CIVILSOCIETY

Charity whistleblowing disclosures rise to record levels

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George Hayes
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By Shawn Hempel/Adobe

Whistleblowing disclosures to the Charity Commission have increased to record levels, data shows.

The commission received 594 whistleblowing complaints in the year to 31 March 2026, an 8.8% annual increase and the highest since it started collecting data, its latest statistics reveal.

Governance concerns were the most frequently raised, accounting for 37% of reports in 2025-26, however these fell year-on-year to 229 from 303 in 2024-25.

Some 145 financial harms (24%) were flagged in 2025-26, the most since reporting began and more than triple the number in 2019-20.

Safeguarding disclosures also hit their highest-ever level with 138 complaints (23%) in 2025-26, a rise from 84 the previous year.

Most disclosures (61% in 2025-26) came from employees and former staff. The remaining 39% were non-employees or volunteers who have worked at the charity in some capacity.

The Charity Commission opened 465 compliance cases into charities where the disclosure identified a serious risk.

It also gave regulatory advice to trustees of 23 charities to ensure they made necessary improvements to their organisation's governance.

'Overall pattern of sustained growth'

Since the regulator's 2019 policy change to encourage more disclosures, the number of people volunteering information has more than doubled.

The commission reported that concerns over governance, financial harms, and safeguarding and protecting people had all "shown a significant upward trend" since then.

"The overall pattern is one of sustained growth, with report volumes in 2025-26 remaining significantly above historic levels," it said.

Governance concerns remain the most prominent, the commission stated, but they can be linked to other issues.

"Safeguarding and governance issues can arise in many different situations and are often closely connected," it said.

"For example, weaknesses in governance can be a significant contributing factor in safeguarding incidents, particularly where the safeguarding concern relates to risks faced by beneficiaries."

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Contact us

Civil Society Media Limited 15 Prescott Place London SW4 6BS United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0)20 7819 1200 Fax +44 (0)20 7819 1210

newsdesk@civilsociety.co.uk info@civilsociety.co.uk

Co. Reg: 2855714 VAT reg no: GB 629 3702 31