruption
- Dishonesty (covering up of wrong-doing)
- Bullying, Harassment or Discrimination (where you feel unable to approach your manager or main Barnardo's contact about)
- or any other issue that you feel is unacceptable in the workplace and are unable to approach your manager about.

The Service is primarily for concerns where the interests of others (in the public interest), or of the charity itself, are at risk, whether they are happening now, took place in the past, or are likely to happen in the future.

If you are an employee/worker and your concern is about your working with another employee (or volunteer) you should consider using the Grievance Resolution Policy or other applicable policy, which may be found here:

- [Employee Handbook](#)
- [Grievance resolution policy](#)
- [Prevention of harassment policy](#)

Why have we changed providers?

We first brought in an independent provider to deliver our whistleblowing service, three years ago. Given how seriously we take whistleblowing and how difficult it can be for people to speak up we feel it's important to have in place a professional service, completely independent of Barnardo's, as the first point of contact for any whistleblowing concerns.

There were reasons for the change of providers were:

1. Our previous contract was up for renewal in December 2021; and
2. In the last year our previous provider was subject to a take over, as part of this the current system we use for receiving and recording cases is being decommissioned at the end of the year.

To appoint Safecall we have undertaken a rigorous procurement exercise. Safecall are one of the leaders in the market and their focus on quality and the solution they offered really impressed the procurement panel.

In appointing Safecall we are confident we will see benefits and improvements in the way the whistleblowing service works going forward. The Safecall system includes a case management application with the capability to triage cases directly to investigators and provides a secure (and anonymous if required) route for investigators to contact reporters directly. A key feature of Safecall's system is the ability for reporters to remain semi anonymous, whereby the reporter's identity is only known to Safecall. This protects the reporter's identity and provides a means for investigators to contact reporters (i.e. via Safecall), helping to ensure a thorough investigation is possible. Finally, the Safecall system is supported by dedicated interpreters meaning reports can be made in many languages (170 in total).

How does the Whistleblowing service work?

There are two main ways you can contact Safecall, by Freephone telephone or send a report via Safecall's website, see below for details. When you contact Safecall by telephone you will be asked by the call handler to explain your concern in as much detail as possible. During this time he or she will take notes and may ask you questions based on the account you give.

Once complete, Safecall will send a written report to nominated individuals in the Audit and Assurance team who will decide on the most appropriate course of action.

All reported matters are reviewed diligently and discreetly and, where appropriate, with feedback to the reporting individual.

How to contact Safecall

In the first instance you should raise your concerns with your manager or your main Barnardo's contact. You can do this verbally or in writing. If you feel unable to approach your manager or main Barnardo's contact, or you are concerned they may be involved, you can submit a concern via the whistleblowing hotline run by Safecall, Barnardo's independent whistleblowing service provider, using the contact details below:

0800 915 1571

www.safecall.co.uk/barnardos

Can I remain anonymous?

Yes. If you do not tell Safecall who you are they will not know your identity. Even if you make a mistake and accidentally tell Safecall your name they will not pass it on if you do not want them to. Also, Safecall do not audio record any of the calls to help protect the identity of anonymous callers.

When you make a report you will have the choice to do so as:

- **Named:** You agree that your identity can be passed by Safecall to Barnardo's.
- **Semi Anonymous:** You agree to provide your identity to Safecall but you do not want this passing to Barnardo's. Safecall may contact you using the details you have provided.
- **Anonymous:** You do not want to provide your identity to Safecall or Barnardo's.

How Barnardo's will respond

All concerns raised are received and logged by Safecall, which is independent of Barnardo's. Concerns are then passed to the Barnardo's Audit and Assurance (A&A) team, confidentially and if requested, anonymously, for investigation. On receiving your concern, you will be contacted by Audit and Assurance (A&A) in confidence, usually within 3 working days, to acknowledge receipt of your concern. Within 10 working days you will receive confirmation of:

- how it is proposed to deal with this matter
- whether further investigations will take place, or if not deemed appropriate, why this decision has been made

□ where an investigation is deemed appropriate, a named point of contact during the investigation, and confirm temporary alternative working arrangements (if applicable).

You will receive a progress update within a further 10 working days of the initial enquiries.

If you wish to remain completely anonymous, A&A will carry out an initial assessment of your report to consider the most appropriate next steps. If an investigation, under the whistleblowing policy, is not deemed appropriate we will inform you and, where applicable, provide advice on more suitable methods of investigating your concerns (e.g. if your concern is a personal grievance or complaint, this would normally be dealt with under our Grievance Resolution Policy).

If an investigation is deemed appropriate, we will undertake enquiries, but it is likely to be more difficult to investigate your concerns if you remain anonymous. If you do wish to remain anonymous, please ensure you provide a sufficient amount of information to enable your concerns to be properly investigated.

How we will investigate

The Director of Audit & Assurance, in consultation with the relevant senior manager in the area about which the whistleblowing concern is raised (where the concern is not perceived to involve them), will determine who will perform the investigation. If there is an actual or perceived risk to the independence and objectivity of the investigation, this will be undertaken in full by a member of Audit & Assurance.

The investigator will contact you to discuss your concerns in more detail. If necessary, the investigator will meet with you to find out all the facts and check any details. You may be asked to give a written statement.

Once the investigator clarifies your concerns, if he/she believes the concerns fall outside this policy you will be advised of the alternative route to follow.

The investigator will keep you informed as to the likely duration of the investigation.

Once the investigation is complete, we will contact you to confirm the outcome, where possible. Because of confidentiality and data protection we may not be able to share details of our findings with you (e.g. where you have chosen to remain anonymous), but we will discuss this with you fully and, where we can, explain our decisions.