

Local Authority Designated Officer Annual Report

April 2016 to March 2017

SOMERSET



County Council



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1 Introduction

1.1 Statutory Guidance

The statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children...* (2015) outlines the criteria that trigger the allegations management procedure. The procedure applies when there is an allegation that any person who works with children, in connection with their employment or voluntary activity, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they pose a risk of harm to children.

The guidance sets out the importance that the co-ordination of any actions to address welfare concerns, in relation to the child or children involved, are taken without delay. It stipulates that local authorities should have a *designated officer* – Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or team of officers, to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children.

1.2 Managing Allegations Procedure

The detail of the procedure to manage allegations against people who work with children is contained within the South West Child Protection Procedures http://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/somerset/p_alleg_against_staff.html Inappropriate behaviour by those who work with children should be considered within the context of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. It includes concerns about inappropriate relationships between staff / volunteers and children. For instance, where professional boundaries are not maintained and employees / volunteers breach policies e.g. a worker having contact online with a young person through social networking sites.

1.3 Role and Responsibilities

1.3.1 Role of the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)

The role of the LADO is to:

- Provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations
- Liaise with the police and other agencies;
- Monitor the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process.

1.3.2 Role of Employers

The role of employers is to: -

- Appoint a designated senior manager to whom allegations or concerns should be reported;
- Appoint a deputy to whom reports should be made in the absence of the designated senior manager or where that person is the subject of the allegation or concern.

1.3.3 Role of Police

Avon and Somerset Constabulary through the Safeguarding Co-ordination Unit – Southern (SCU), provides the following support:

- Immediate availability for strategy discussions / meetings as it is now co-located with the First Response Team (Children’s Social Care);
- Consultation to the LADO on notifications received to determine if there is a role for the Police;
- A review on the progress of cases in which there is a police investigation;
- Sharing information on operational cases as appropriate including confirmation of the outcomes upon completion of investigations or related prosecutions.

1.4 System for Dealing with Notifications

The system of recording and managing referrals, including LADO notifications, being processed through Somerset Direct ensures a first point of contact to determine whether the threshold for Children Social Care involvement is met.

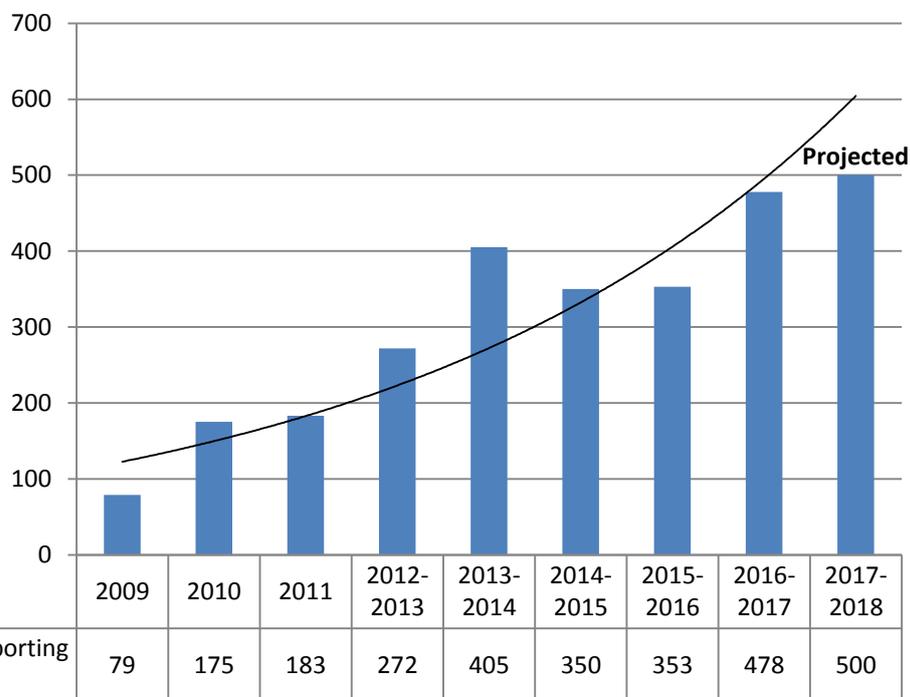
The managing allegations process is compliant with DfE expectations in terms of there being a single point of contact for all notifications to ensure the safety of children is determined at the earliest stage.

Organisations are required to complete an **Allegations Reporting Form (ARF)** before advice, guidance and support is received from the LADO Service.

2. Data and Information on Notifications - 2016 / 2017

2.1 Notifications received

Number of Allegations per Reporting Year



The LADO was notified of 478 allegations during the year. This means that the LADO dealt with 125 more allegations than in the previous reporting year. This represents approximately a 35% increase in notifications from the previous year.

The high number of notifications is often due to organisations seeking clarity as to whether or not the alleged incident meets the criteria to trigger the managing allegations procedure. Anecdotally many of the contacts received can be attributed to the notifier lacking the confidence to determine if any of the criteria are met and / or wishing to have an audit trail of consultation with the LADO.

This is reflected in the number of children's residential homes who will make notifications having already determined that the incident does not meet any of the criteria. This is in order to avoid undue criticism from Ofsted inspectors who expect all incidences to be notified to the LADO irrespective of whether the home can evidence that the incident does not meet any of the criteria.

This said, such notifications can potentially be invaluable as it enables the cross referencing of names to the existing database and the ability to detect any emerging patterns of concerning behaviour by an adult at an early stage, or the involvement of a child in previous notifications.

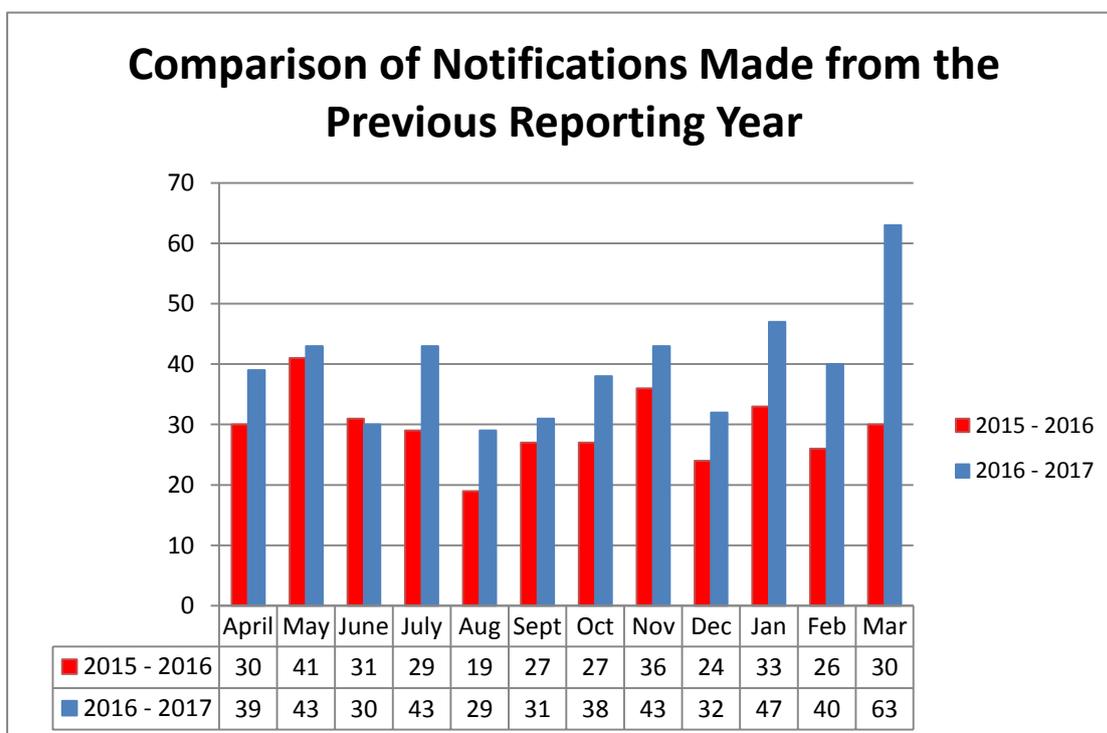
Additionally, completion and return of an Allegations Reporting Form (ARF) serves as an official record of consultation between organisation and the LADO Service.

The importance of recording advice and guidance is highlighted in the serious case review report (East Sussex Safeguarding Children Board - Child G – A Serious Case Review) which states, the LADO is “*personally and professionally responsible for ensuring that consultations are conducted and recorded appropriately*” (Harrington, K, 2013, pp15-16). As a result, comprehensive case recordings are maintained for all notifications that are received.

However, a high number of notifications also indicate that agencies / organisations are becoming increasingly familiar with the requirement to notify the LADO when there are concerns relating to the alleged inappropriate behaviour of employees / volunteers.

To deal with this increase, capacity has been created through the combination of a number of measures including: a robust application of the threshold to determine if the criteria to trigger the managing allegations procedure is met; advice and guidance only being provided upon receipt of a completed Allegations Reporting Form (ARF); the appointment of an Independent Reviewing & Safeguarding Officer to supplement the existing cover arrangements; providing advice and guidance by email as opposed to telephone conversation which can at times be lengthy.

2.2 Comparison of Notifications



In comparison to 2016 there were 11 months in 2017 in which more notifications were received.

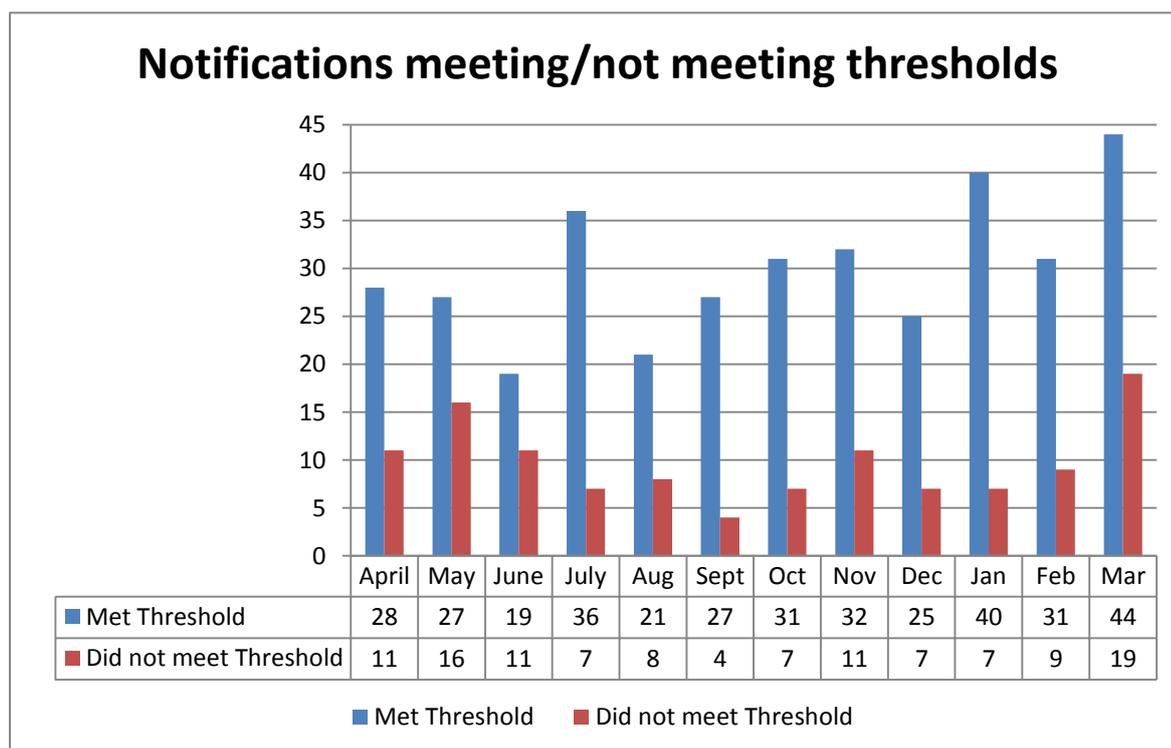
The multi-agency safeguarding training – ‘*Introduction to Child Protection*’ (One day) and ‘*Working Together*’ (2 days), continues to promote the managing allegations procedure and requirement to notify the LADO when there are concerns of inappropriate behaviour relating to employees / volunteers.

Notifications peaked in March (2017) with an increase of 110% compared to March (2016). There is no obvious reason for such a spike in numbers.

The trend of notifications being lower in the school holidays is evidenced by the numbers reported during August. The pattern of a large number of notifications being received prior to the Easter break with a steady rise in notifications during the autumn months following the summer holiday continues.

There is insufficient evidence to suggest that there is an escalation in the numbers of professionals, working in the wider childrens workforce, who may pose a risk to children.

2.3 Thresholds



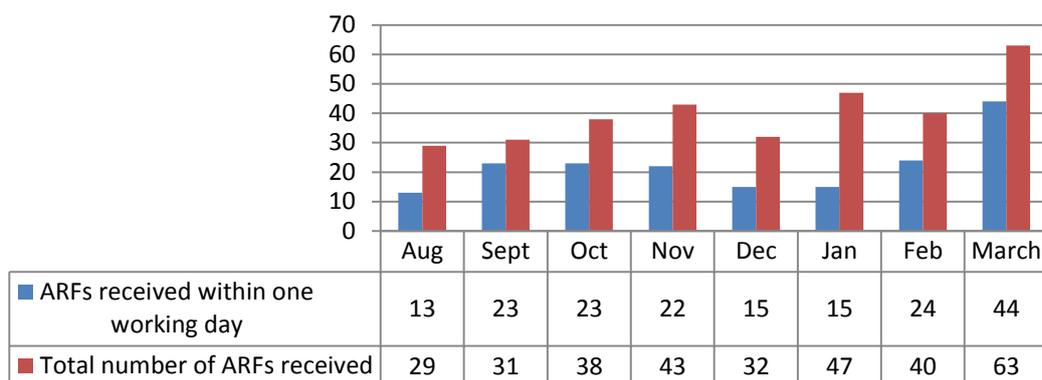
A possible explanation for increases in notifications is the lack of confidence in professionals determining if an allegation meets the threshold outlined in the managing allegations procedure.

There continues to be an average of 25% of total notifications received where agencies / organisations have sought contact with the LADO service to assist in determining if a reported concern meets the threshold.

It supports the continuing need to explore opportunities to further promote the managing allegations procedure. This would include training to support managers and Headteachers in application of thresholds to improve their understanding and confidence to interpret allegations against the criteria.

2.4 Notifications Received in One Working Day

The number of ARFs received within 1 working day against the total number of ARFs received each month



The statutory guidance requires agencies / organisations to notify the LADO of an allegation that potentially meets the criteria to trigger the managing allegations procedure within one working day.

The notification form was amended in August 2016 to ensure all those making notifications entered a date when the allegation was first known and the date of actual notification to the LADO.

This graph demonstrates that at times agencies / organisations are not fulfilling the statutory requirement to notify the LADO within one working day.

Of the 323 notifications received during this 8 month period 179 (55%) were received within one working day.

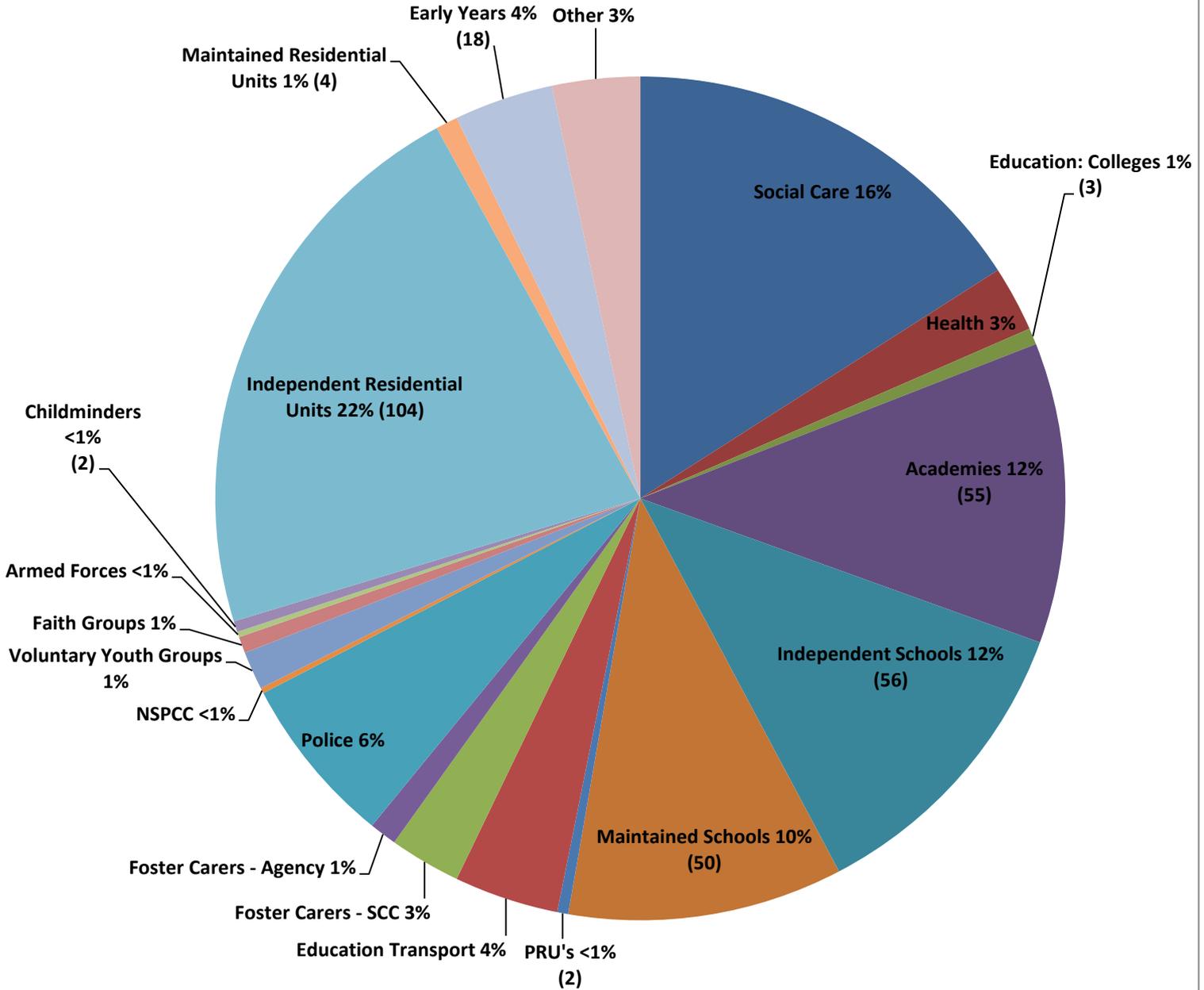
It is recognised that on occasion delays can occur as a result of the organisation itself not considering an incident to meet the criteria whereas another professional involved with the child considers that it does and makes a notification.

Other instances can be where the organisation wishes to discuss the incident with the child's social worker before notifying the LADO.

As it is a statutory requirement further communication to all agencies and organisations is required to ensure compliance and this will be an action for the coming year.

2.5 Which Organisations are Making Notifications?

Notifications by Organisation Type



2.5.1 Notifications from Education & Early Years Settings

The largest number of notifications received came from the education and early years providers which combined amounted to 184 (38% of the total notifications received, this compares to 43% in 2015/16).

This was followed closely by notifications received from residential childrens homes which combined amounted to 108 (23% of the total notifications received).

The amount of time children spends in education and early years and / or who are accommodated in residential or foster care would explain the higher rate of notifications.

2.5.2 Notifications from all Schools

Generally reporting from schools is higher as a result of the schools' statutory guidance which has existed for some years. Over time this has enabled more staff to be familiar with the managing allegations procedure and the expectations to report any concerns about inappropriate behaviour of colleagues.

The move to a more robust safeguarding culture in schools was as a result of the Soham Public Inquiry (2004) into the murders of Jessica Chapman and Holly Wells by the caretaker employed in a local secondary school. He was in a relationship with a Teaching Assistant, at the local primary school the girls attended, and she had lied to Police about his whereabouts when a major search was underway to find the girls at the time they went missing.

This led to major changes in legislation - Education Acts (2002 & 2006); Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006), which introduced huge changes to the way staff are recruited including Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks now Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) disclosure checks. Additionally, it introduced the mandatory requirement that on every interview panel for a school vacancy at least one person having completed a nationally accredited Safer Recruitment course. The course covers offender behaviour, how to deter unsuitable people from applying for vacancies and detecting such people should they apply.

As a result Headteachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) in schools have developed a degree of confidence in understanding the threshold to make notifications to the LADO.

2.5.3 Notifications from Independent Schools

The number of notifications received from independent schools – 56 (12% of all notifications received) remains consistent with the figure of 45 (13%) that were received in 2015 / 16.

The number of notifications for both independent schools and academies remains similar to that received from maintained schools. This especially demonstrates that fee paying schools are becoming familiar with and

understand the managing allegations process indicating evidence of a real focus on child safety. This ameliorates any criticism that such schools place more emphasis on protecting the reputation of the school.

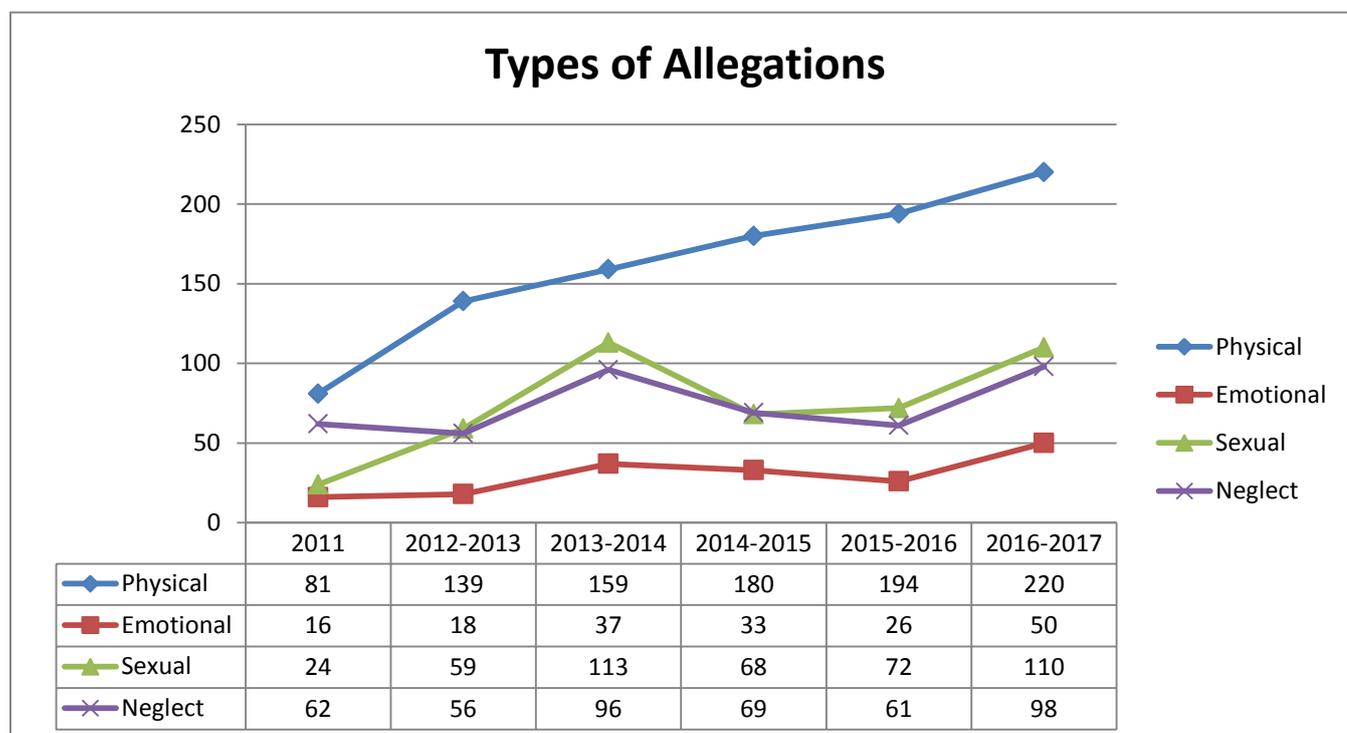
2.5.4 Notifications from Residential Children’s Homes

The residential sector is effective in making notifications with 108 (23%) of the total notifications received coming from this area. This compares to 92 (26%) in 2015/16.

It is expected that the volume of notifications of residential care homes is high when the following factors are taken into account:

- For many children to be taken from their family home and placed into statutory care is not what they would wish for.
- As a result some will exhibit challenging behaviour as a result of their unhappiness and distress at being away from the family.
- The needs, often complex, that many children have.
- The potential issue of limited placement availability whereby decisions can be taken to place a child in a home without thorough evaluation of its ability to meet that child’s needs.
- The pressure from Ofsted for all incidents of actual or potential inappropriate behaviour by staff to be notified to the LADO.
- Feedback from registered managers suggesting a greater confidence in the LADO service whereby they are quick to seek advice, guidance and support.

2.6 Types of Allegations



There has been an increase in all types of abuse reported without any obvious cause other than the capability of professionals to identify specific harmful behaviour and its impact on the young person.

Primarily the increase in all types of abuse is as a result of the increase in the numbers of notifications.

2.6.1 Physical Abuse

There has been a year on year increase in the number of notifications relating to *Physical abuse* with an approximate 13% increase in allegations of physical abuse from last year.

2.6.2 Emotional Harm

In relation to *Emotional harm* there has been a 92% increase from 26 notifications in 2015 / 2016 to 50 notifications in 2016 / 2017.

2.6.3 Inappropriate Behaviour / Neglect

With *Inappropriate behaviour / neglect* there was a 61% increase from 61 notifications in 2015 / 2015 to 98 notifications in 2016 / 17.

2.6.4 Sexual Abuse / Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

In terms of *Sexual Abuse* there has been a 53% increase from 72 notifications in 2015 / 2016 to 110 notifications in 2016 / 17.

Classifying a child as being sexually exploited is determined by the following recognisable elements being present:

- The child has been groomed by an individual with power and control e.g. a professional working with children.

In all notifications to the LADO this element existed.

- There is evidence of an exchange – gifts, money, food, drugs, alcohol etc, being present; this could be to a third party and not always to the child themselves.

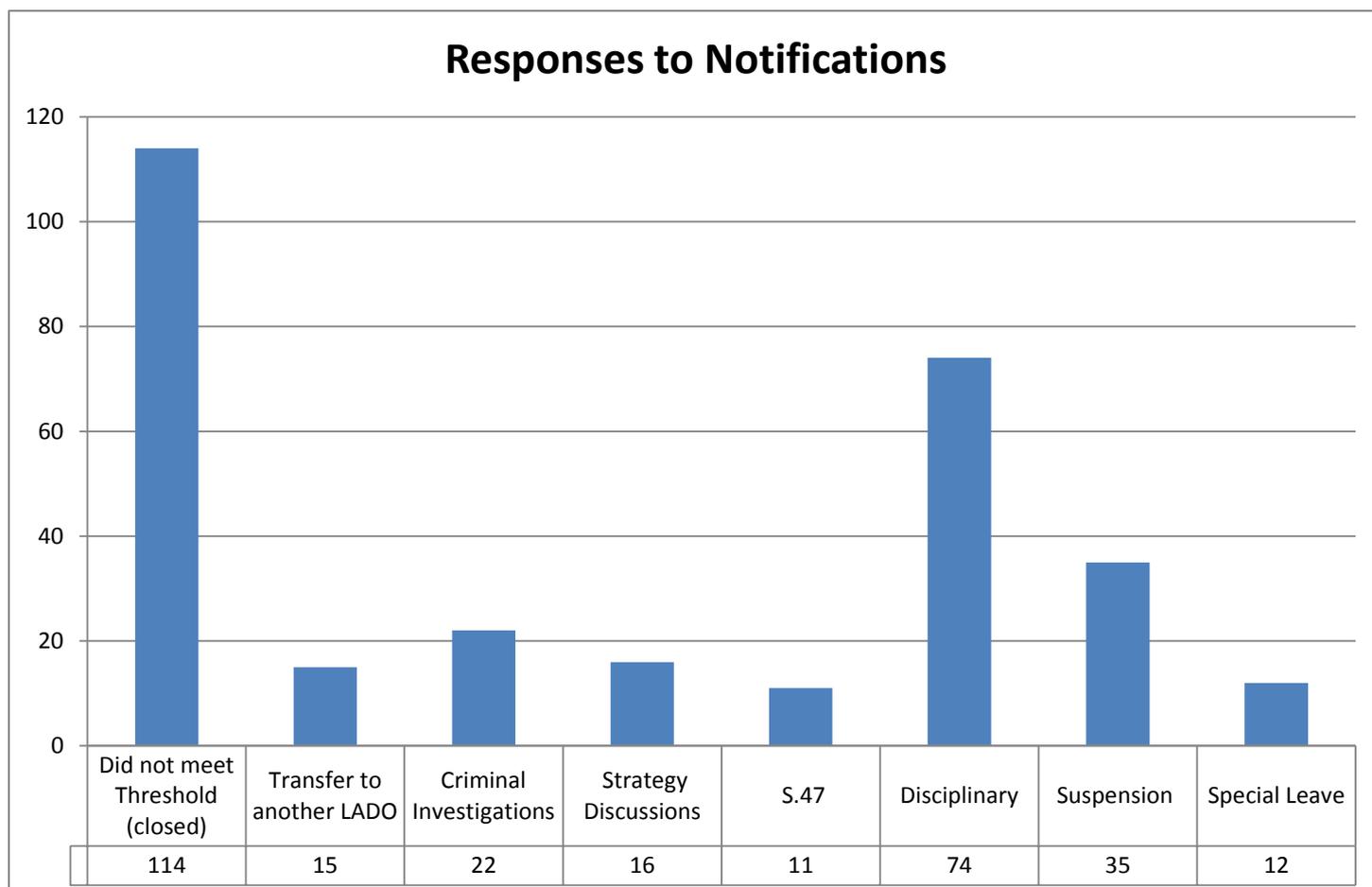
In none of the sexual abuse notifications was there clear evidence of an exchange.

- There is evidence of a sexual act taken place or the exchange of a sexual image.

In those cases of an alleged sexual encounter or sexting the matter was investigated by the Police.

In none of the sexual abuse notifications in 2016 / 2017 did all three elements exist to be recorded as CSE.

2.7 Responses to Notifications



2.7.1 Number of Allegations Not Meeting Criteria

114 (24%) notifications to the LADO were deemed not to meet the criteria for triggering the managing allegations process and appropriate advice was provided. This compares with 27% in 2015 / 2016.

This percentage figure is similar to previous years and as previously stated often reflects organisations not being confident in applying the thresholds to reported incidents.

An example of this is a parental complaint that the school is failing to address bullying behaviour towards their child. Whilst the emotional impact on the child can be harmful it is as a result of the possible inadequacy of the schools overall safeguarding arrangements – particularly its bullying policy, supervision and pastoral arrangements, rather than one individual being culpable for the harm being experienced by the child.

2.7.2 Involvement of Childrens Social Care and the Police

The majority of notifications received do not meet the respective thresholds for either Childrens Social Care or the Police to be involved.

For Childrens Social Care to become involved there must be at the very least reasonable cause to suspect a child has suffered significant harm.

In respect of the Police becoming involved in an allegation the burden of proof requires that there is sufficient evidence to establish the fact that a crime has been committed beyond reasonable doubt.

2.7.3 Child Protection Enquiries

There were 16 strategy discussions as a result of there being reasonable cause to suspect a child/ren had suffered significant harm.

In 11 of these cases the decision was taken to undertake child protection enquiries (section 47, Children Act 1989).

2.7.4 Criminal Investigations

Consultation will always take place with the Police when notifications indicate that a criminal offence has potentially been committed against or related to the child. This liaison with the Southern Safeguarding Co-ordination Unit (SSCU) ensures that appropriate decisions are taken to determine if the criminal threshold is likely to be met and if so ensures that the case is allocated to the relevant inspection team.

There were 37 notifications that resulted in criminal investigations being undertaken.

2.7.5 Investigations by the Employer

For all notifications where the individual is in employment the LADO Service advises the employer of the need to consider an internal investigation being undertaken.

An example of this is notifications in which a teacher has made physical contact with the pupil – grasping their shoulder, to remonstrate with them for negative behaviour. Without evidence of the child being physically harmed it may not meet the criminal threshold for investigating but is a clear breach of the school's code of conduct.

2.7.6 Suspension

The statutory guidance for schools – *'Keeping Children Safe in Education'* (2016) and for all other organisations the guidance within the South West Child Protection Procedures, states that suspension should not be automatic. It encourages other options to be considered first e.g. re-deployment.

For many employers however, they will defer to their own disciplinary policy which for many organisations state that a decision to suspend should be taken when the allegation indicates an act of potential gross misconduct has been possibly committed.

In 35 of the total notifications received a decision was taken to suspend the employees during the investigation processes - criminal and / or disciplinary investigation.

In 11 cases, rather than to suspend the member of staff alternative working arrangements were agreed. This included a change of work base or role during the course of the investigation.

In one case, special management leave was agreed.

2.7.7 Transfer of Notifications

In 15 cases although the incident involved a child looked after by Somerset County Council it had occurred outside of the county and therefore became the responsibility of the relevant LADO. Further consultation takes place between the respective LADOs to ensure a comprehensive handover of actions. This principle has been established in agreement with all LADOs in the south west.

2.8 Outcomes of Allegations

2.8.1 Department for Education Definitions

The following DfE definitions are used when determining the outcome of cases:

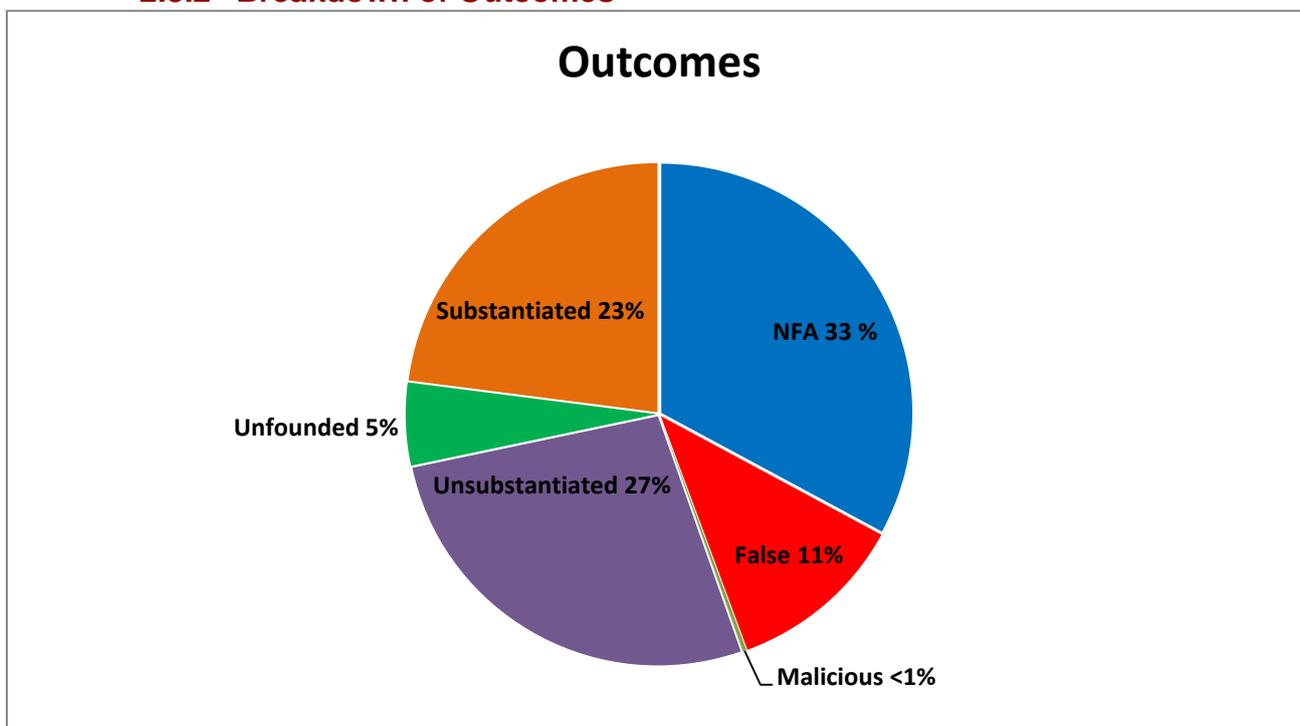
- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation (90 [19%] of cases);
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence (106 [22%] of cases);
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation (45 [9%] of cases);
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there is a deliberate act to deceive (only one case had this recorded outcome).

One additional outcome is used to lend clarity to those cases in which the young person has misinterpreted the actions and intentions of the professional involved:

- **Unfounded:** this is defined as there being no evidence or proper basis that supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation had misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what he/she saw, or was not aware of all the circumstances (21 [4%] of cases).

This was a definition in previous statutory guidance that many LADO's in the South West Regional forum continue to use. It better reflects those cases where the conclusion of an investigation indicates that the professional's actions had no malicious or sinister intent, was carried out in accordance with organisational policies and procedures and that the young person misinterpreted the individual's conduct.

2.8.2 Breakdown of Outcomes



- There has been a 10% increase to 23% in the total number of *substantiated* allegations (13% in 2015 / 2016).
- There has been a 13% increase to 27% in the total number of *unsubstantiated* allegations (14% in 2015 / 2016).
- Less than 1% of notification resulted in an outcome – *malicious*.
- The number of *false* allegations slightly increased by 1% from 10% in 2016 / 2016 to 11% in this reporting year.
- The reintroduction of the outcome – '*Unfounded*' (see definition in paragraph) was the recorded outcome in approximately 24 (5%) of cases.

2.9 Actions Taken by the Employer

2.9.1 Recording of Actions

It should be noted that the recording of actions by employers can lead to double or even multiple counting for individual cases. For instance, a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse perpetrated by a teacher can lead to the following recorded outcomes:

- Dismissal
- Refer to the regulatory body

- Refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service
- Criminal Conviction

Even in less serious cases there may be a need to record several outcomes. For example, in the case of a foster carer an allegation that they handled the challenging behaviour of the child in placement inappropriately led to the following outcomes: additional supervision, refresher training and management advice.

2.10 Outcomes

2.10.1 Criminal investigations

Of the 37 notifications that resulted in criminal investigations only 2 cases resulted in a conviction.

2.10.2 Formal Action Following Investigation

Of those cases where there were sufficient grounds to pursue formal procedures - disciplinary investigation (n.74, 15%), the following outcomes are recorded:

- In 25 cases (34%) a decision by the employing organisation to *dismiss* the employee.
- In 12 cases (16%) a decision was taken to issue formal *written warnings* to the respective employees.
- In 25 cases the employer has provided *training* to the employee.
- 57 cases resulted in *management guidance* being provided to the individuals concerned. This includes those cases where the outcome is recorded as unsubstantiated and the employee was reminded of required standards of conduct and the need to comply with policies and procedures.
- 25 cases resulted in *training* for staff members.
- In 13 of these cases a referral was made to the *Disclosure and Barring Service* (DBS) for a decision to be made about whether the individual should be barred or restricted from working with children and young people in the future. Current legislation prevents the DBS from informing the local authority as to what decision it takes on referrals made. It is not possible to confirm the conversion rate of referrals to decisions to ban or prohibit the individual from working with children.
- In 6 cases the individuals were either employed through an agency or providing services on a self-employed basis and their work with the organisation was *ceased*.

- In 7 cases a referral was made to the relevant *Regulatory Body* e.g. National College for Teaching & Leadership (NCTL); Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC).

2.10.3 Resignations

The statutory guidance for schools – ‘*Keeping Children Safe in Education*’ (2016), and for all other organisations the guidance within the South West Child Protection Procedures, requires that allegations are investigated even if the individual has resigned. It acknowledges that this can be difficult given the employee may have served their notice and left their employment. Nonetheless, the guidance states that the process of seeking a response from the individual, recording the allegation and any supporting evidence and reaching a judgement should still happen. One reason for this is that it may impact on what is shared in future reference requests that are received.

In 2016 / 2017 13 staff members *resigned* during the process of an allegation being investigated. The allegations were investigated by the respective organisations and the following conclusions reached:

- The outcome in nine of the allegations the decision taken was that the allegations were substantiated.
- In four of these nine cases a decision to dismiss would have been taken had the individual not resigned.
- In all four cases a referral was sent to the Disclosure & Barring Service.

In two cases, involving foster carers, a decision was taken by the Foster Care Panel to de-register the carer.

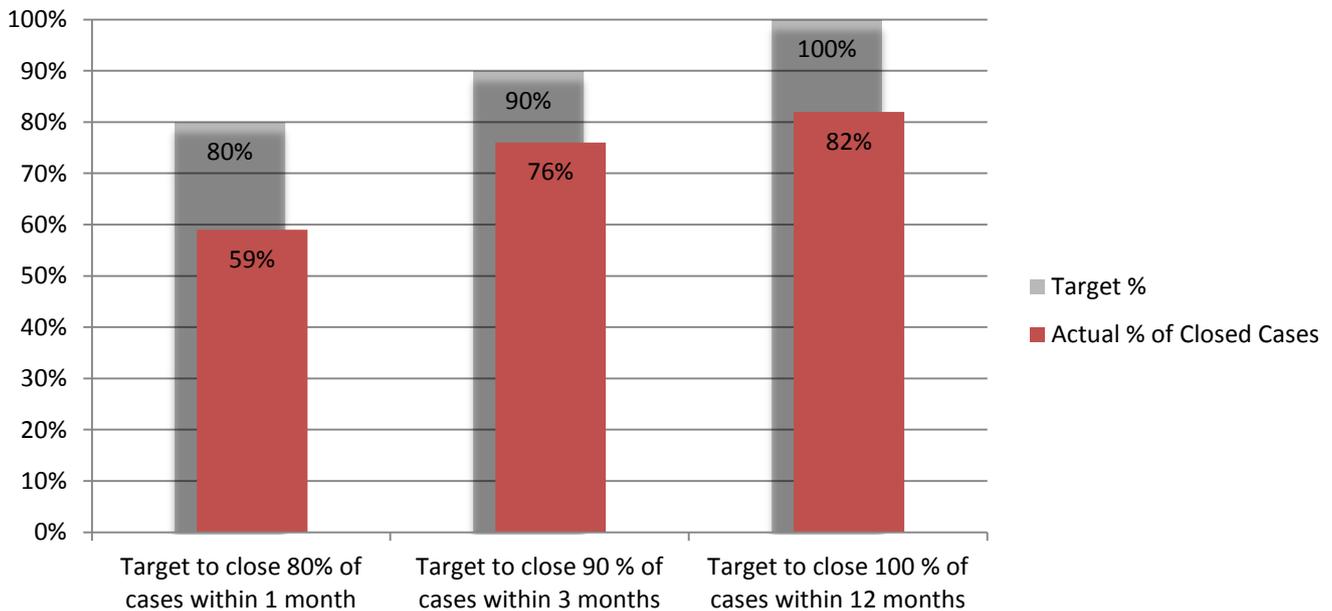
2.11 Timescales to Close Notifications Received

The statutory guidance requires that all notifications are resolved as quickly as possible consistent with a fair and thorough investigation. To this end, a key aspect to the role of LADO is to be involved in the management and oversight of cases being dealt with by agencies and organisations to ensure avoidance of unnecessary delays.

The following target timescales have been established to measure the effectiveness of closing cases expeditiously:

- A. 80% of cases to be resolved within **one** month.
- B. 90% to be resolved within **three** months.
- C. All but the most exceptional cases to be closed within **twelve** months.

Percentage of Cases Closed Between April 2016 - March 2017 against targets



2.11.1 Limiting Factors

There are a number of factors that make these targets challenging including:

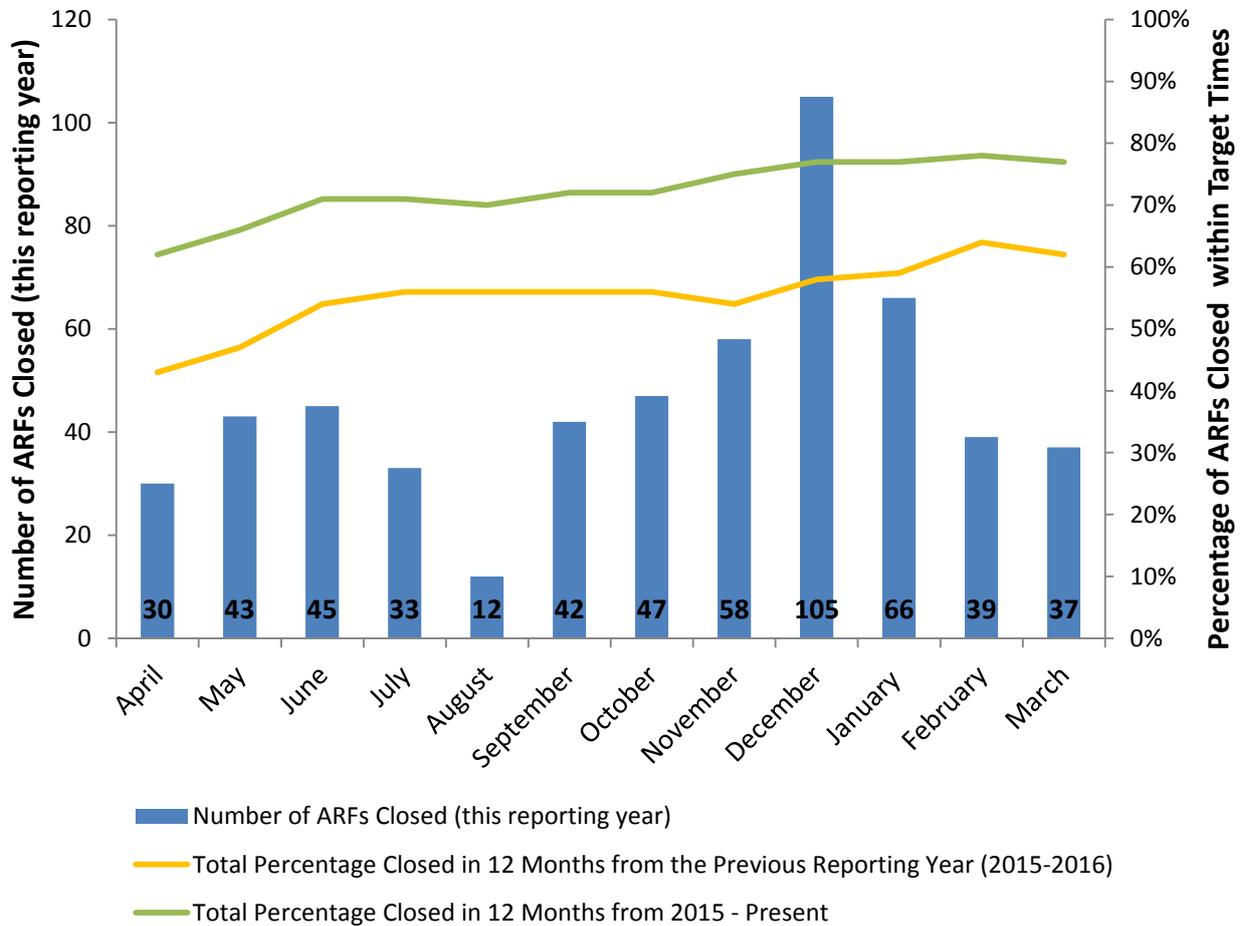
- The length of time a case may take to work through the criminal justice process to conclusion.
- Employers awaiting the outcome of a criminal investigation before being able to formally investigate under its disciplinary procedures.
- Practical considerations such as the unavailability of people including witnesses to an incident due to shift patterns; holidays; sickness.

2.11.2 Improvement

Monthly performance reports – see Appendix B, demonstrate a steady improvement in all three targets being met and this remains a priority for the LADO Service and is reflected in the 2017 / 2018 action plan – see Appendix A.

Certainly the development of the LADO Assistant to be involved in running cases has assisted towards overall case management including timely closure of notifications. . This upward trend in the closure rates of notifications received is outlined in the following graph.

Number of ARFs Closed per Month against % Target Times



3.0 Service Development

3.1 Progress on priorities set in 2015 / 2016

There has been work with the Placements Team to ensure that there is cross sharing of data and information on residential childrens homes where Somerset children who are looked after are placed. The resulting analysis identifies quality assurance issues resulting in monitoring visits and communication of expectations around standards of care.

This is a complex area given the needs of young people in placement and the service capacity of homes and will require further on-going work into next year and is carried over as an on-going action.
 [Reference no. 1 - Action Plan (2017/2018)]

3.1.1 Timely Closure of Notifications

It is vitally important to ensure that allegations are resolved as quickly as possible to alleviate the potential stress and anxiety for all parties involved – the child, the child’s parents / carers, the professional who is implicated and their employer.

It is encouraging that there is an upward trend in the timely closure of notifications received. Measures have been set to monitor progress towards targets that have been set. .

However, this is a key priority and though arguably aspirational targets, it is important that this is an on-going action that is carried forward.
[Reference no. 7 - Action Plan (2017/2018)]

3.1.2 Develop a Quality Assurance Process

An approved Quality Assurance process for the LADO Service has reached the pilot phase.

A QA group has been developed that involves representatives from the Somerset Safeguarding Children Board, schools, foster care services, Somerset Council County Human Resources and services to children looked after.

It has reviewed a sample of cases utilising an audit tool that had been produced. This enables to group to evaluate the consistency and quality of decision making by the service in managing and subsequently closing cases.

The pilot identified that further work was needed on the audit tool and a written and approved process to support the QA process.

This work to develop further the Quality Assurance framework will be reflected in the action plan.

3.1.3 Promotion of the Managing Allegations Procedure

The promotion of the managing allegations procedure to all organisations is reflected in the increase numbers of notifications received.

Work has been done with Somerset Football Association to promote the procedures in the advent of nationally reported historic sexual abuse cases.

Additionally, contact has been made with the County Sports Partnership to utilise forums involving sports coaches and designated safeguarding leads affiliated to sports clubs to promote the procedures.

3.1.4 Creation of the LADO Triage Forum

During the past year a process and forum – LADO Triage Discussion, has been created to address those cases involving an adult identified as a potential risk to children where there is no named child.

It had been recognised that a supplementary forum to the MASH meeting was needed when there was no named child but an identified adult, in a position of trust, who posed a risk of harm to children e.g. accessing on-line child abuse images where victims cannot be identified.

A multi-agency group, reflecting membership of the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) meeting, was set up to address the need to risk manage such individuals.

The terms of reference allow for multi-agency sharing of information in order to risk assess and manage such individuals. The benefits of this sharing of information, making joint decisions and actions ensures a planned approach to risk managing individuals of concern working in the community.

Additionally, the LADO continues to be available to MASH meetings that are held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

3.1.5 Developing a LADO Business Process

Work on a LADO Business Process has commenced. This is to ensure an explicitly written system exists for the LADO Service for business continuity and contingency purposes. Further work is required to complete the manual that is to be created.

[*Reference no. 4 - Action Plan (2017/2018)*]

3.1.6 Establishing a Safeguarding Advisors Forum (SAF)

A Safeguarding Advisors Forum meets on a quarterly basis in order to share knowledge, expertise and best practice. This enhances the advice and support to organisational safeguarding leads responsible for keeping all children, particularly those identified as vulnerable e.g. children who are looked after, safe.

A term of reference has been established and includes representatives from education and early years, Licensing Manager – South Somerset District Council, Placements Team, Training Manager - SSCB and Transporting Somerset.

3.1.7 Percentage of Closed Cases

A higher percentage closure of cases has been achieved.

3.2 Other developments

Quality Assuring Transport for Children Looked after (CLA) - a criminal investigation relating to a volunteer driver who is alleged to have possession of child abuse images highlighted the need to check what the journey experience for children travelling. This situation, where the child is often alone in the vehicle, at times for some quite lengthy journeys, makes children particularly vulnerable.

- This resulted in working with Transporting Somerset, the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Somerset Leaving Care Council (SLCC) and to produce an age appropriate questionnaire.
- This questionnaire will be taken to a sample of CLA on a quarterly basis to gather feedback about the experience of the journeys taken. This will enable social workers and service managers to understand emerging or actual concerns and take measures to ensure they are safe.

Archiving hard copy files – this is a specific piece of work by the LADO Assistant to transfer hard copy files held in the Bridgwater office to achieve storage under a retrieval recording system.

- This has required a time commitment of half a day a week for 6 months and remains on-going with capacity to cover provided by the duty LADO system in place.
- The completion of this work will ensure that once the moratorium on the retention policy, set by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, is over, the service continues to be compliant with data protection requirements to delete files after certain time periods.

Development of the online questionnaire survey – ‘Survey Monkey’.

- This provides evidence of continuing positive feedback from stakeholders’ experiences of dealing with the LADO Service.
- Since August, when the survey commenced, over 75% of respondents (n.36) have responded – ‘excellent’, when asked how they would rate the overall service.
- Four (11%) commented that the organisation was not aware of the managing allegations procedure but understood the need to contact Somerset Direct.

- Six (17%) respondents were not aware of the need to notify Somerset Direct as opposed to contact the LADO Service directly.
- This evidences the need to ensure that further promotion of the managing allegations procedures is needed.

Mentoring support – to the LADO / LADOs in Wiltshire and Devon.

Action Learning Set - established and involving those providing front line and duty cover to the LADO role to ensure consistency in approach to managing notifications in Somerset.

Regional & National networking - on-going involvement with the regional South West LADO group and the National LADO Network (NLN).

- The NLN brings together all LADOs throughout the country and working parties have been developing joint protocols, national standards, promoting the managing allegations procedures to agencies / organisations and sharing experience with the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse led by Alexis Jay.
- The regional group continues to develop with its prime focus to ensure that practice and processes between South West LADOs are consistent in complying with statutory guidance and the South West Child Protection Procedures. Additionally, the forum is used to share information, best practice and lessons learnt from each other's professional experiences as well as learning from serious case reviews. This forum enables the identification of training needs and input into policy development at a local and national level.
- On behalf of the SSCB, delivery of the nationally accredited **Safer Recruitment Training**.
- Attendance at the **Independent Providers Group** to promote the managing allegations procedure.
- Delivery of presentation at the **annual induction** organised for new appointed Headteachers.
- Receiving regular updates on live cases from the Police has been achieved by working with the Southern Safeguarding Co-ordination Unit (SSCU) – Police, to create a **bi-monthly monitoring spreadsheet** is used which provides an update on progress with the criminal process for individual cases.

4.0 Emerging Themes, New Issues & Challenges

4.1 Notifications relating to Physical Abuse

As with previous years the number of notifications involving physical abuse – 220 (46% of the total notifications) was exponentially higher than the other categories of abuse.

Compared to other types of abuse the nature of physical abuse is that incidences are observable and it is clearer to witnesses that a reportable offence has taken place.

Many of these cases involve restraint situations although it is difficult to determine exact numbers and the method of statistical recording has been changed to capture more accurate information for future reporting.

The high number of notifications for this type of abuse continues to evidence the need for organisations to review how to equip staff to deal with challenging behaviour.

The significant needs of children, particularly in residential or foster care placement, require highly skilled and knowledgeable practitioners. This is in order to be able to recognise potential flash points and effectively support and manage them through this. When de-escalation is not possible then carers need to be adequately train to manage the situation safely.

Further collaboration with the Placements Team is required to identify those organisations who continue to need support with developing fit for purpose policies and procedures, induction processes and training for all staff. This on-going task is reflected in this year's action plan.
[Reference no. 1 - Action Plan (2017/2018)]

4.2 Notifications involving the Police

There continues to be some criminal investigations that are unduly lengthy in terms of the time taken to work through the criminal justice process. A commitment to understand the extent of this issue and support improvements in the system is reflected in the coming year's action plan.

The level of notifications relating to Police Officers is exceptionally low for such a large section of the workforce dealing daily with children and young people often in challenging circumstances.

This low rate of reporting needs to be explored and understood with support provided to address any particular challenges. This is addressed in the action plan.

Day to day working with some officers demonstrates an unawareness of the statutory responsibilities of the LADO including the role being involved, alongside the Police and Children's Services, in the management and

oversight of allegations (chapter 2, p.54, paragraph 5: '*Working Together...*', 2015). Further promotion of the LADO role to Police Officers through briefing sessions would address this issue.
[Reference no. 2 - Action Plan (2017/2018)]

4.3 Notifications received within one working day

The statutory requirement is that notifications should be made to the LADO within one working day of the allegation been made. This is reflected in the South West Child Protection Procedures. This statistics has only been collected since August and reflects poor compliance with the reporting requirement.

Further work needs to be undertaken to promote this statutory requirement through publicity and promotion at forums.
[Reference no. 3 - Action Plan (2017/2018)]

4.4 Timeliness in Notifications being concluded

There is an on-going priority to ensure cases are concluded as expeditiously as possible for the benefit of the young person involved, their parent(s) or carer(s), the individual whose behaviour is being questioned and the employer. It is important to maintain a focus on improving on closure targets for one, three and twelve months and for this reason will continue as a key priority.
[Reference no. 4 - Action Plan (2017/2018)]

5.0 Action Plan for 2017 & 2018 – see Appendix A

From the emerging themes an action plan has been produced.

Anthony Goble
Local Authority Designated Officer
May 2017