



Designated Officer for Allegations against People in a Position of Trust

**Annual Report April 2018 – March 2019 for
North Somerset Safeguarding Children Board
Julie Bishop (Designated Officer for Allegations)**

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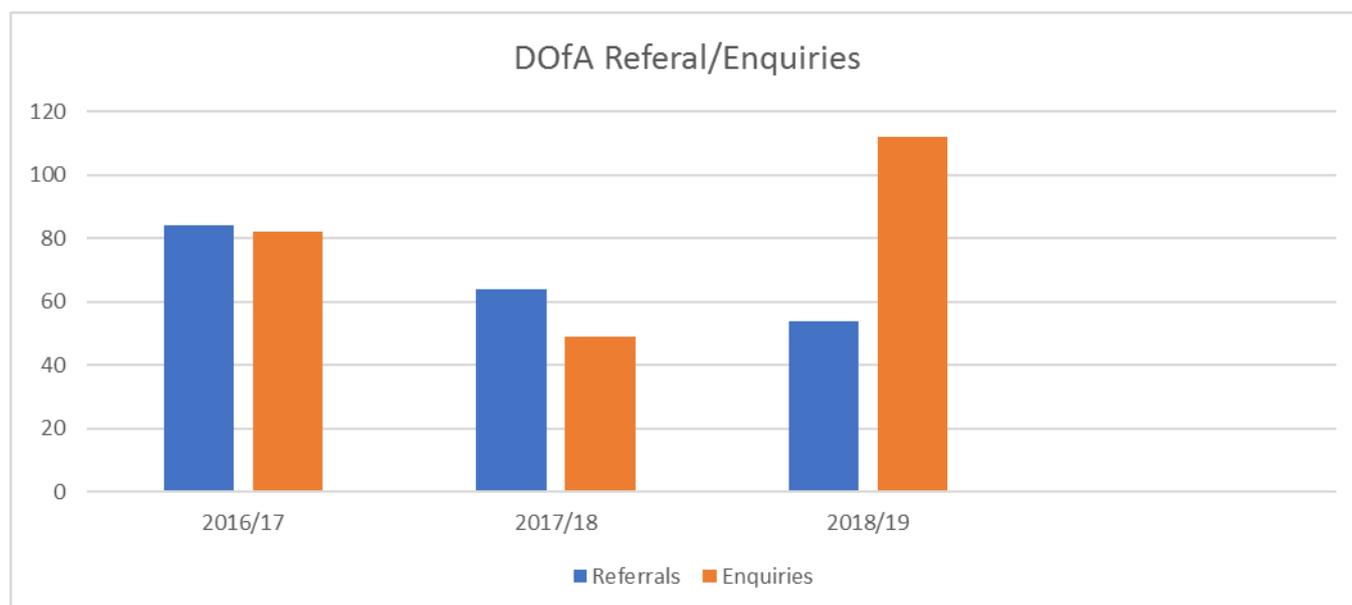
1. Executive summary

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 2018 – March 2019.

Referrals to the Designated Officer for Allegations (DOfA) service in North Somerset have increased in the last year. In the 2018/2019 reporting year, there were a total of 166 notifications of allegations in North Somerset. This is broken down to 54 referrals, where threshold was met and 112 Enquiries, where advice was given, or cases were overseen by the DOfA but investigations were undertaken by individual organisations. 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. As highlighted this figure shows a significant increase in the overall numbers in comparison to the previous reporting year.

Following my peer audit from the Bristol Local Authority Designated Officer, LADO, I have introduced some significant changes in the recording of cases on receipt of the initial enquiry, this explains the reason for the high number of enquiries against referrals during this reporting year; resulting in a re-evaluation of the previous threshold. The profile of the role has also been heightened by me visiting teams within our multi agency partners.



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 and safety 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 2018 to 31 March 2019.

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*, *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (DfE)*, and *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 (Part Three)*. –

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 compliant, and with the introduction of the Business Support Safeguarding Officers all DOfA enquiries are being received by one team and passed to the DOfA, thus, preventing confidential and sensitive information from being shared to other departments within the Council. The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service is currently drawing up a business case for a package to be added to the Liquid Logic case management system to ensure DOfA information, as appropriate, is stored on the People and Communities Children's Services electronic recording system.

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 2018, however 'Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2018' 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 54 cases the following is a breakdown of how those cases was managed. There are four cases that are still being assessed, two where there are Police investigations and one of those cases is going through the Court process and Foster Carers and a Taxi Driver where an investigation is underway and due to finish by the 26/04/19.

Status of cases



5. Category of Abuse - Referrals April 2018 – March 2019

Of the 54 Referrals there were

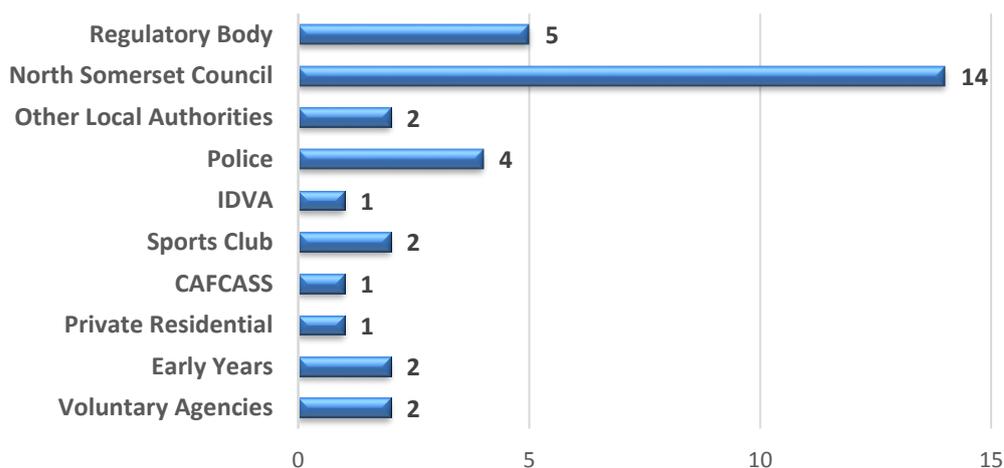
11 Sexual
10 Neglect
11 Emotional
21 Physical
1 On line

Outcome of these categories: -

29 Substantiated
10 Unsubstantiated
0 Founded
11 Unfounded
0 Malicious

4 There isn't an outcome as there are Police, Foster Carer and a Taxi Driver 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 that this data is available. From the 54 referrals in this reporting year the average days a case was open was 24 days, (inclusive of weekends and Bank Holidays). During the previous reporting year there were 64 referrals and the average days a case was open was 34 days, (inclusive of weekends and Bank Holidays). The decrease in the timeliness of cases open and closed means that children aren't

waiting as long for an outcome following their allegation and the DOfA intends to continue in this vain of bringing cases to a speedy conclusion.

There are sixteen cases that went above this which 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 and in one case a Nursery setting was closed down.

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).

One Front Door

The DOfA sits on the One Front Door Operational Board Meeting. The purpose of the meeting is for partner agencies to come together and discuss things that are going well along with worries/concerns. The DOfA process fits within this when there are cases coming through the 1FD that are linked to allegations from children against Professionals. There is further development needed to embed the DOfA process within the One Front Door system and discussions to be had when those cases reach the threshold for a Strategy/Allegation Meeting.

Peer Audit

Peer Audit has been arranged with the Local Authority Designated Officer, LADO in Bristol and the first audit was undertaken in August 2018. This took the form of a sample of 10 cases going through the Audit Process and will cases were tracked from the beginning to the end. This helped identify consistency in threshold, timeliness and record keeping and gave an opportunity of a re-evaluation of the recording of DOfA Cases.

South West LADO/DOfA Regional Group

I was elected Vice Chair of the above Group in November 2018 and we meet quarterly. North Somerset is hosting the meeting in April 2019.

6. Action Plan DOfA Annual Report 2018/19

All but one action that was identified in the DOfA Annual Report 18/19 have been achieved and these include: -

- Attendance at Early Years Team Meeting
- Monthly meetings with the Safeguarding Lead in Education
- Presented the Role of DOfA at the Designated Leads in Education Training
- Presented the Role of DOfA at the Designated Leads Nursery's/Childminders Training
- Attendance at the Early Years Annual Meeting with Ofsted
- Meetings with School Transport Colleagues
- Attendance at Woodspring School Team Meeting
- Annual visits to the two North Somerset Residential Units and attendance at their Team Meeting
- Attendance at the Senior Probation Officer Team Meeting

- Independence of the role led to a request from the NSSCB to undertake the Section 11 Audit, North Somerset Probation
- Wrote an article on the Early Years Newsletter
- Met with the Ofsted inspector in the latest round of Safeguarding Inspections
- Collate Quarterly Statistics from the DOfA Evaluation Form
- Developed leaflets for Parents, Children and Adults where allegations have been made against
- Attendance on the One Front Door Operational Board Meeting
- Developed closer working relationships with adult safeguarding colleagues through case discussion, providing advice and jointly working on some cases where children and vulnerable adults feature.
- Established closer working relationships with the Ofsted Inspectors
- Elected Vice Chair of the Regional DOfA/LADO Meetings and attendance at the Annual National DOfA/LADO conference

Action to be removed from the Action Plan: -

Develop webinars to support key agencies in understanding the role of DOfA. **Update:** This is something that is being developed at a Regional Level along with a Best Practice Guide.

North Somerset DOfA Action Plan April 2019 – March 2020

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 inspectorate and with DOfA's (LADOs) across the South West	October 2019
2.	Increase liaison with Adults' Services on the development of the role of designated allegations' management leads Collaborate with Adult Safeguarding to ensure that there are consistencies in		To develop and implement a joined-up approach to Safeguarding, reporting and investigation	September 2019

	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?
	practice in situations where there may be overlaps (particularly when dealing with young people who may be in settings which also cater for adults)			
3.	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 2020
4.	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 2020
5.	Review South West Child Protection Procedures (SWCPP) where they relate to DOFA/LADO		TRIX has been reviewed and a new set of South West DOFA Procedures are to be written and introduced in the North Somerset Policy and Procedures and updated on the NSCCB Website.	July 2019
6.	The DOFA to embed the DOFA Process into the One Front Door System a to meet with Colleagues rom People and Communities when the threshold has been met for a Strategy Meeting		This is to provide early DOFA involvement when allegations come through the 1FD and to establish who chairs Strategy Meetings when cases come through via the Referral and Assessment Teams.	June 2019
7.	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		To this end, the DOFA has delivered training or briefing sessions for internal staff as well as external agencies.	December 2019

	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?
	safeguarding role and responsibilities.			
8.	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 2019
9.	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 2019
10.	Produce Quarterly Statistics from the DOFA Evaluation Form		This will ensure the views and experiences of other agencies on the DOFA service are included in service development.	March 2020
11.	Continue awareness raising of DOFA activity through multi-agency training, NSSCB communications and direct awareness raising by the named DOFA. Deliver training/briefing sessions to the wider workforce including health, faith groups and sports clubs		To enable the users of the DOFA service to understand the threshold for intervention and process	November 2019
12.	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.	September 2019
13.	To undertake any changes with regards to new Government guidance, in particular <i>Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018</i>		To ensure compliance and if necessary a change in practice.	February 2020

	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?
14.	To review complex cases from published Serious Case Reviews that are linked to DOFA		This will ensure any Learning from such reviews will influence practice	March 2020
15.	To expand the DOFA cover arrangements up in the Quality Assurance Team by training the ISRO's up in the role of DOFA		This will enable flexible cover arrangements and at times of leave and training the Service isn't reliant on two people.	July 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 2018.
- 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 to the DOFA when the DOFA is on annual leave or training. There are plans to expand the cover arrangements by training the Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Officers (ISROs) in the role of DOFA.

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).

- The DOfA attended a number of training courses throughout the year