

# Safeguarding Concerns – Analysis (including DoLS activity)

## Introduction

This briefing gives some background to changes in Stockton's Safeguarding performance reporting and aims to contextualise the increase in the number of Safeguarding concerns this year.

## What our data was telling us

In presenting the TSAB annual report (2021/22), the TSAB Chair reported an increase in the total number of Safeguarding Concerns in all the Local Authorities apart from Stockton. This was reported at the Health and Wellbeing Board in December 2022 and in the local media.

Members of the Adult Social Care and Health Committee in January 2023 queried Stockton's lower number of Safeguarding concerns compared to other LAs.

The ADASS regional dashboard shows that Stockton ranks lower than the other LAs for the number of Safeguarding Concerns in both 21/22 and 22/23, making the conversion rate in Stockton higher than other neighbouring authorities.

In Stockton all Safeguarding concerns are triaged by our First Contact Team and concerns not requiring any further action are dealt with. The Safeguarding Team takes responsibility for cases where more investigation is needed or where the Section 42 enquiry threshold is met. The Safeguarding Team captured data for our Safeguarding returns; any work undertaken by First Contact was not being measured and there was under-reporting of the number of Stockton's Safeguarding Concerns.

## Changes

Performance recording has now been changed and all Safeguarding Concerns reported to Stockton are now being measured, in alignment with the other LAs in TSAB.

The increase in the number of Concerns for Stockton was anticipated, triaging of concerns has not changed and therefore there has not been a significant increase in the number of Section 42 enquiries for this quarter compared to previously. However due to the increase in the total number of Safeguarding Concerns recorded, there will be a decrease in the conversion percentage of Concerns leading to Section 42 Enquires.

An assurance audit of Safeguarding concerns triaged at First Contact as No Further Action was completed, showing effective and consistent decision-making. All referrals and decisions are recorded on the LAS system for Adult Social Care. The number of safeguarding concerns being reported should remain high from now, as data previously held only at First Contact is being captured.

## 1. DoLS Annual Data Collection

1.1. The latest [official statistics for the MCA DoLS](#) were published on 24th August 2023.

## **2. National DoLS Activity**

- 2.1. Applications for authorisation of DoL increased nationally by around 11%, which is higher than previous years, and more in line with pre-Covid activity levels. Completed DoLS applications have increased by 10% on average over the last five years, although the cases reported as not completed (c. 126,000) were up by 2% on the previous year.
- 2.2. Nationally, 19% of applications were completed within the statutory timeframes (on average 156 days). This shows that significant rates of potential unlawful deprivation of liberty.

## **3. Regional DoLS Activity**

- 3.1. The North East consistently reports levels of DoLS activity. In 2022/2023 per 100k population, the number of individuals with a DoLS application, the number of applications and completed applications were all higher than the national average. This is viewed as positive because it means that the relevant people are afforded the protections of the DoLS, and deprivations of liberty are lawful. Some Local Authorities in the region have cited data reporting issues affecting data integrity and subsequent under-reporting of activity.
- 3.2. DoLS networks in the North East are well-established and rationale for DoLS activity in the region has been provided previously. This includes compliance across most of our LA neighbours; movement between care settings meaning multiple authorisations for individuals, dedicated DoLS functions with committed resource to the DoLS process, including raising awareness with managing authorities; an increase in the number of qualified BIAs within the LAs; “competitive” regionally-agreed rates for DoLS assessments impacting positively on throughput.

## **4. Stockton-on-Tees Data**

- 4.1. There were 10% more DoLS applications in 2022/2023. The Discharge to Assess process appears to have largely contributed to this. Last year, we received 293 DoLS applications for people in a discharge to assess placement in a care home, most of which resulted in a standard DoLS authorisation. Work is underway to better understand the impact of this on DoLS activity.
- 4.2. Completed DoLS applications in 2022/2023 per 100k population were the highest regionally and among our LA peers in England (and much higher than the national average).
- 4.3. 70 DoLS applications were not yet signed off at the end of the reporting period. Nationally this was 126, 000 indicating backlogs in the system. For this measure, Stockton-on-Tees is in the lowest percentile, and ranks lowest among our Local Authority peers and regionally. There is no waiting list for DoLS in Stockton-on-Tees.
- 4.4. Our average time between receipt of application and completion in was 11 days across urgent and standard authorisations (significantly lower than the national average of 156 days) evidencing SBC’s continued compliance with the DoLS framework.