



Designated Officer for Allegations against People in a Position of Trust

**Annual Report April 2017 – March 2018 for
North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board
Julie Bishop (Designated Officer for Allegations)**

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1. Executive summary

What was done?

This report sets out the key findings from North Somerset's Designated Officer for Allegations (DOfA), and activity using both data analysis and commentary since April 2017 – March 2018.

Referrals to the Designated Officer for Allegations (DOfA) service from North Somerset have decreased in the last year. Given the steep increase in referrals during the previous reporting year, this is not necessarily surprising, but will be monitored to ensure that referrals continue to be made by agencies where appropriate. In the 2017/2018 reporting year, there were a total of 113 notifications of allegations in North Somerset. This is broken down to 64 Referrals, where threshold was met and 49 Enquiries, where advice was given, in North Somerset an overall total of 113 cases. In the 2016 - 2017 reporting year there were a total of 84 referrals and 82 enquiries in North Somerset an overall total of 166. As highlighted this figure shows a significant reduction in the overall numbers in comparison to the previous reporting year. However, the previous reporting year 1st October 2015 to 31st March 2016 there were 51 allegations. It is difficult at this stage to confirm whether there is a downward trend as data from the previous years has used different criteria.

How well was it done?

All cases were assessed by the DOfA, with referrals to police and Children's Social Care where appropriate. Where threshold was not met, advice, support and guidance were provided to the employer. There has been continuous promotion of the managing allegations procedures to ensure that agencies and organisations are familiar with the local child protection procedures in relation to the reporting of allegations concerning the children's workforce within one working day. The DOfA process continues to ensure that allegations against those who work or volunteer with children are not seen in isolation and that the welfare needs of children are prioritised and coordinated. Cases are well recorded, including all consultations and discussions. The DOfA continues to work closely with a variety of multi-agency partners.

2. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the management of allegations against the children's workforce within North Somerset for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

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, 2015, 2018 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 generally compliant. It is imperative the DOfA Service has one single point of contact for all enquiries into the Service. The information that is received by the DOfA is often sensitive, confidential and needs to be limited to a small number of people. The current arrangements can mean that the information is relayed via telephone calls to at least four different departments within North Somerset Council, thus potentially creating a breach of GDPR. However, work is underway on obtaining a Single Point of Contact for all enquiries into the DOfA Service, Named Business Support Personnel and to align the recording of DOfA files onto the People and Communities Children's electronic recording system, LCS.

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 regard 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;

These bullet points reflect the statutory guidance in Working Together to Safeguard Children March 2015 para 4. Chapter 2, however 'Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2016' has a different wording in the third bullet.

These behaviours should be considered within the context of the four categories of abuse (i.e. physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect). These include concerns relating to inappropriate relationships between members of staff and children or young people, for example:

- Having a sexual relationship with a child under 18 if in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if consensual (see ss16-19 Sexual Offences Act 2003);
- 'Grooming', i.e. meeting a child under 16 with intent to commit a relevant offence (see s15 Sexual Offences Act 2003);
- Other 'grooming' behaviour giving rise to concerns of a broader child protection nature e.g. inappropriate text / e-mail messages or images, gifts, socialising etc;
- Possession of indecent photographs / pseudo-photographs of children.

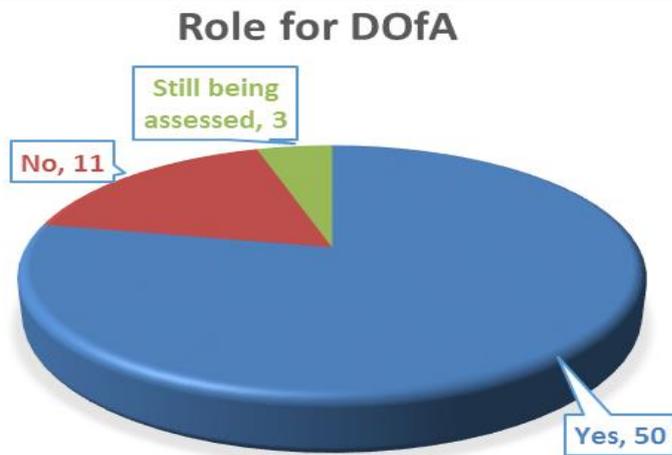
Referrals do not always result in an allegation meeting, but instead the DOfA provides advice and support in relation to disciplinary matters, health and safety measures or identified training needs.

Overview of the service function and key areas of work

All agencies have a duty to contact the DOfA where there are safeguarding allegations in respect of employees or volunteers who work with children. 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. DOfA procedures may also apply to an individual who works with children, but the allegations or concerns arise in their private life. Allegations can also relate to the partner of the person who works with children, whose response or attitude suggest that their ability to fulfil their role might be compromised. The Childcare Act 2006 prohibits anyone who is disqualified themselves under the regulations, or who lives in the same household as a disqualified person, from working in relevant settings. Relevant settings may include some schools. The DOfA has taken responsibility for providing briefings to schools, governors and other settings, including the early years teams, regarding these regulations.

4. Breakdown of DOfA Cases

There are occasions when there isn't a role for the DOfA but consultation takes place on the best way of handling a case for e.g. it may be that the Organisation handles the matter as an internal investigation and threshold isn't met for the DOfA intervention. Of the 64 cases the following is a breakdown of how those cases was managed. The three cases that are still being assessed are those where there are Police investigations and the cases are going through the Court Process.



5. Category of Abuse - Referrals April 2017 – March 2018

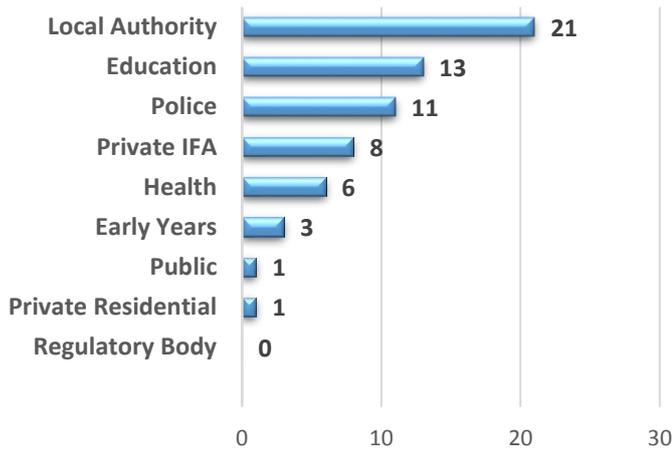
Of the 64 Referrals there were

- 19 Sexual
- 17 Neglect
- 14 Physical
- 4 On line

Outcome of these categories: -

- 31 Substantiated
- 13 Unsubstantiated
- 0 Founded
- 17 Unfounded
- 0 Malicious
- 3 There isn't an outcome as there are Police investigation's in progress.

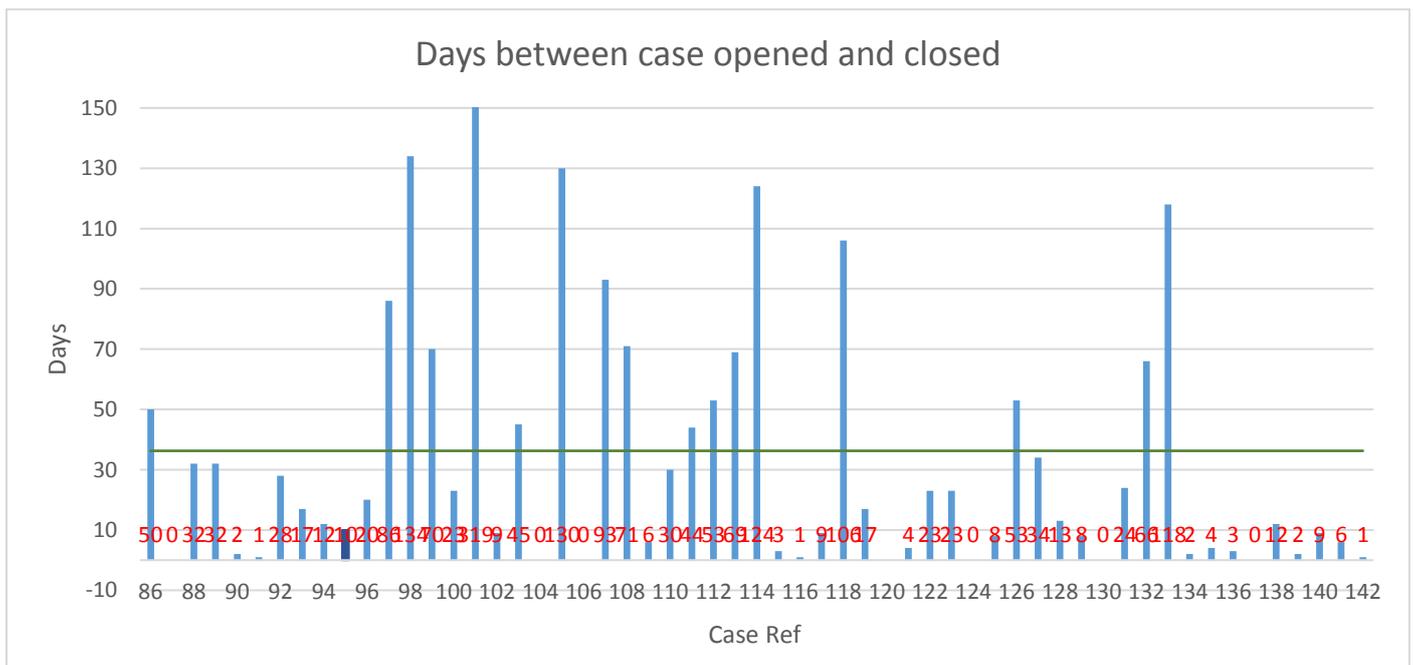
Agencies reporting allegations



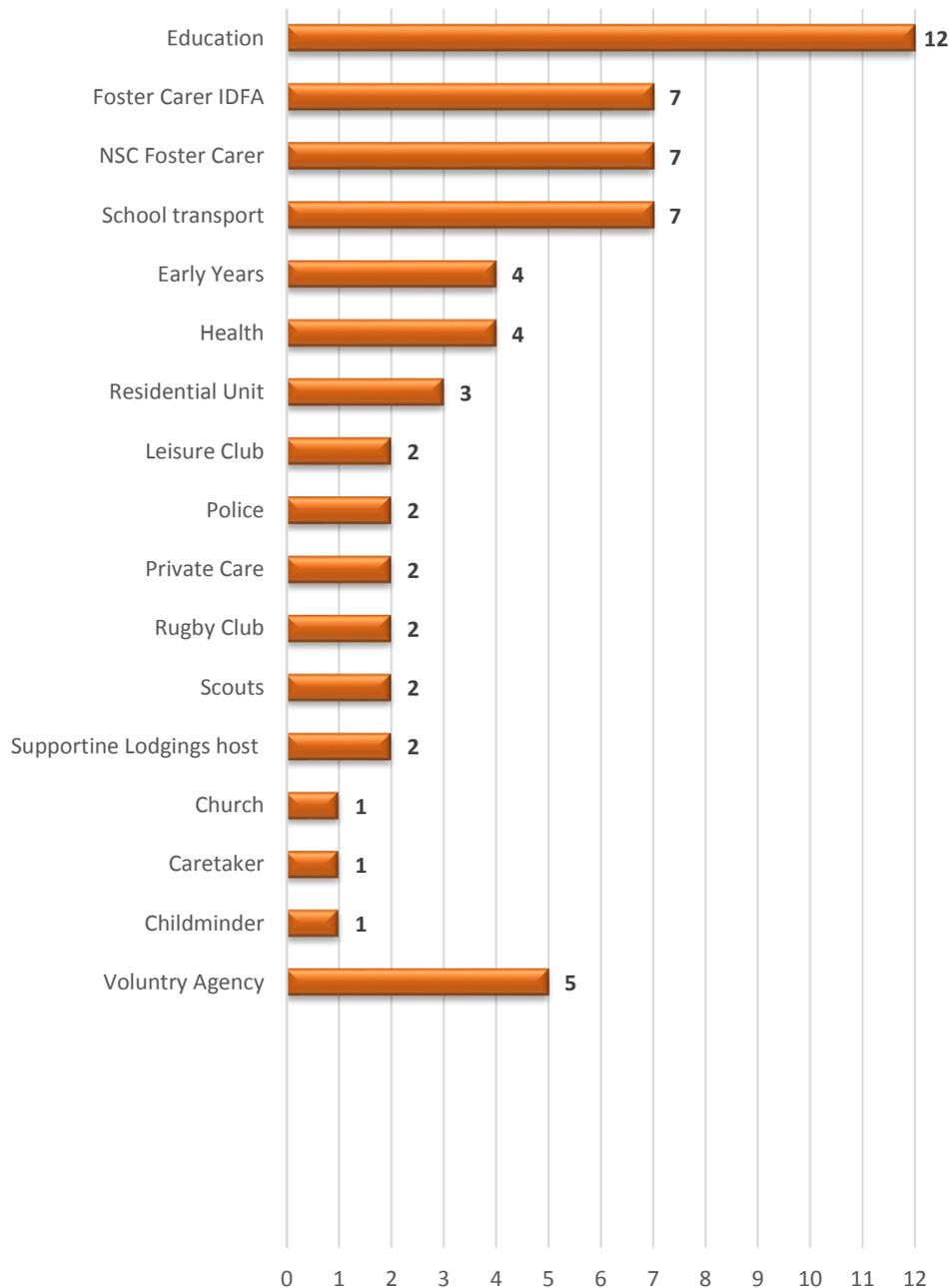
Staff are required to declare if they are living in a household with an individual convicted of certain offences that are not considered spent conviction (Rehabilitation of Offenders act 1974). This being the case, then staff are required to seek a waiver from Ofsted / DfE to continue working in such settings. There has been a Case in North Somerset where a staff member didn't declare this information and was subsequently Dismissed.

Days between cases Opened and Closed.

The timeliness of a DOfA case from open to close was raised by Ofsted during the Inspection in June 2017; following this the DOfA Spreadsheet has been developed so this data is available. From the 64 Referrals in this reporting year the average days a case was open was 34 days, (inclusive of weekends and Bank Holidays). There are sixteen cases that went above this and these were Police investigations where IT equipment and Social Media sites had to be searched, (four led to Criminal Prosecution) and lengthy Disciplinary Investigations by Organisations that led to Dismissal, Written or Verbal Warnings.



Organisations associated with allegations



Signs of Safety has been introduced in the DOfA Allegation Meeting process and appears to be a successful addition. It is helping to identify Safety Planning for children after the initial allegation has been made, the impact of the allegation on them and there is a clear identified worries, concerns and things working well within the minutes. The format of the Action Plan has changed to highlight the changes needed, by whom, timescales and review by the DOfA. The scaling question has been introduced to allow Agencies to identify the risk they see for the children(ren).

Peer Audit

Peer Audit has been arranged with the Local Authority Designated Officer, LADO in Bristol and the first audit is to be undertaken in August 2018. It has been agreed that this will take the form of a sample of 10 cases going through the Audit Process and will track a case from the beginning to the end. This will help identify consistency in threshold, timeliness and record keeping.

6. Action Plan DOfA Annual Report 2017/18

All but one action that was identified in the DOfA Annual Report 17/18 and the Ofsted Action Plan 2017 have been achieved and these include: -

Attendance at Children's Services Team Meeting's
 Visits to two North Somerset Residential Units Staff and attendance at Team Meeting
 Attendance at the Designated Leads Training
 Attendance at the Executive Board
 Attendance at the Probation Service
 Representation of the South West LADO Group at Police Training
 Development of leaflets for Parents, children and adults where allegations have been made against them
 Developed and implemented an Evaluation Form for those attending allegation meetings
 Implemented Peer Audit with the Bristol LADO
 Developed closer working relationships with adult safeguarding colleagues
 Close working relationships with HR colleagues and the latest Policy and Procedure does reflect the role of the DOfA
 The secure data base has been built and has a case tracking tool that ensures that record is maintained in one place.
 Established closer working relationships with the Ofsted Inspectors
 Attendance at the Regional/National LADO Meetings

Actions to be carried forward: -

Develop webinars to support key agencies in understanding the role of DOfA

North Somerset DOfA Action Plan April 2018 – March 2019

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 facilitate safeguarding. Links have also been established with the regulators and	October 2018

			inspectorate and with DOFA's (LADOs) across the South West	
2.	Raise the profile of the service with all partner agencies		This will ensure that referrals and consultations continue to be timely and appropriate	March 2019
3.	<p>Increase liaison with Adults' Services on the development of the role of designated allegations' management leads</p> <p>Collaborate with Adult Safeguarding to ensure that there are consistencies in practice in situations where there may be overlaps (particularly when dealing with young people who may be in settings which also cater for adults)</p>		To develop and implement a joined-up approach to Safeguarding, reporting and investigation	January 2019
4.	Brief teams and organisations on safe working practice		To raise awareness to ensure colleagues are aware of reporting criteria and their responsibilities	March 2019
5.	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 2019
6.	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	March 2019
7.	DOFA to develop and publish leaflets to be		To provide information in a way	September 2018

	circulated to those Professionals where allegations are made against them, children and parents/carers		that makes it easy to access and to upload onto the NSSCB Website	
8.	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 training or briefing sessions for internal staff as well as external agencies.	December 2018
9.	Raise awareness of DOFA role with designated safeguarding leads in schools and Governors		To build close working relationships with Designated Leads in schools / Education	November 2018
10.	Raise awareness of DOFA role with designated safeguarding leads in Nurseries, voluntary agencies, clubs and religious groups		This will help identify consistency in threshold, timeliness and record keeping.	December 2018
11.	Work with QA Manager to ensure there is a Single Point of Contact to support the DOFA Service.		To ensure that the back-office function maintains information bases, arranges meetings, takes and records minutes etc	August 2018
12.	Finalise arrangements with Bristol to undertake in-depth peer audits			August 2018
14.	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
15.	Continue awareness raising of DOFA activity through multi-agency training, NSSCB		To enable the users of the DOFA service to understand the threshold for	November 2018

	communications and direct awareness raising by the named DOfA. Deliver training/briefing sessions to the wider workforce including health, faith groups and sports clubs		intervention and process	
16	Discuss with the Service Lead responsible for LCS to develop a bespoke DOfA workspace within LCS		This will provide an electronic filing system that will not only be fully secure but will have the capacity to transfer some information on/from the children's files.	January 2019
17	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 to participants to question and seek clarity without having to attend a more formal training course.	February 2019

7. Service structure and staffing, including administrative support

- 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 the Manager of the Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Officers within the People and Communities Directorate.
- Having a designated DOfA provides consistency and the opportunity to develop good working relationships with partner agencies.
- The Safeguarding and Reviewing Manager provides 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

8. 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 (Safeguarding and Reviewing Manager).