

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY

5 September 2022

DESIGNATED OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the progress and performance of the Designated Officer (DO) between April 2021 and March 2022 and to highlight the required actions for April 2022 to March 2023.

Summary

2. In line with national guidance, the Designated Officer function is to ensure that:
 - a) advice and guidance are provided to partner agencies and staff where an allegation is made against a person who works with children (paid or voluntary capacity).
 - b) the Designated Officer will facilitate and oversee this process. The Designated Officer does not investigate. Investigation is the role of the employer or the police where a criminal offence has been committed.
 - c) an agreed outcome of the investigation is established.
 - d) allegations are appropriately managed by employers to protect not only the welfare of children but also staff.
 - e) support actions are taken without delay to protect children.
 - f) all learning is effectively disseminated.
3. All organisations working with children in Darlington are required to have policies and procedures in place in relation to what their organisation should do when an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer who has contact with children. These policies and procedures should be in line with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership multi-agency procedures.
4. The allegation can be in connection with:
 - a) employment
 - b) voluntary activity
 - c) work placement
 - d) the individual's own children
 - e) related to the community or private life of a partner, member of the family or other household member

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that:
- a) the contents of the report and the work undertaken during 2022/23 and the priorities of the Designated Officer service for 2022/23 be noted.
 - b) the annual report be agreed.
 - c) all agencies consider how to promote the role of the Designated Officer within their own organisation.

Chris Bell
Assistant Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

None

Marian Garland: Extension 6451

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Health and Wellbeing	The work of the Designated Officer can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of children and young people
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no issues which this report needs to address
Diversity	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	All Children and Young People
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	Not a key decision
Urgent Decision	Not an urgent decision
Council Plan	This report has no implications for the Council Plan
Efficiency	The outcome of this report does not impact on the Council efficiency agenda
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Designated Officer Annual Report 2021/22

Managing Allegations and Concerns against Staff, Carers or Volunteers

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Designated Officer Annual Report 2021/22

Managing Allegations and Concerns against Staff, Carers or Volunteers

1.0 Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members of Scrutiny on the progress and performance of the Designated Officer (DO) service, (previously known as the Local Authority Designated Officer LADO) between April 2021 and March 2022 and to highlight the required actions for April 2022 to March 2023.

2.0 Introduction / National Context

- 2.1 The framework for the management of allegations of abuse is set out in [Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children \(July 2018\)](#) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges \(September 2018\)](#).

In line with the guidance, the Designated Officer function is required to ensure that:

- advice and guidance are provided to partner agencies and staff
 - any allegation made against a person who works with children in either a paid or a voluntary capacity is investigated. The Designated Officer will facilitate and oversee this process to conclusion. The Designated Officer does not investigate. That is the role of the employer or if a criminal allegation, the police
 - Designated Officer meetings are chaired effectively, and an agreed outcome of the investigation is established
 - allegations are appropriately managed by employers to protect not only the welfare of children but also staff
 - support actions are taken without delay to protect children
 - learning from Designated Officer referrals is effectively disseminated
- 2.2 All organisations within Darlington are required to have clear policies and procedures in place which outline how and what their organisation should do when an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer who has contact with

children. These policies and procedures should be in line with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership procedures.

2.3 The criteria for a Designated Officer referral are when a person is alleged to have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed or may harm a child
- has possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she may pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children
- behaved in a way or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

The allegation can be in connection with employment / voluntary activity / work placement, regarding individual's own children or related to the community or private life of a partner / member of the family / household member.

3.0 Local Arrangements

3.1 Darlington Borough Council currently has one Designated Officer who is based with the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Business Unit and has undertaken the role since November 2019. The current Designated Officer has a dual role and is also a Policy Development Officer within the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Business Unit.

3.2 Clear arrangements are in place to ensure robust oversight and monitoring of the Designated Officer function. This has been provided through supervision with a Service Manager to ensure that policies are applied consistently and fairly and that all enquiries are progressed in a timely manner.

4.0 Cross Boundary Issues

4.1 Where a child from the Darlington Local Authority area makes an allegation in a setting or placement which is outside the Darlington Borough Council jurisdiction, the lead responsibility for action lies with the Designated Officer in the local authority for the area where the alleged abuse occurred. The Designated Officer has received notification of 4 allegations about Darlington Children placed in other Local Authority areas and all have been addressed by the Designated Officer for that area.

4.2 In these circumstances, the relevant Designated Officer, and where appropriate, the child's Social Worker, will liaise with the relevant local authority and agree a joint strategy.

4.3 Checks should be made as to whether there are any other children in the placement. If so, the child's Social Worker and manager must be informed, and

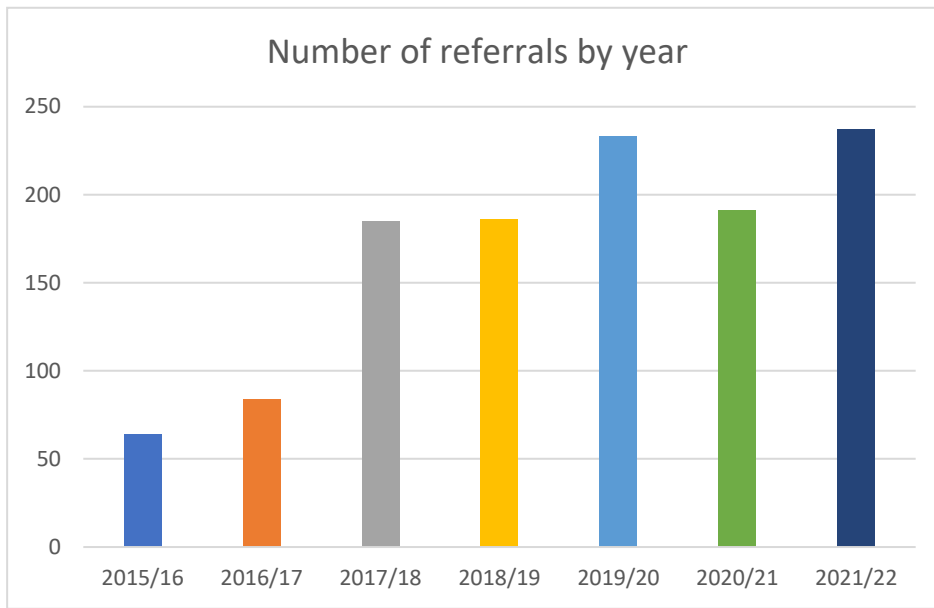
the Designated Officer should consult them about the action required.

- 4.4** Interviews of children from Darlington Local Authority areas will usually be undertaken by their own local children's social care services in conjunction with the police as appropriate.
- 4.5** Where the referral relates to a child from another Local Authority temporarily placed in an establishment located within the Darlington Local Authority area, the Darlington Designated Officer should liaise with the child's home authority about the roles and responsibilities in carrying out this procedure. In 2021/22 the Designated Officer received 50 allegations concerning children from other Local Authority areas either temporarily placed in an establishment in Darlington or receiving education in Darlington.

5.0 Contact made with the Designated Officer

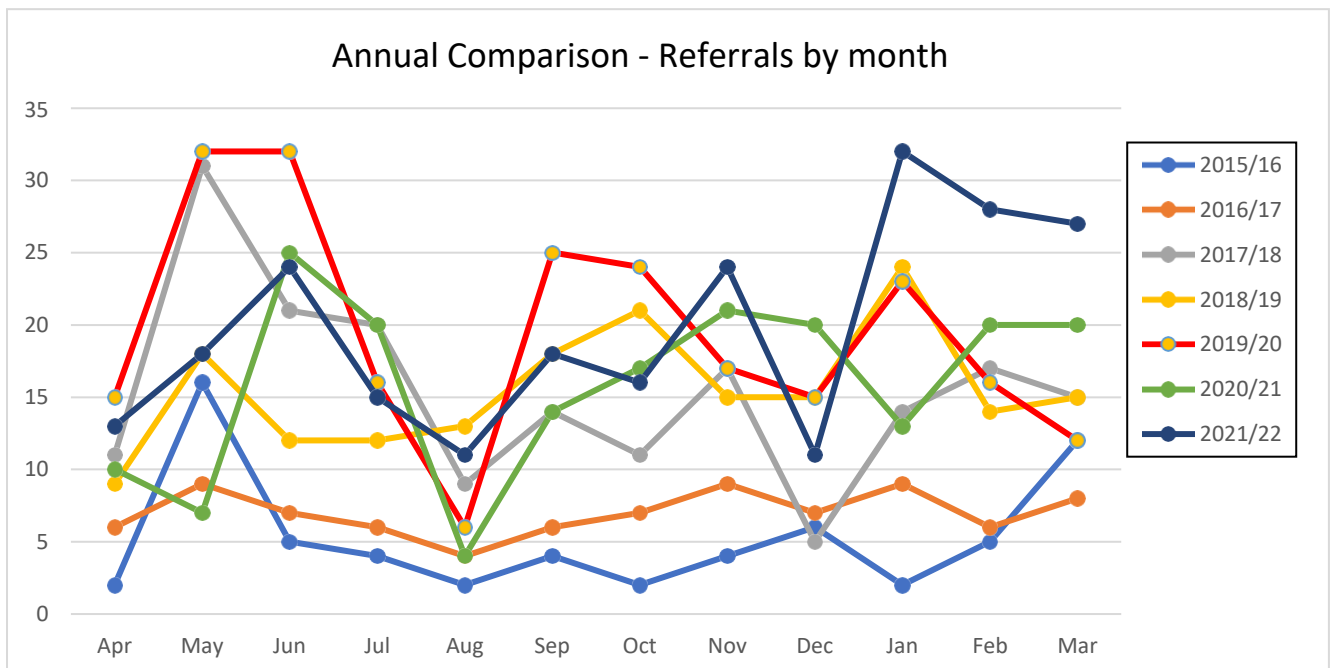
- 5.1** In 2021/22 the Designated Officer service received a total of 237 contacts in respect of allegations. This represents a 24% increase on the number of contacts received in 2020/21 and is the highest number of yearly contacts ever recorded. Of the total number of contacts received, 59 allegations progressed to an Initial Evaluation Meeting (IEM), (all of which were conducted via Microsoft Teams), amounting to 25% of all contacts, which is an 84% increase on the 2020/21 figures when 32 Initial Evaluation Meetings took place. The increase in the number of Initial Evaluation Meetings is mainly a consequence of the introduction of meetings held remotely via Microsoft Teams during the Covid-19 pandemic, meetings held in this way have proved very popular with practitioners and has greatly improved attendance at meetings. This has improved information sharing and decision making and has been of benefit to the Designated Officer service and remote meetings will continue going forwards. Of the allegations which progressed to an Initial Evaluation Meeting, 37% were subject to at least one review meeting. Again, this is beneficial to the Designated Officer service. The increase in the number of Initial Evaluation Meetings and review meetings has significantly increased the workload of the Designated Officer.
- 5.2** Initial Evaluation Meetings take place when information sharing is beneficial between agencies involved, for example, Designated Safeguarding Leads within the referring organisation, Human Resources, Police and Children's Services. This can be after a Strategy Meeting held by Children's Services, or it may be a stand-alone meeting. In some circumstances, it is appropriate to share information via telephone without the need of convening an Initial Evaluation Meeting, for example, when the allegation is not of a serious nature, there is no involvement with other agencies, or there is limited information to share with the employer. These allegations are still monitored by the Designated Officer.

CHART 1



5.3 The figures in **Chart 1** show that the rate of contacts in 2021/22 increased by 24% (an increase of 46 contacts) in comparison to the previous reporting year, which is to be expected as we gradually moved forward from the pandemic restrictions in 2021/22 and the effects of the national lockdowns.

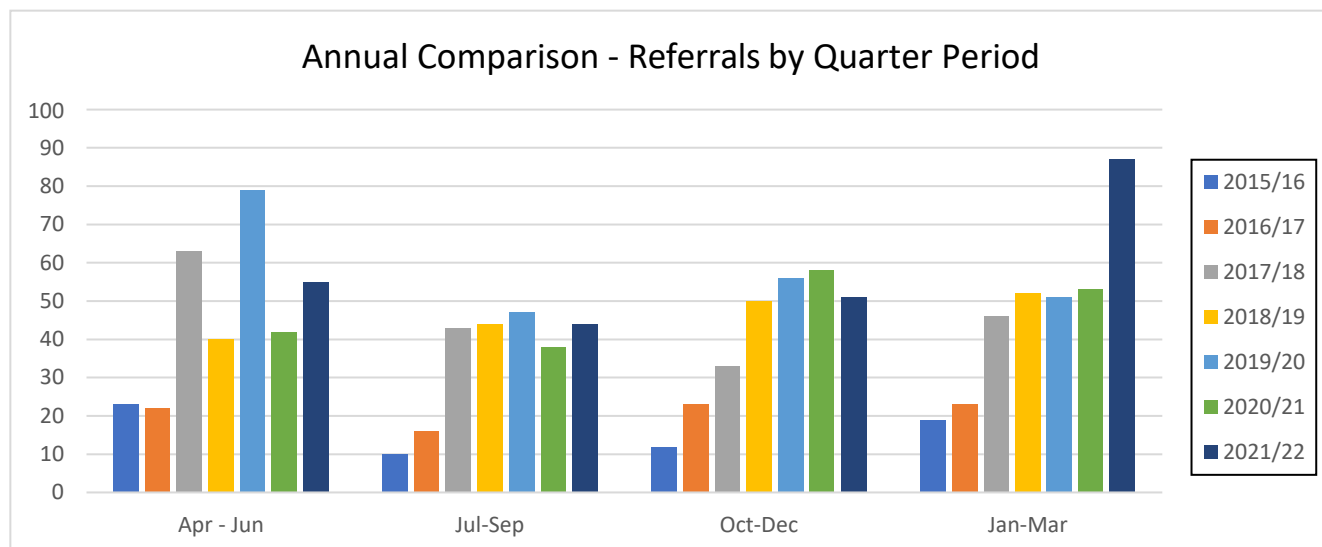
CHART 2



5.4 Analysis of the breakdown of monthly data reflects the gradual return to normality beyond the pandemic restrictions as the phased exit from lockdown

commenced in March/April 2021. The majority of contacts with the Designated Officer relate to schools and the number of contacts tends to fall significantly in the month of August during the summer break. However, the graph shows a significant increase in the rate of contacts to the Designated Officer between January and March 2022.

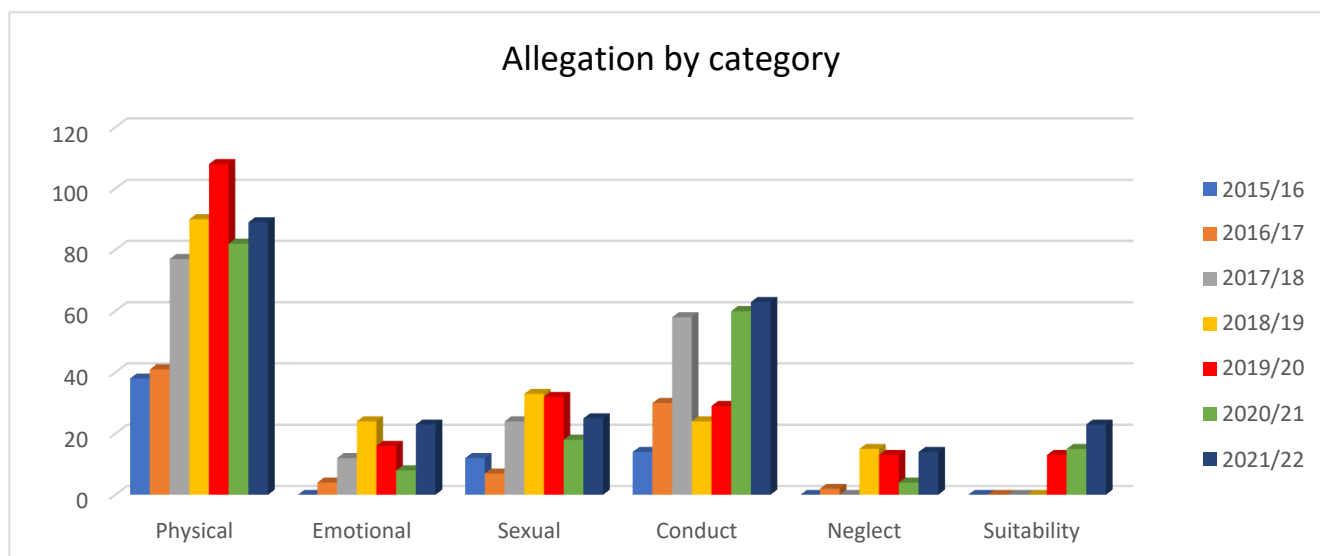
CHART 3



5.5 The effects of the gradual return to normality beyond the pandemic restrictions are also demonstrated in **Chart 3**, which provides an annual comparison of the rate of contacts by quarter and shows the significant increase in the rate of contacts in Quarter 4. A similar pattern has been noted by Designated Officers throughout the North-East region and similar increases in both safeguarding referrals and the complexity of investigations were experienced by Children’s Services in Darlington at the same time. A potential explanation for the significant increase is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health and wellbeing of the population as outlined in the [Government’s Covid-19: mental health and wellbeing surveillance report](#). The ‘up and down’ nature of the changes in mental health coincide with periods of national lockdown and high levels of Covid -19 cases. The report highlights a deterioration in the population’s mental health and wellbeing around late December 2021 when the Omicron variants spread rapidly. This may explain the sharp increase in the rate of contacts in Quarter 4.

6. Categories of Concern

CHART 4



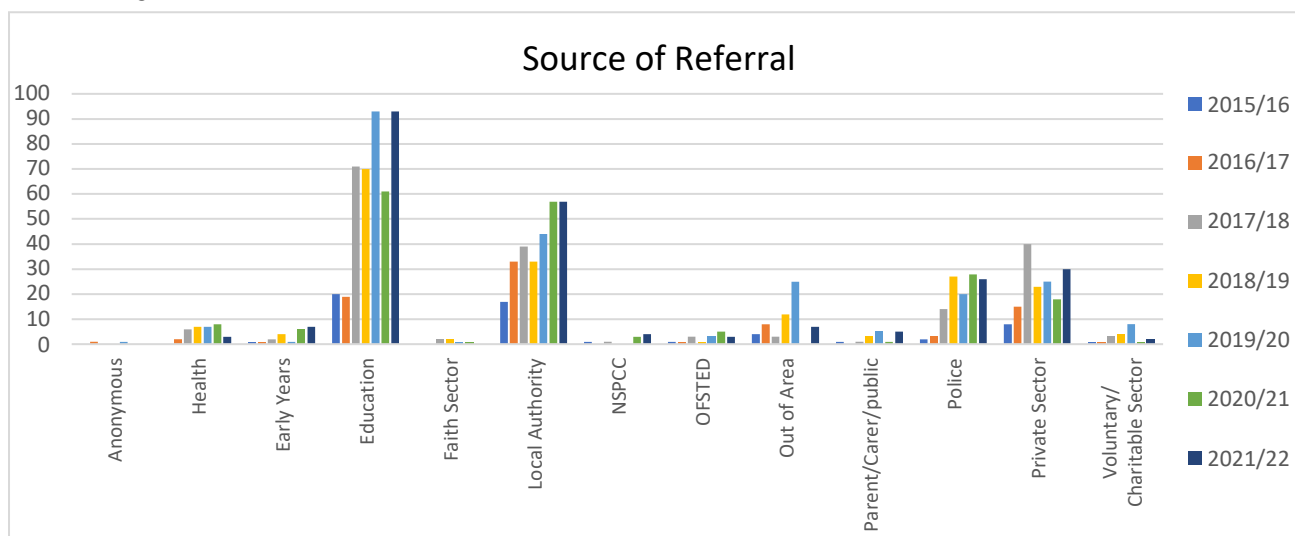
- 6.1** Of the 237 contacts in 2021/22, the main category for referral was allegations of physical abuse. This is in line with the data from previous years.
- 6.2.** In 2021/22, 89 (38%) contacts were in relation to physical abuse which represents an increase of 9% on last year's figures within this category. This is probably explained by the increase in allegations of physical assault within education settings as schools gradually moved out of lockdown as pandemic restrictions were gradually eased, resulting in an increase in allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) or allegations of assault. There is more detailed information on this in paragraph 8.5.
- 6.3** Allegations under the category 'conduct' have seen a slight increase accounting for 63 (27% of total) contacts to the Designated Officer in 2021/22. This is comparable with the figures for the previous twelve months but demonstrates a continuing upwards trend in this category. Contacts recorded within this category relate to behaviours which do not easily fit into the four main categories. A total of 26 (41%) contacts recorded as 'conduct' were in relation to incidents which occurred in the private lives of individuals and did not occur within the workplace.
- 6.4** A total of 23 contacts have been recorded under the category of 'suitability'. This category amounts to 10% of the total and a slight increase in contacts under this category compared to last year and represents a continuing upward trend. This category usually relates to issues in an employee's personal life, such as mental ill-health or 'association' with an offender, or association with proscribed organisations, which may affect their suitability to work with children. Some of these incidents related to mental health and alcohol abuse and self-harm or association with a partner who has committed sexual offences. Again, the

increase is potentially a consequence of the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the wellbeing of the population and the sharp increase in the rate of contacts between January and March 2022. Improved reporting from Children's Social Care to the Designated Officer (following the structural changes and reporting mechanisms to the Children's Front Door) in allegations where a parent's employment involves working with children, is likely to be a contributory factor in the continuing upwards trend.

- 6.5** There were 25 contacts regarding allegations of sexual abuse in 2021/22. This is 11% of all contacts and represents a 10% increase in contacts under this category compared to last year. Again, this is probably a reflection of the gradual move away from pandemic restrictions bringing the rate of contacts in this category close to pre-pandemic rate.
- 6.6** There were 14 contacts regarding allegations of neglect in 2021/22. This is 6% of all contacts and represents a 250% increase in contacts under this category in comparison with last year (when figures were very low). Again, this is probably a reflection of the gradual move away from pandemic restrictions, bringing the rate of contacts in this category close to the pre-pandemic level.
- 6.7** There has also been a 187% increase in the number of contacts regarding emotional abuse in comparison to the rate of contacts in the previous reporting year, with a total of 23 recorded in 2021/22 (when figures were very low). Emotional abuse contacts represented 10% of all referrals to Designated Officer. Once again, the increase is not significant and is likely to reflect the gradual move away from pandemic restrictions, bringing the rate of contacts in this category back towards pre-pandemic levels.
- 6.8** A total of 54 contacts to the Designated Officer in 2021/22 were related to incidents which have occurred in the private lives of individuals (as opposed to the workplace), which is 22% of the total contacts and represents a decrease in the rate of such contacts reported in the height of the pandemic in 2020/21 when lockdowns impacted on families and wellbeing. These incidents mainly relate to alcohol abuse, domestic abuse, mental health problems and allegations of child abuse and neglect within the family. Such allegations can be complex in terms of disclosure and resolution and may require review meetings.

7.0 Source of Referrals by Profession / Employment setting

CHART 5



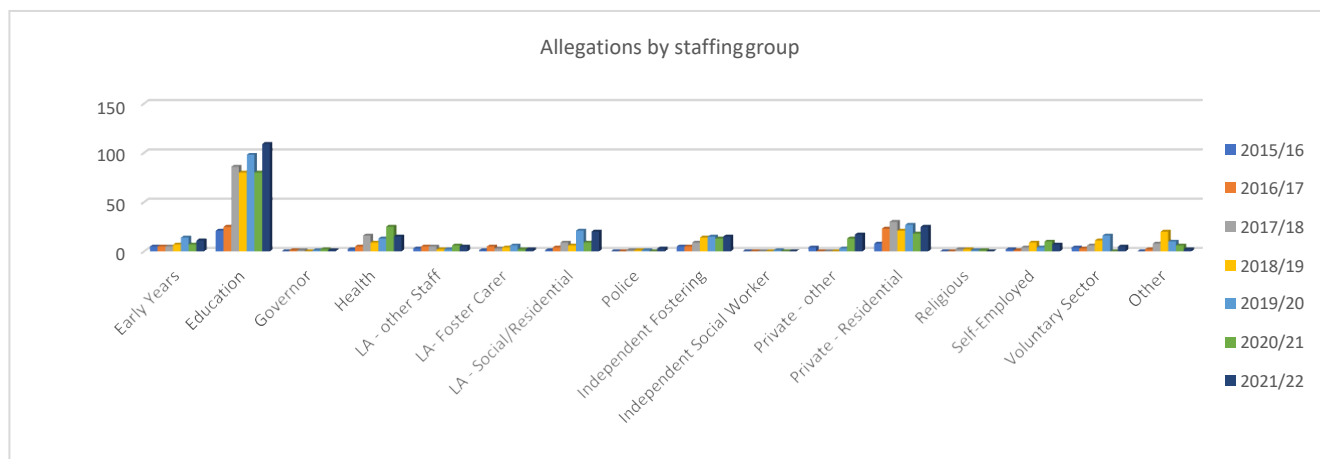
7.1 As can be seen in **Chart 5** Education settings in 2021/22 continues to be the largest referring group, accounting for 93 (39%) of the 237 contacts with the Designated Officer. This represents an increase on last year’s figures and once again brings the rate of contacts back to pre-pandemic levels. Most contacts from and involving schools were as a result of allegations of physical abuse and correspond to the analysis of ‘category of concern’ data, showing that physical abuse is the most common category of allegation reported to the Designated Officer. It should be noted that the total number of allegations relating to education establishments in the ‘allegations by staff group’ is slightly higher at 102 and this is because some of the allegations involving an employee in education were referred to the Designated Officer by other agencies.

7.2 Contacts have continued to be received from a wide range of professions and organisations. In 2021/22, there were a total of 64 contacts to the Designated Officer by a Local Authority, the majority of which originated from Darlington Borough Council. This represents a 12% increase on the previous reporting year and demonstrates a continuous upward trend year on year. This is likely to be a result of the changes in the safeguarding arrangements within Children’s Social Care at Darlington and the creation of the Children’s Initial Advice Team, which has improved the process of referral to the Designated Officer and has been of considerable benefit to the service. It is also once again possibly a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the spike in the rate of contacts between January and March 2022 and a potential increase in safeguarding referrals to Children’s Social Care of incidents involving domestic abuse and parental mental health concerns, or other categories of abuse which are referred to the Designated Officer if a parent or carer works with children.

8.0 Allegations by Staff Group

8.1 **Chart 6** shows that referrals are made across a wide range of roles and settings, whether paid staff or volunteers, as outlined in the national guidelines.

CHART 6



8.2 As expected, and in accordance with previous years, the largest number of allegations by staffing groups is Education, accounting for 102 contacts which is 43% of all allegations referred to the Designated Officer in 2021/22 and the largest number recorded in any reporting year. The [Covid 19 mental health and wellbeing surveillance report \(Chapter 4\)](#) states that over the pandemic, girls and young women, 16-24 year olds, disadvantaged children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) were more likely to report difficulties with mental health and wellbeing. Wellbeing scores between March and July 2021 appeared lower than during a similar period of restrictions in the previous year. Some children with SEND appear to have suffered substantial impacts on their mental health and have experienced greater anxiety during the pandemic and in the 2021 summer term staff. Parents of special schools or college pupils reported poorer pupil wellbeing, particularly greater anxiety and a decline in student mental health. This may explain the increase in contacts involving Education regarding allegations. Equally, increased knowledge and awareness on the part of staff of the requirement to notify the Designated Officer and clear channels of communication may also be a factor. The Education Safeguarding Officer works closely with the Designated Officer and regularly deliver refresher training to Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools. The Designated Officer has a good relationship with the Designated Safeguarding Leads in all schools for children with SEND in Darlington and there are clear channels of communication.

8.3 Of the 102 contacts relating to allegations received in 2021/22 about employees in education settings, 23 (23%) were regarding employees from primary schools;

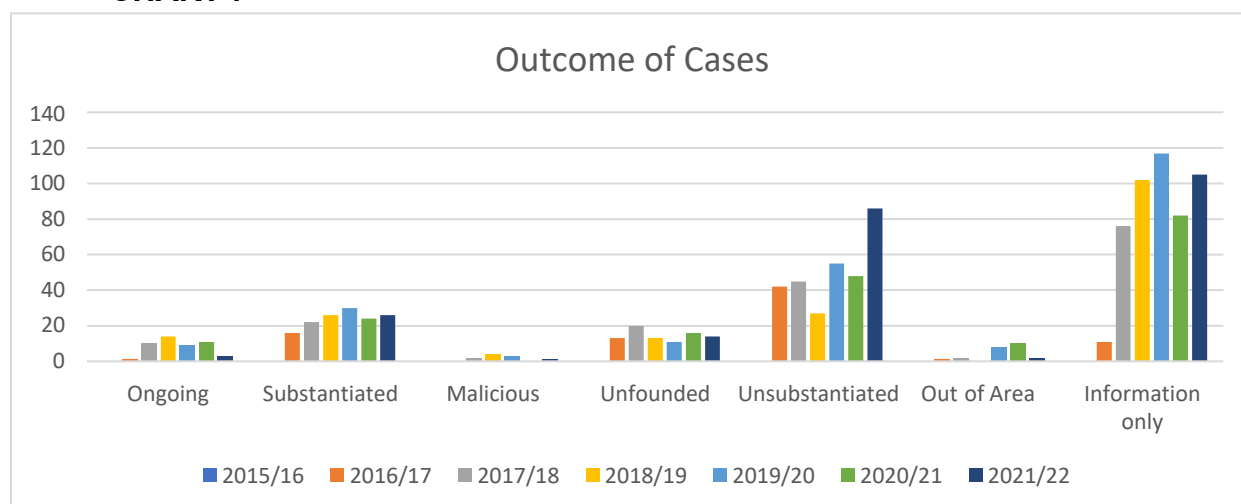
14 (14%) from secondary schools; 9 (9%) from Further Education settings; 7 (7%) referred to an agency teacher and 6 (6%) from a residential establishment with attached education provision. A total of 43 (43%) were from schools which provide a service for children with Special Educational Needs (both primary and secondary age groups). The Designated Officer has noted that there has been an increase in the number of allegations against supply teachers employed by recruitment agencies in this reporting year. It is likely that this is a consequence of the current challenges faced by schools in the recruitment and retention of permanent teachers and a greater reliance on agency staff.

- 8.4** There was a total of 52 allegations (52%) in the category of physical abuse relating to the education sector and this represents a 33% increase in the number of contacts within this sub-category in comparison to the previous reporting year. This figure correlates with the presenting contacts by education, often involving Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) being used within educational settings for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), for example, Team Teach, which is an approved management model for dealing with children and young people who are posing a risk to themselves or others.
- 8.5** The rate of allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in education settings has been closely monitored by the Designated Officer throughout this reporting period. There were 25 allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) across the Education sector in 2021/22, which accounts for 48% of all allegations under the category 'Physical' in education settings. This represents a slight increase in the number of allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in schools in comparison with the previous reporting year and is probably explained by more children returning to school as pandemic restrictions eased and the negative impact of the pandemic which is particularly evident in children with SEND. The Designated Officer currently does not have any concerns regarding the use of RPI in any education settings in Darlington for children with SEND and will continue to monitor the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in schools throughout 2022/23.
- 8.6** The number of contacts regarding Independent Foster Carers has slightly increased with 15 allegations being referred during 2021/22. There have been 2 contacts relating to Darlington Borough Council Foster Carers during the recording period, comparable with last year's figures.
- 8.7** The Designated Officer continues to work closely with the Service Manager for the Fostering Team (Darlington Borough Council), following a decision in 2018 that all referrals about foster carers (including Independent Fostering Agencies) would be shared with the Service Manager. This enables the Service Manager to keep a close check on those agencies where the standards of care fall below what is expected of an accredited provider of services. When appropriate, this information

is shared with the Commissioning Team.

9.0 Outcome of Cases

CHART 7

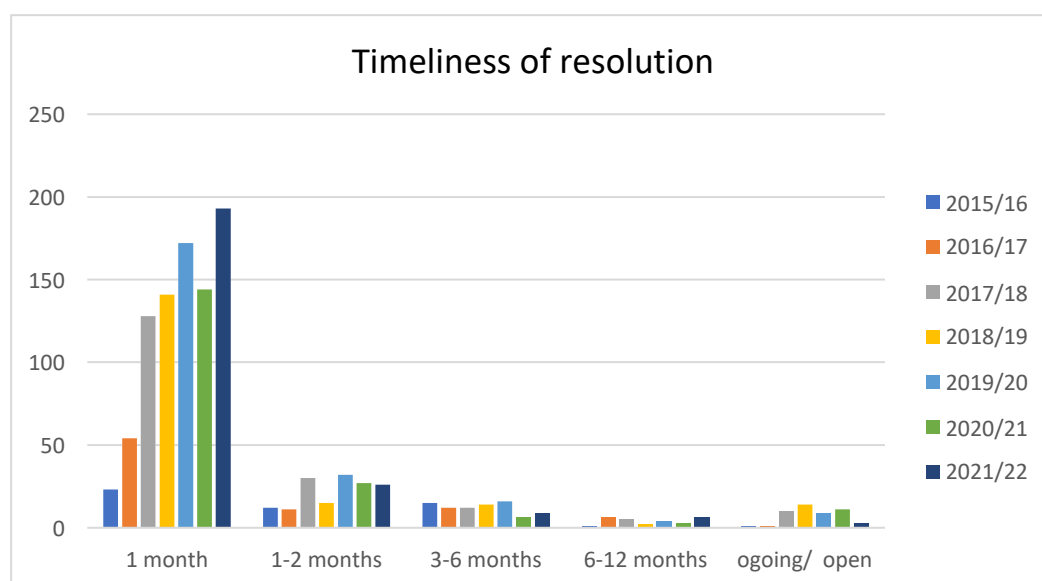


- 9.1** In relation to the 26 substantiated allegations, 12 employees were dismissed (46%), 1 was deregistered (4%), 6 resigned from their position (23%), and 5 staff members were reinstated (19%) with management advice/written warnings. No action was taken in respect of two allegations. The number of dismissals has increased significantly in comparison to previous years and suggests that some employers are taking a robust stance against employees who may pose a risk of harm to children.
- 9.2** There were 86 unsubstantiated outcomes and of these, 6 staff were re-instated (7%) and 77 resulted in no further action (90%), 1 staff member was dismissed (1%) and 2 staff members resigned (2%). When an allegation is recorded as unsubstantiated, employers are encouraged to look at whether learning can be derived from the incident to inform future practice and whether additional training or management advice for the employee is required.
- 9.3** There were 14 allegations deemed to be unfounded, of these 2 staff were re-instated (14%) and in respect of 12 allegations no further action was taken (86%).
- 9.4** One allegation was recorded under the category 'malicious'. This outcome is not used by the Designated Officer unless there is overwhelming evidence that the allegation was based on deliberate falsehoods and in this case the allegation was made by an adult.
- 9.5** In this reporting period, 105 allegations were recorded for 'information only'. This includes allegations which are 'out of area' (sometimes this fact is only established after initial enquiries have been carried out by the Designated Officer), which are reported to the Designated Officer but are subsequently found not to be in the

remit of the Designated Officer procedures and result in advice being given and enquiries which are transferred to the Safeguarding Adult Manager, as they are better dealt with under the Managing Allegations Procedures in accordance with the Care Act 2014. Some allegations can fall within the remit of both the Designated Officer and the Safeguarding Adult Manager, for example, agency employees or employees with two roles. In such enquiries the Designated Officer works closely with the Safeguarding Adult Manager and a joint meeting may take place.

9.6 At the time of writing, a total of 3 allegations (1%) remain open. These are either ongoing police investigations, complex internal disciplinary investigations, or investigations which are awaiting the outcome of a court case or an appeal.

10. Performance
Chart 8



10.1 The Designated Officer continues to work to the professional standards set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010, even though there is no longer a timescale for completion of enquiries stipulated in the updated versions of the legislation. The performance of the Designated Officer is measured and monitored through supervision between a Service Manager and the Designated Officer.

10.2 It is important to manage allegations within timescales to ensure that investigations are dealt with promptly, firstly to ensure that children are protected from employees who may pose a risk of harm, but also to ensure a fair and consistent process for employees (who should be supported by the employer throughout the process). Oversight and management of allegations within timescales helps employers to conduct investigations and disciplinary proceedings lawfully and expeditiously, enabling employees to be either reinstated, disciplined or dismissed at the earliest opportunity thereby minimising disruption to the employer and employee.

10.3 There is currently no requirement in legislation for enquires to meet timescales. However, local targets are set in line with an earlier version of Working Together (2010) in that:

- 80% of allegations are resolved within one month
- 90% within are resolved within three months

10.4 In 2021/22 allegations were resolved in a timely manner with 193 (81%) of the total being resolved in one month and this is a slight improvement on performance data from previous years. Resolution timescales can be impeded by the complexity of allegations involving ongoing criminal investigations and internal investigations where the employee has declared themselves unfit for work, therefore delaying disciplinary action.

10.5 A total of 92% of allegations were resolved within 3 months and 93% within 6 months. A total of 96% were completed in within 6 months and 99% within 12 months. The remaining allegations were ongoing and not finalised at the end of this reporting period, all involve ongoing complex allegations and criminal or internal disciplinary investigations. At the time of writing the report, a total of 3 (1%) investigations originating in 2021/22 were still active. Again, this is a slight improvement on the performance data from previous years.

10.6 The Designated Officer tracks all open enquiries on a 4 weekly basis to ensure that updates on outcomes of investigations are received and to enable enquiries to be closed in a timely manner. However, it should be noted once a police investigation is involved or a case is referred to an employer for disciplinary procedures to be followed, the Designated Officer is reliant on external process which impact on resolution timescales.

11.0 Freedom of Information Requests

11.1 Throughout 2021/22, the Designated Officer service has continued to take the lead with regards to Freedom of Information Requests with regards to allegations made about employees or volunteers working with children. Over the 12 months reporting period, 6 Freedom of Information requests were processed.

12.0 Service Improvements & Developments 2021/22

12.1 See Appendix 1.

13.0 Designated Officer Service Priorities and Plan 2022/23

13.1 In 2022/23, the Designated Officer service plans to continue to promote

awareness of the service across a range of professions to ensure that appropriate referrals are coming in and to break down any barriers to agencies seeking the advice and support of the Designated Officer service. The role of the Designated Officer and the responsibilities of employers are included in multi-agency safeguarding training.

- 13.2** The Designated Officer service will continue to be crucial to frontline practice to safeguard children in Darlington. Working in partnership with the Designated Officer and sharing information effectively ensures that children are protected from people who pose a risk of harm and promotes good practice and challenges unsafe practice. The Designated Officer continues to work with the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Trainer and the Education Safeguarding Officer to raise awareness of the role of the Designated Officer and the Managing Allegations Procedures to promote good practice and safeguard children.
- 13.3** The service also wants to improve the quality of the performance information gathered and to maximise the efficiency of the service using electronic recording systems. In 2021/22, the recording of referrals to the Designated Officer service was integrated within the casework system Liquid Logic. However further work is required to adapt the system for the purpose of recording allegations. This will enable Children's Services to improve data matching where appropriate. This work will continue in 2022/23.
- 13.4** In 2021/22 the Designated Officer established close links with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) which has provided a single point of contact for professionals. The Designated Officer intends to work with DOs in the North-East region in 2022/23 to promote safer recruitment.
- 13.5** The Designated Officer service has identified 5 key priorities (Appendix 2) to progress in 2022/23 which are pivotal to the on-going development of the service.

14.0 Recommendations

- 14.1** To note the contents of the report and the work undertaken during 2021/22 and to acknowledge the priorities of the Designated Officer service for 2022/23.
- 14.2** To share the Annual Report with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership and Members who will be asked to:
- agree this Annual Report
 - consider how they will continue to promote the role of the DO within their own organisation.

15.0 References

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2018
- Guidance for staff facing an allegation 2014

16.0 Author

Marian Garland
Designated Officer
Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Business Unit
Date: 20th June 2022

Appendix 1

Service Improvements & Developments 2021/22

Actions were identified for development of the Designated Officer function during 2020/21 which would further improve the performance of the service. The progress against these actions in 2021/22 is highlighted below.

	Action	Lead	Timescale	Update
1	To ensure the induction of a newly appointed DO is successful and the appointee is retained	AD	Jan 2022	Review of the role and function to ensure the Designated Officer role is in the appropriate service area. This is ongoing
2	The Designated Officer will continue to monitor the rate of allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in schools for pupils with SEN and identify themes and take action where appropriate.	DO	Ongoing	The DO holds regular meetings with one provider regarding allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) (as a means of monitoring the rate of allegations) and has regular conversations and meetings with head teachers in the schools for children with SEND.
3	DO will continue to raise awareness of the DO role via a range of media throughout the coming year	DO	Completed	All relevant information re the DO service has been updated on the revised Darlington Safeguarding Partnership website (July 2021). Websites and literature to have the name and contact details of the DO. All agencies will have correct details of DO. DO information will be easily accessible and relevant referrals made.
4	DO will continue to engage with the Safeguarding Multi Agency Trainer and Safeguarding Education Officer in	DO	Ongoing	This is an on-going process and a top priority. In 2021/22 the DO and Education safeguarding Officer held a joint refresher training session with Designated

	relation to continual roll out of designated training to improve practice and reduce referrals across all organisations			Safeguarding Leads from Education to explain the KSCIE amendment in respect of low level concerns. The DO has also started a rolling programme of sessions to raise awareness of the managing allegations procedures across the wider partnership.
5.	DO to liaise with police in relation to any historical allegations that may come as a result of the Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.	DO	Ongoing	The DO has an agreed strategy in place referring any notifications of historical sexual abuse from the Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. There has been one referral from the IICSA via the NSPCC.
7.	The DO will continue to maintain accurate records of referrals, decision making and outcomes and identify and monitor any themes which emerge and feed the themes into training sessions	DO	Ongoing	Records are reviewed monthly to ensure that they are accurate and up to date. Regular conversations take place between the DO and the Principals of schools for pupils with SEND to monitor the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI).
8.	DO to attend all regional DO meetings to ensure that Darlington's views and opinions are represented.	DO	Ongoing	The DO has attended all quarterly regional meetings in 2021/22. These meetings are held via Microsoft Teams.
9.	DO will continue to develop recording practice within system development for future reports.	DO	Ongoing	The DO has worked with the Liquid Logic team in 2021/22 and has developed a recording system. However, there are currently limitations in the system and further work is required.

9	To develop a safer recruitment guidance to offer further support and guidance to settings	DO and HR	Completed	The Safer Recruitment guidance is available on Darlington Borough Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy.
11	The DO will provide feedback on National DO standards and seek approval from DSP and legal services	DO	Ongoing	The National Standards are not yet completed. There is an ongoing discussion as to whether a National Guidance will be appropriate for such a wide diversity of Local Authorities.
12	The DO will review and up-date the procedure for Managing Allegations and concerns against staff, carers or volunteers and seek approval via the DSCB Practice and Development and Procedures sub-group as required.	DO	Completed	The procedures were reviewed in 2021/22 within the framework of the DSP Learning and Development sub-group, the procedures have been updated to reflect the changes to legislation – Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 (additional amendment)
13	To review and up-date the guidance for staff facing an allegation	DO	Completed	This guidance was reviewed in 2021/22 within the framework of the DSP Learning and Development sub-group but will be kept under review.

Designated Officer Service Priority Plan 2022/23**Priority 1: Training and Awareness Raising in respect of the Designated Officer role and local procedures**

Action	Planned outcome	Lead	Timescale
DO will continue to engage with the Safeguarding Multi Agency Trainer and Safeguarding Education Officer in relation to continual roll out of designated training and will hold awareness raising sessions with employers as requested.	Increased awareness amongst employers of the DO procedures and their responsibilities in reporting allegations to the DO and improved transparency in reporting allegations. This will potentially increase the number of referrals to the DO service and will improve safeguarding outcomes for children.	DO	March 2023

Priority 2: To monitor and address the prevalence of allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in SEN Education settings in Darlington

Action	Planned Outcome	Lead	Timescale
Monitor the rate of allegations involving the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) in SEN education settings in Darlington in respect of repeat allegations.	To work with Head Teachers and Safeguarding Leads to ensure that the DO is informed when such an allegation is made by a pupil/parent and that staff are using Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) appropriately and that any breaches of Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) guidelines are dealt with appropriately schools with a view to reducing the annual number of allegations of	DO	March 2023

	Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) within this category. This work is ongoing.		
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Priority 3: DO database/recording to be integrated within Liquid Logic

Action	Planned Outcome	Lead	Timescale
In conjunction with the Liquid Logic team improve the DO casework recording system within Liquid Logic.	Improved recording and enhanced searching capacity for the DO and improved data matching for Children's Services where appropriate. Performance Indicators to be available on Liquid Logic which will feed figures into the DO Annual report.	DO/LL team	September 2022

Priority 4: The future of the Designated Officer service in Darlington to be agreed and a decision made as to where the service will be placed within the Local Authority

Action	Planned Outcome	Lead	Timescale
A decision to be made as to where the Designated Officer would be best placed within the Local Authority with regards to workload and taking into consideration resilience for abstraction.	A decision regarding where the DO role should be placed.	Assistant Director	September 2022

Priority 5: To work closely with the Disclosure and Barring service to support safer recruitment practices

Action	Planned Outcome	Lead	Timescale
To work closely with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Single Point of Contact and Police to	To ensure that employers have the necessary disclosure to make decisions regarding safer recruitment to ensure that applicants who	DO	March 2023

<p>address concerns around disclosure as they arise and to provide information to the DBS as requested in accordance with GDPR in support of disclosure and safer recruitment.</p>	<p>may pose a risk of harm to children are identified at an early stage in the recruitment process and children are protected from harm.</p>		
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