



## **Designated Officer for Allegations against Professionals, Volunteers and Foster Carers**

**Annual Report March 2016 – April 2017 for  
North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board  
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## 1. Executive summary

This report sets out the key findings from North Somerset's Designated Officer for Allegations (DOfA), formerly LADO, and activity using both data analysis and commentary since April 2016 – March 2017.

Referrals to the (DOfA) service have continued their upward trend and in the 2016 - 2017 reporting year there were a total of 84 referrals and 82 enquiries in North Somerset an overall total of 166.

Please note in December 2016 a new DOfA was appointed on a part time basis to fulfil the requirements of this critical role.

## 2. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the management of allegations against the children's workforce within North Somerset for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

All agencies that provide services for children, provide staff or volunteers to work with, or care for children are required to have a procedure in place for managing and reporting allegations against staff, which meets the requirements of the statutory guidance published by the DfE *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 and 2015* and *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (DfE)*.

The guidance also

- outlines the requirement for the DOfA to oversee the effectiveness, transparency and record retention of the process, not only in terms of protecting children, but also ensuring that staff who are the subject of an allegation are treated fairly and that the response and subsequent action is consistent, reasonable and proportionate
- provides more flexibility about how arrangements for allegations are set up locally, however, make it explicit that Local Authorities should have designated a particular officer, or team of officers, to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children
- and ensure that the designated officer is sufficiently qualified, competent and experienced to be able to fulfil this role effectively and should be a qualified social worker.

Section 11 of the Children Act, 2004 requires organisations that employ staff, contractors or volunteers who work with children to have a procedure in place for handling allegations against staff.

The current arrangements in North Somerset are wholly compliant.

## 3. The role of the DOfA

The DOfA's key roles are to:

- provide advice/guidance to employers or voluntary organisations within the North Somerset Local Authority;
- liaise with the police and other agencies, including Ofsted and professional bodies;

- monitor the progress of referrals to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly and consistently as possible with a thorough and fair process;
- provide the oversight of the investigative process through to its conclusion;
- chair DOfA strategy meetings and establish an agreed outcome of the DOfA investigation;
- facilitate resolutions to any inter-agency issues
- liaise with other local authority DOfAs where there are cross-boundary issues
- collect strategic data and maintain a confidential database in relation to allegations
- disseminate learning from DOfA enquiries throughout the children's workforce;
- attend all of the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Executive Meetings and attend the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board on an annual basis; and
- attend Children's Social Care and Police Strategy Meetings where there are concerns regarding the children's workforce.
- take responsibility for providing briefings to schools, governors and other settings, including the early year's teams, in regards to these regulations.

DOFA procedures may also apply to an individual who works with children, but the allegations or concerns arise in his/her private life.

Allegations can also relate to the partner of the person who works with children, whose response or attitude suggest that his/her ability to fulfil their role might be compromised.

Behaviours are considered in the context of the four categories of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.

- Behaviours associated with inappropriate relationships or abuse of trust also comes under this remit.

Statutory Guidance places a clear responsibility on organisations to report to the DOfA where it is alleged that a person working with children has:

1. Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child;
2. Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child; or
3. Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she would pose a risk of harm to children;

Referrals do not always result in an allegation meeting, but instead the DOfA provides advice and support in relation to disciplinary matters, health and safety measures or identified training needs.

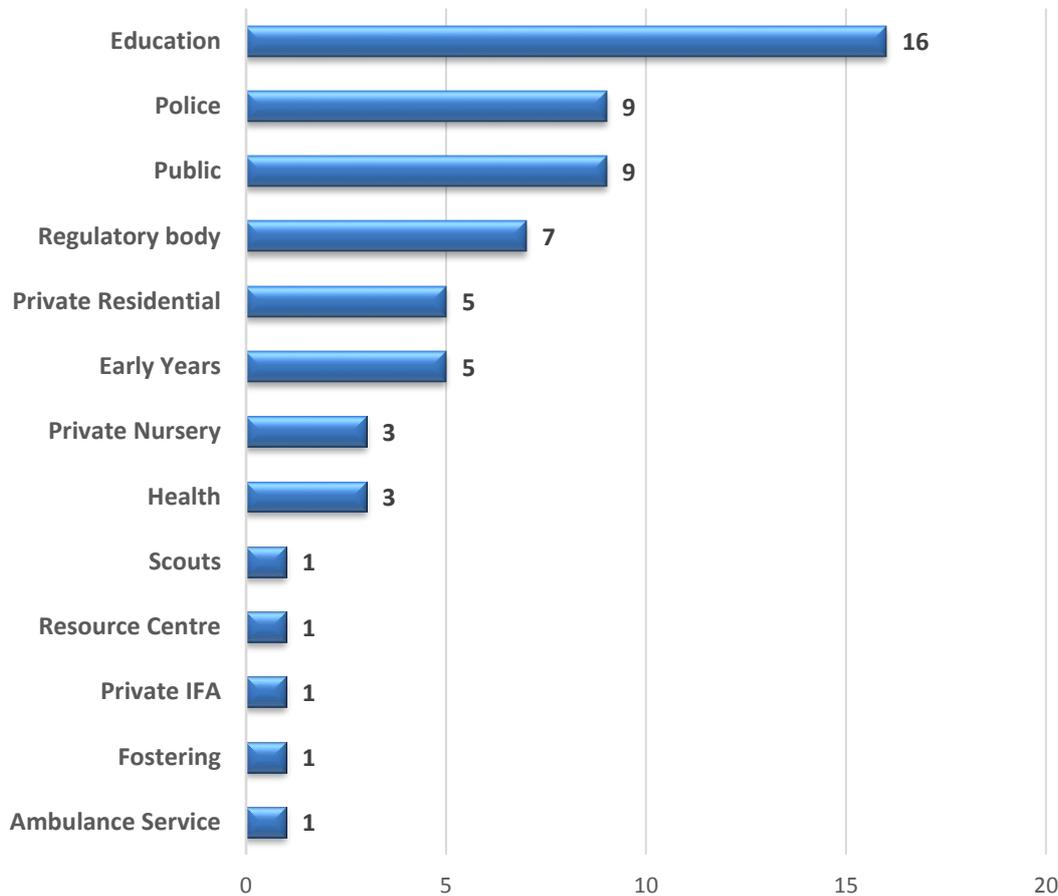
#### **4. Referrals April 2016 – March 2017**

Referrals to the (DOFA) service have continued their upward trend and in the 2016-2017 reporting

year there were a total of 84 referrals and 82 enquiries in North Somerset an overall total of 166. The previous reporting year 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 there were 51 allegations.

The main source of referrals have come from Education and the Police.

### North Somerset Organisations / Agencies Reporting Allegations 2016-2017



The graph below breaks down the number of allegations that have been made per agency.

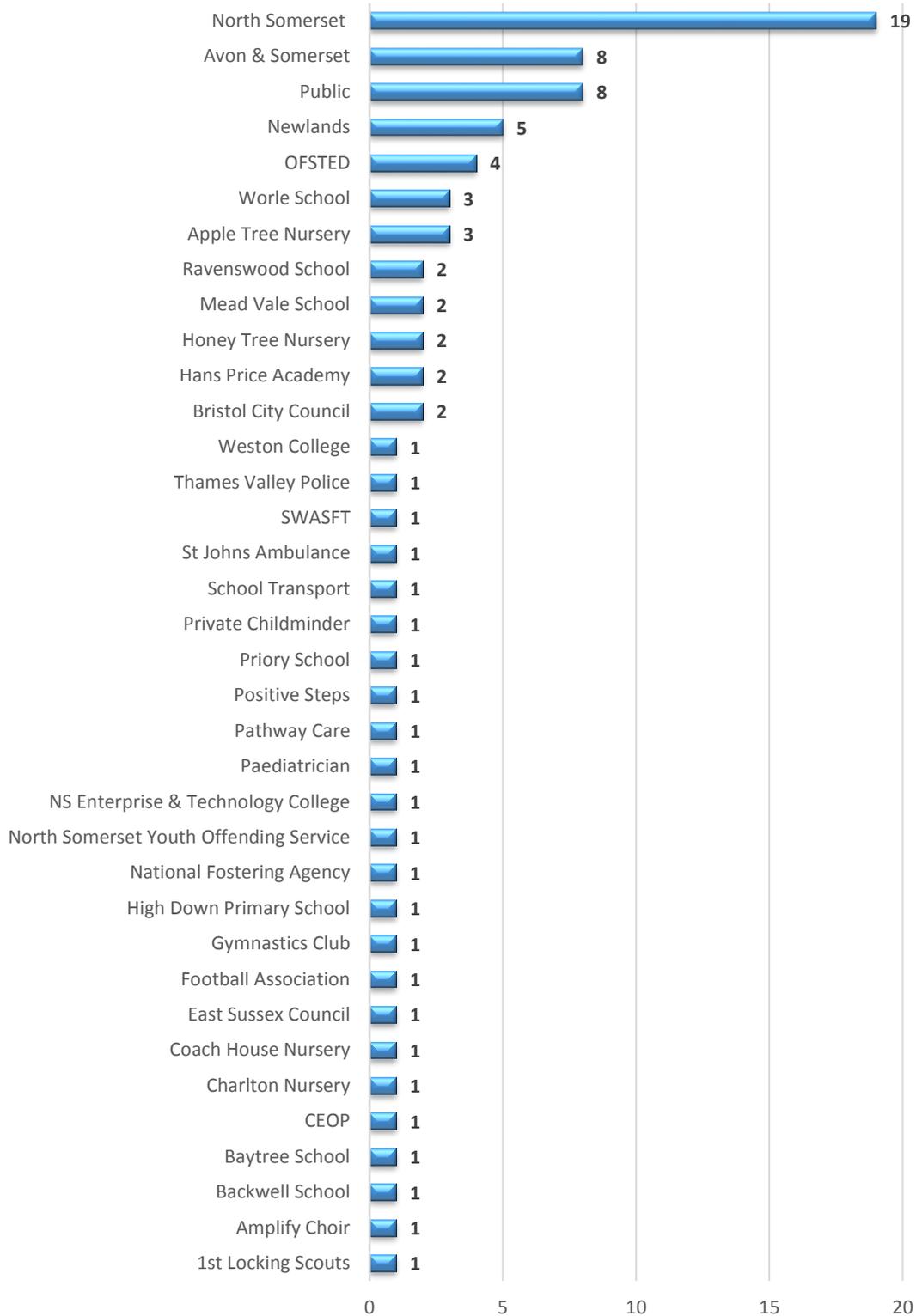
This shows a slightly different trend with North Somerset Council having the highest number of allegations and to put this into context this figure includes as an example, foster carers.

- the highest number of allegations
- which progress to a DOfA meeting relate to physical harm and ICT/sexual concerns

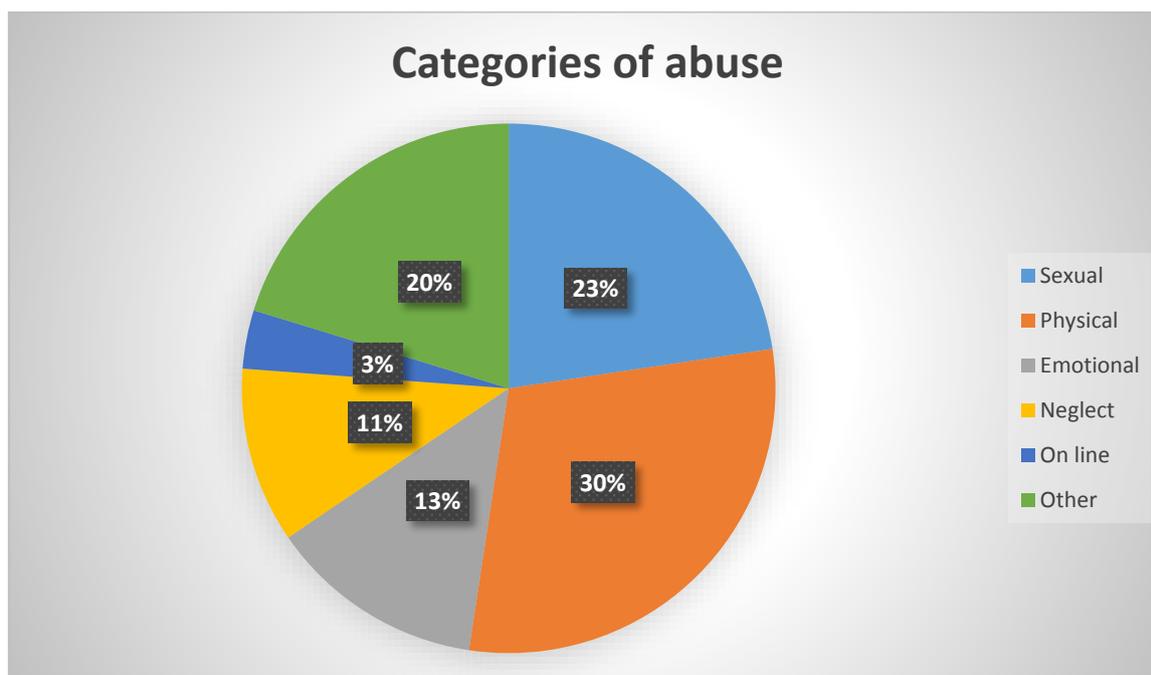
Staff are required to declare if they are living in a household with an individual convicted of certain offences that are not considered spent conviction (Rehabilitation of Offenders act 1974). This being the case, then staff are required to seek a waiver from Ofsted / DfE to continue working in such settings.

# North Somerset Organisations Reporting Allegations April 2016- March 2017

## Organisations reporting allegations



The allegations are broken down into the following categories by percentage:-



Sexual Abuse	19
Physical Abuse	25
Emotional Abuse	11
Neglect	9
On line	3
Other	17

## 5. North Somerset Action Plan December 2016 (new DOFA) – March 2018

The following areas have been identified:

	What Needs to change happen or continue?	RAG Rating	What will we see happening to know this is working?	When will this be done by?
1.	The DOFA is developing working relationships across children's services and with external statutory partners.		This will enable a coordinated and consistent approach to allegations management, facilitates the dissemination of guidelines in respect of safe working practice and aids the development of organisational cultures which	October 2017

			facilitate safeguarding. Links have also been established with the regulators and inspectorate and with DOFA's (LADOs) across the South West	
2.	<p>The DOFA has developed and implemented a secure database and case tracking tool to ensure that records are maintained in one place,</p> <p>The continued development of a sophisticated and robust monitoring system which includes an extensive database.</p>		<p>Additional information can be easily added and the progress of any allegation readily monitored.</p> <p>The data base scheduled to be moved across to LCS once functionality has been provided</p>	<p>February 2017</p> <p>November 2017</p>
3	Raise the profile of the service with all partner agencies		This will ensure that referrals and consultations continue to be timely and appropriate	March 2017
4.	Increase liaison with Adults' Services on the development of the role of designated allegations' management leads		To develop and implement a joined up approach to Safeguarding, reporting and investigation	January 2018
5.	Brief teams and organisations on safe working practice		To raise awareness to ensure colleagues are aware of reporting criteria and their responsibilities	March 2017
6.	DOFA to link with NSCCB trainer Sub-Group and deliver nationally accredited safe recruitment training which is open to all agencies.		Employers have the relevant information available to them so they can be confident in their employment of staff.	March 2018

7.	DOFA to attend NSCCB Executive Board		To enable the Board to have oversight of the role.	April 2017
8.	Explicit reference to the arrangements for managing allegations in North Somerset to be made in all multi-agency training.		To provide clarity and understanding so concerns can be reported in a timely way	May 2017
9.	DOFA to develop and publish leaflets to be circulated to those Professionals where allegations are made against them, children and parents/carers		To provide information in a way that makes it easy to access and to upload onto the NSSCB Website	November 2017
10.	DOFA to develop closer working with the HR department in North Somerset and with those providing Human Resources services for partner agencies		Policies and Procedures will reflect the role of the DOFA and this will enable a smooth process when HR cases come vi the allegation process.	November 2017
11.	DOFA to help ensure that Local Authority and North Somerset staff, as well as partner agencies understand the role of the DOFA and feel confident in their safeguarding role and responsibilities.		To this end, the DOFA has delivered a number of training or briefing sessions for internal staff as well as external agencies.	December 2018
12	Raise awareness of DOFA role with designated safeguarding leads in schools		To build close working relationships with Designated Leads in schools / Education	March 2017
13	Raise awareness of DOFA role with designated safeguarding leads in Nurseries, voluntary agencies, clubs and religious groups			December 2017

14.	Develop webinars to support key agencies in understanding the role of the DOFA and reinforcing safeguarding responsibilities.		Webinars will provide an alternative awareness raising sessions and provide an opportunity for participants to question and seek clarity without having to attend a more formal training course.	March 2018
15.	Work with QA Manager to ensure Business Support is made available to support the DOfA service.		To ensure that the back office function maintains information bases, arranges meetings, takes and records minutes etc	October 2017
16.	Make arrangements with B&NES to undertake in-depth peer audits			March 2018
17.	Service Leader for Strategic Safeguarding and Quality Assurance to undertake a qualitative annual audit		Five 'Unsubstantiated' Cases to be audited	Outcome for the 2017/18 period
18.	The Safeguarding and Reviewing Manager (newly developed post) will have regular and consistent robust oversight of cases.		This will enable management sign off of cases that have concluded and require no further action.	2017/2018
19.	DOfA attendance at the National LADO Annual Conference		To implement and develop practice from a National level to a local level	February 2018
20.	Develop and evaluate a feedback process		This will ensure the views and experiences of other agencies on the DOfA service are included in service development.	November 2018
21.	Continue awareness raising of DOfA activity through multi-agency training, NSSCB communications and direct awareness		To enable the users of the DOfA service to have an understanding of the process	March 2018

raising by the named DOfA. Deliver training/briefing sessions to the wider workforce including health, faith groups and sports clubs			
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## 6. Service structure and staffing, including administrative support

- The DOfA service arrangements were reviewed and in December 2016 the DOfA role became a permanent part time position. This provides a robust response to the growing levels of referrals and consultations to the service.
- The DOfA is an experienced social worker, registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and fully meet the requirements of the revisions to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015.
- The DOfA role sits within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service. The DOfA, is managed by a permanent, Service Leader within the People and Communities Directorate.
- Having a designated DOfA provides consistency and the opportunity to develop good working relationships with partner agencies.
- There is a current arrangement in place where the Referral and Assessment Team back up the DOfA when she is on annual leave or training.

The DOfA service needs to be supported by an experienced Business Support Officer whose role includes:

- Maintaining an up to date database and file system by recording all DOfA contact, including consultations and referrals;
- Arranging DOfA meetings and reviews
- Maintaining contact with partner agencies when necessary;
- Taking accurate minutes of DOfA meetings and distributing these securely;
- Maintaining, collating and updating the DOfA case spreadsheet
- Providing the DOfA dataset for the monthly NSSCB Executive Meeting

## 7. Supervision and Training

The DOfA has undertaken a range of training during this recording period, including:

- Serious Case Review learning briefings;
- Prevent and Extremism Conference;
- Regular attendance at the South West LADO Regional Meeting
- Attendance at the National LADO Annual Conference;
- The DOfA receives regular, six weekly supervision with her line manager (Service Leader for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance).