 **Buckinghamshire Council**

**Children’s Services**

**Local Authority Designated Officer**

**Annual Report**

**2020-2021**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the management of allegations against the children’s workforce and the role of the LADO Service in Buckinghamshire Council for the period 1 April 2020- 31 March 2021

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# Executive Summary

## Referral Activity Summary

* **403** Referrals to the LADO Service (increase of **76.75%** from last year)
* **80%** of referrals were deemed to have met threshold
* **100%** of referrals were responded to within 1-2 working days
* **24%** of referrals were Substantiated
* **37%** of Referrals remain active
* **67%** of Referrals concluded within 0-3 months

## Key issues and challenges

LADO referrals have risen from **228** in 2019-20 to **403** in 2020-21 which is an increase of **76.75%.** Despite the increase in referrals, the number of staff within the service has not increased.

This period has seen a rise in referrals related to the personal lives of the children’s workforce, particularly in respect of health and education professionals. Many of these professionals will have experienced additional pressures in their workplaces as well as issues affecting much of the general public including financial strain and physical and emotional health issues associated with the virus itself and the impact of lockdown.

As an organisation concerned with the safety and well-being of children and young people, we have continuously reflected on the impact of Covid19 on the families we work with. As LADO I would highlight the need to also consider the impact on our workforce which in turn will impact the safety and well-being of the children and young people we provide services to.

Between 2019 and now, the LADO Service has undergone some significant staffing changes. The ESAS Service was relocated out of the LADO Service at the end of 2020. The main aim of ESAS and LADO being managed within the same service area was to provide a seamless service to employers within education settings (largest employer for allegation referrals) and to enable an increased emphasis on supporting safe practices in education. Since the relocation of ESAS out of the LADO Service, there have been increased challenges in responding to education safeguarding practice issues which do not meet LADO threshold and as such the LADO Service Manager has scheduled a meeting in August with the Head of Service for ESAS and the Head of Achievement and learning to ensure a seamless approach to education safeguarding matters moving forward.

Furthermore, the LADO Service has experienced 3 different managers during this period and was reliant, until May 2021, on agency staff due to delays in recruitment of permanent LADOs to the service. Previous safeguarding officer roles have been reconfigured to provide for an additional part time LADO and an additional part time Business Support Specialist but, given the very significant increase in referrals this year, capacity within the service remains stretched, particularly in respect of proactive approaches to supporting organisations to improve their safeguarding practice. In response to this the LADO Service Manager has put forward a proposal for funding to be increased to cover the cost of the additional Business Support Specialist which would in turn enable the part time LADO post to be increased to a full time position, thus increasing capacity within the service.

## What was working well in 2020/2021?

* Effective and robust responses to Allegations
* Drift actively being addressed
* Transfer to LCS underway
* Positive working relationships with many partner agencies
* Liaison Meetings with Police had been set up to address drift / delay
* Closure Summaries providing strong case overviews
* Duty LADO system working effectively
* Team Meetings being used effectively
* Improving morale within the service

## What was not working so well / required development

* Duplication of meetings
* Strategy Meetings being led by the MASH when they specifically relate to an allegation in the workplace and therefore required a LADO lead
* Responsibility placed on partner agencies to refer to police / MASH – inaccuracies in information shared, delays in referrals
* LCS process not fully embedded and data collection fields not enabling informative data
* Lack of agreed recording protocols
* Training delivery inconsistent
* Thresholds not communicated / visible – some continued lack of clarity
* Recruitment required to permanent LADO posts
* Lack of up to date, clear policies and procedures
* Lack of understanding amongst internal and external agencies as to the role and remit of the LADO
* Reduced capacity within the LADO Service to respond to safeguarding practice issues

## Actions undertaken within Q4 to address areas for development

* LADO Protocol / Toolkit developed (See Appendix A)
* LADO Threshold Document developed (See Appendix B)
* Flowchart produced setting out LADO Referral Pathways (Appendix C)
* Procedures for Allegations Management Meetings agreed and amended in partnership with social care and police (see Protocols, Appendix A)
* Buckinghamshire Policy for managing allegations reviewed and amended and presented to Policy and Procedures Subgroup
* LADO forms and templates updated
* Full LCS Process agreed – amendments made to Allegations Module within LCS
* Clear recording protocols developed (see protocols, Appendix A)
* Audit Tool developed & Dip Sample activity initiated (see protocols, Appendix A)
* LADO Feedback Form drafted
* Increased training delivery to a wide range of sectors including social care, education, early years and health
* Articles prepared for communications including ESAS & Partnership Board
* Liaison meetings with key agencies established including Police, Fostering, Early Years, Health and Ofsted.
* Liaison with commissioning services to strengthen communication
* Recruitment of one full time and one part time permanent LADO & additional part time Business Support Specialist

## What is still needed?

* Further work to strengthen working relationships with some partner agencies, in particular the Voluntary sector & Independent Schools sector.
* Additional capacity needed to enable proactive engagement with organisations to embed safeguarding culture and improve safeguarding practices.
* Cases to be concluded in a timelier manner – aiming for 90% conclusion rate within 3 months.
* Increased understanding amongst internal and external agencies of the role and remit of the LADO Service.

## What will be the impact?

* Increased awareness and understanding within Buckinghamshire Children’s Services and partner organisations of the LADO function and Allegations Management process leading to increased confidence within these organisations and increased consultation with the LADO Service, ensuring that all level of concerns are appropriately dealt with.
* Increased capacity to take a proactive approach will support organisational development of an embedded safeguarding culture, resulting in increased safety for children and young people within those organisations.

Those impacted by allegations will benefit from timelier conclusions and action to ensure those unsuitable to work with are prevented from doing so will be taken without undue delay.

# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the management of allegations against adults who work with children across Buckinghamshire County, and the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer commonly known as the LADO, for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The term adult applies to those aged 18 years and over working in either a paid or unpaid capacity with children in the county. However, these procedures should also be followed where allegations are made against a 16 or 17-year-old who has been put in a position of trust by an organisation in relation to anyone under the age of 18. For example, where they might be involved in coaching a sport or in other school or out of school activities.

The statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018, updated 2020)* outlines the requirement that all agencies that provide services for children; provide staff or volunteers or care for children should have a procedure in place for managing and reporting allegations against staff.

The Allegation Procedures apply where a person who works with children 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 he or she may pose a risk of harm to children.**
* **Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may be unsuitable to work with children.**

In addition, these procedures should be applied when there is an allegation that any person who works with children:

* Has behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns. These concerns do not have to directly relate to a child but could, for example, include arrest for possession of a weapon;
* As a parent or carer, has become subject to child protection procedures;
* Is closely associated with someone in their personal lives (e.g. partner, member of the family or other household member) who may present a risk of harm to child/ren for whom the member of staff is responsible in their employment/volunteering.

Local authorities should assign a LADO, or a team of LADOs, to:

* Receive reports about allegations and to be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases;
* Assess concerns to determine whether threshold for an allegation is met;
* 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;
* Provide advice and guidance to employers in relation to making referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and regulatory bodies such as Ofsted, the General Medical Council (GMC) etc.

It is important to be aware that LADOs do not carry out investigations into allegations – responsibility for the investigation remains with the employer (or whoever is commissioned by the employer to investigate the process) and/or the police.

The LADO can provide advice and, where necessary, co-ordinate the process. The LADO is also responsible for ensuring an appropriate outcome is reached. Where it is not straightforward to establish which organisation should lead an investigation, the LADO will also provide advice regarding which organisation is best placed to lead the investigation.

# Staffing and Resources

## Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO)

Working Together guidance provides flexibility about how arrangements for allegations are set up locally however makes explicit that Local Authorities should have designated a particular officer, or team of officers (either as part of multi-agency arrangements or otherwise), to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children.

Any such officer, or team of officers, should be sufficiently qualified and experienced to be able to fulfil this role effectively. The guidance adds that any new appointments to such a role, other than current or former designated officers moving between local authorities, should be qualified social workers.

The current arrangements within Buckinghamshire Council are compliant in that all LADOs within the service are sufficiently experienced qualified social workers. Within Buckinghamshire Council, the LADO Service is situated within Quality, Standards and Performance service area which gives a greater degree of independence to the role.

At the start of 2021, the LADO Service was made up of both permanent and agency LADOs. Following a successful recruitment process, the service has recruited 1 full time and 1 part time permanent LADO and from June 2021, will comprise of a fully permanent team (3 x full time, 1 x part time). However, given the significant increase in referrals, the LADO service requires further resource to enable it to continue to provide effective allegations management oversight and meet the requirements set out within Working Together 2018. As noted, a request has been made for additional funding to enable the part time LADO post to be extended to a full time post, thus increasing capacity within the service.

## Business support staff

The LADO Service has been supported by one full-time permanent Business Support Specialist. An increase in referrals and associated meetings placed significant pressures on Business Support and as such a further part time Business Support Specialist has been recruited. The Business Support Specialists provide an initial point of contact, help in keeping the electronic records up to date, and take notes at LADO Strategy Meetings and Positions of Trust (POT Meetings).

A permanent Business Support Coordinator provides direct line management to the Business Support Specialist and arranges cover during periods of annual leave.

## Management of the LADO Service

The management of the service changed during 2019/20 to provide a Service Manager for LADO and Education Safeguarding Advisory Services. The main aim of this change was to provide a seamless service to employers within education settings (largest employer for allegation referrals) and to enable an increased emphasis on supporting safe practices in education.

Towards the end of 2020, the ESAS service was relocated to MASH and the LADO Service became a standalone service. This followed the departure of the existing Service Manager. An interim Service Manger was appointed in September 2020 and a new permanent LADO Service Manager commenced post in January 2021.

# Managing Allegations Activity

## Summary of referrals

During 2020-21, the number of actual referrals to the LADO Service has significantly increased. The total number of referrals during this period is **403** in comparison to **228** for the period 2019-2020.

**80%** of these were determined to have met threshold. The remaining 20% were dealt with by way of further evaluation, advice and guidance. LADO Evaluation is an area that is difficult to capture through data alone but in the majority of cases requires a significant level of advice and consultation provided by LADO to employers and other organisations.

In many cases, the LADO is contacted for guidance and consultation by a wide range of organisations. The LADO will evaluate the concerns and undertake significant enquiries to establish whether the concern meets the threshold for allegations management. Even where cases do not meet the allegations threshold, the LADO will often provide a high degree of intervention which may include supporting organisations to develop safeguarding policies, providing training and liaison with other safeguarding professionals.

This is becoming an increasingly important area in terms of allegation management as the implications of lower level concerns are becoming more apparent. Marcus Erooga’s Research on institutional child sex offenders highlighted patterns of more general rule breaching in cases of offenders and further noted the “slippery slope” of boundary violations towards abuse, highlighting that many initial infringements are made innocently or with good intention but once boundaries are breached, it becomes difficult to restore the relationship to one in which proper boundaries are respected. His conclusions are that organisations in which boundaries are adhered to in every aspect in which staff perform their role are likely to be the safest environments for children.

The graph below shows the categories of concerns reported to the LADO. The category ‘other’ and ‘not recorded’ are unhelpful in providing clear analysis and the LADO Service has made some very recent changes to the way in which data is collected to ensure that future reports provide clear analysis on the categories of concern.

**Type of allegations**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category | 2019-20 Q1 (Apr-Jun) | 2019-20 Q2 (Jul-Sep) | 2019-20 Q3 (Oct-Dec) | 2019-20 Q4 (Jan-Mar) | 2020-21 Q1 (Apr-Jun) | 2020-21 Q2 (Jul-Sep) | 2020-21 Q3 (Oct-Dec) | 2020-21 Q4 (Jan-Mar) |
| Other | 1 |  | 2 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 10 |
| Neglect | 18 | 9 | 8 | 13 | 14 | 29 | 12 | 42 |
| Emotional | 8 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 13 | 16 | 4 | 25 |
| Sexual | 11 | 9 | 17 | 4 | 8 | 14 | 6 | 13 |
| Physical | 21 | 19 | 31 | 32 | 17 | 18 | 28 | 4 |
| Not recorded |  |  |  |  | 2 | 5 | 13 | 45 |

Analysis indicates that the highest number of allegations referred to the LADO relate to neglect and physical harm. Whilst physical harm (including restraint) is alike to regional and national data intelligence, neglect is comparatively higher. A likely explanation for this is the absence of a breakdown of both suitability and professional conduct issues within data collection. For example, poor professional conduct and transfer of risk (suitability) issues may have been recorded in some cases under neglect in the absence of a more suitable category. The LADO Service has sought to develop processes for data collection to enable a clear breakdown and further work is being undertaken through LADO team meetings to ensure consistency in terms of how referrals are categorised.

In terms of suitability and conduct issues, these do not always lead to a formal LADO meeting but require significant input from LADO in ensuring that employers are meeting their responsibilities and managing concerns through the appropriate channels which may include formal disciplinary procedures. Conduct and suitability issues have most certainly been a feature in referrals during this period which evidences the need for organisations to create a culture in which all concerns about adults (including those that do not meet the threshold of an allegation) are shared and dealt with appropriately.

*“If implemented correctly, this should encourage a more open and transparent culture; enable organisations to identify concerning behaviour early; minimise the risk of abuse; and ensure that adults working in the organisation are clear about professional boundaries and act within these boundaries, and in accordance with the ethos and values of the organisation.” Farrer & Co, Safeguarding Children: dealing with low level concerns about adults, May2017*

An additional note would be the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many staff working with children have experienced their own adversity whether that be financially or in respect of either their or family member’s physical and/or mental health and wellbeing. At a recent south east regional meeting, this was highlighted by all LADOs in attendance as an emerging theme.

## Allegations by sector in which the employee works / volunteers

**Allegations by sector**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sector | 2019-20 Total | 2020-21 Total |
| Armed Forces | 0 | 4 |
| BCC Commissioned Services | 15 | 46 |
| BCC Youth Services | 0 | 1 |
| Childcare and Early Years | 19 | 40 |
| Education Sector | 110 | 143 |
| Faith Groups | 1 | 1 |
| Foster Care | 15 | 43 |
| Health | 26 | 64 |
| Other | 6 | 13 |
| Police | 2 | 4 |
| Social Care | 8 | 10 |
| Sports Coach | 9 | 5 |
| Transport | 12 | 16 |
| UNKNOWN | 1 | 3 |
| Voluntary Youth Organisations | 3 | 5 |
| YOT | 1 | 2 |
| More than one employer | 0 | 3 |
| Total | **228** | **403** |

Education staff and volunteers have historically been subject to the highest number of allegations locally and nationally due to the volume of education staff and direct and frequent contact with large numbers of children and this continues to be the highest sector for allegations.

Allegations against health professionals has increased somewhat since last year. A significant number of health referrals are attributed to the Tier 4 Child & Adolescent Mental Health Hospital situated within Buckinghamshire. Referrals in respect of this Hospital increased significantly over Q3-4 which coincided with the establishment being placed under special measures. The LADO Service has actively engaged with the provider collaborative in respect of their improvement plan and provided additional support including training for staff and a dedicated LADO going into the hospital to ensure greater oversight and challenge in respect of investigatory processes into allegations. The impact of such is starting to be seen with declining numbers of referrals and timelier responses.

A very small proportion of allegations relate to the voluntary and community sector and engaging such organisations is a key priority for the LADO Service in 2021-22.

## Outcomes

When an allegation is concluded the outcome is recorded. The definitions for outcomes are set out below.

* **Substantiated:** There is sufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation.
* **False:** There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.
* **Malicious:** There is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false.
* **Unfounded:** There is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively, they may not have been aware of all the circumstances.
* **Unsubstantiated:** This is not the same as a false allegation. It means that there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove.

To ensure fairness, it is important to ensure that outcomes are agreed for all allegations which are progressed to a LADO Meeting.

**Outcomes of allegations**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Outcome of Allegation | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 | 2020-21 Total | % |
| False | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0% |
| Malicious | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 1% |
| No requirement for LADO Oversight – advice & guidance | 2 | 1 | 1 | 70 | 74 | 18% |
| Not an allegation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0% |
| Substantiated | 29 | 39 | 19 | 8 | 95 | 24% |
| Threshold not met | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 1% |
| Unfounded | 6 | 16 | 14 | 6 | 42 | 10% |
| Unsubstantiated | 13 | 12 | 22 | 20 | 67 | 17% |
| Not recorded (case still open) | 8 | 17 | 11 | 76 | 112 | 28% |
| **Total** | **59** | **90** | **67** | **187** | **403** | 100% |

A number of referrals to LADO were classified as advice and guidance only. This does not necessarily mean that they were inappropriate referrals but ones where no specific allegation was made to warrant an outcome such as some suitability issues.

Malicious allegations are rare but when they are made, the strategy meeting review will consider what action may be appropriate, including police action.

In cases whereby the allegation is substantiated, consideration should always be given to whether lessons can be learnt. The employer should review the circumstances of the case to determine whether there are any improvements to be made to the organisation's procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future. Examples of learning being implemented include changes to organisational policy and procedure and training reviews.

**Outcomes of investigations**

This year **4%** of employer’s investigations resulted in dismissal or deregistration. A further 4% of staff resigned following an allegation.

A significant number of referrals result in no further action following the initial evaluation and many are dealt with via workplace internal processes including risk assessment. A minority result in formal disciplinary action, prosecution and conviction.

For the cases which don’t progress, advice and training is often recommended and in some cases points of learning are noted for settings. Additional training for the subject was an outcome in **24%** of cases this year.

**37%** of cases referred this year remain active and therefore an outcome has not yet been agreed.

It is in everyone’s interest to resolve cases as quickly as possible, consistently and with a fair and thorough investigation. All allegations should be investigated as a priority to avoid any delay.  The time taken to investigate and resolve individual cases depends on a variety of factors including the nature, seriousness and complexity of the allegation, but these national targets should be achieved in all but exceptional cases. Target timescales are as follows:

* 80 per cent of cases should be resolved within one month;
* 90 per cent should be resolved within three months;
* All but the most exceptional cases should be completed within 12 months.

The graph below demonstrates that Buckinghamshire LADO Service is falling below expected standards in this area. In 2019-20, 40% of cases were resolved within one month and this year has seen the exact same percentage. In terms of cases being resolved within 3 months, we currently stand at 67%.

Thresholds have recently been reviewed and identified that LADOs were managing a significant number of cases that were below threshold and that this was impacting on capacity. Further work has been undertaken (set out under improvements) such as the introduction of a threshold matrix for LADO cases and a distinction between consultation and referral pathways to address thresholds.

It should also be noted that some cases subject to ongoing police investigation, take a considerably longer time to conclude due to forensic examinations, court timetables etc.

**Timescales for completed cases**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Timescale | Number of Cases | % |
| 1. Under 1 month | 51 | 40% |
| 2. 1 - 3 months | 35 | 27% |
| 3. 3 - 6 months | 20 | 16% |
| 4. 6 - 12 months | 19 | 15% |
| 5. Over 12 months | 3 | 2% |
| **Total** | **128** | 100% |

## Comparable data

The LADO Service in Bucks is part of a wider South East Regional LADO network who meet regularly to share practice and develop standards. Buckinghamshire LADO Service has raised the benefits of sharing comparable data but, to date, this has been limited with only 2 other Local Authorities providing their data. The following comparisons have been drawn from the data received;

Buckinghamshire: 403 referrals

Brighton & Hove: 279 referrals

Hampshire: 455 referrals

Hampshire have a significantly higher number of schools within their area at 600 compared to 285 in Bucks. In addition, they have 455,000 children under the age of 18 in comparison to the most recent figure recorded of 122,200 in Bucks (2017).

Both Hampshire and Brighton & Hove data show a similar pattern to Bucks in terms of the sector of referrals (highest being education) but in terms of category of abuse, Buckinghamshire’s figures in respect of neglect are significantly higher than both Hampshire and Brighton & Hove. The data supports the view that this is linked to a lack of recording in Buckinghamshire in respect of suitability and professional conduct as categories of harm. Both Hampshire and Brighton & Hove show a high number of referrals in respect of these categories which we suspect has been captured in Buckinghamshire under the category of neglect.

Brighton & Hove do not identify the number of allegations substantiated but Hampshire do and sit at a lower rate of 16% of allegations being substantiated.

# Multi agency involvement

The LADO actively contributes to both regional and national LADO networks and has built a positive working relationship with neighbouring LADO’s to ensure cross boundary cases are effectively managed.

Often LADOs receive an allegation regarding an adult working with children where there is no manager or overarching body to invite to a meeting as the ‘employer’. The LADO is aware that the management of allegations where there is no manager is an area of weakness and challenge within Allegations Management processes in general and every effort is therefore made to involve a registered/professional/affiliated body where there is one. A recent example is the case of a self-employed squash coach who was alleged to have sexually abused children. The LADO liaised with England Squash who suspended and banned him immediately. The coach subsequently received a custodial sentence.

There has been an increased drive to raise the profile of the LADO amongst partner agencies. Since January 2021 the LADO service has provided or is scheduled to provide the following training / development sessions to the following in respect of Allegations Management:

* Team Meeting sessions for all social care teams: Taken up by Disabilities Team, FGC Team, Children in Care team, Leaving Care team;
* Introductory session for Academy recruits;
* 3 x Early Years Designated Safeguarding Events;
* 2 x Chairs of Governors and Headteachers;
* 2 x Side by Side Education Conferences;
* Huntercombe Hospital;
* Action for Children;
* Health – Safeguarding Leads;
* Safer Recruitment and Allegations Management for Schools (in partnership with HR).

Awareness is additionally being raised via the Safeguarding Partnership Boards Website and school communications.

Feedback from learning events has been positive as noted below:

* *Very good speaker. Was great to hear from the LADO team - I found this incredibly useful/helpful.*
* *Often you are happy to come away from a conference with a few good points / nuggets of information that you will be able to use. Today I came away with many.*
* *Very pleasing to hear that schools can discuss low level incidents with the LADO. I think there is a fear that some issues are not serious enough to take to the LADO, but in my opinion if left could be giving the signal that the school allows certain inappropriate behaviour, with the risk of issues then escalating into something more serious.*
* *Brilliant presentation, very informative, very interesting and very clear. A worthwhile course to attend with lots to take back to school.*

Overall the multi-agency and private sector employers’ contribution to day to day cases is strong. The LADO has continued to work closely with Children’s Social Care, Health, Early Years, Thames Valley Police and regulatory bodies such as Ofsted and the Charities Commission. In particular, the LADO service has sought to strengthen key partner relationships as follows:

* Quarterly Strategic Meetings between the LADO Service Manager and the Detective Inspector of the Child Abuse Investigation Unit (Thames Valley Police) to identify themes.
* Regular Operational Meetings between a named LADO and a named Detective Sergeant from CAIU to monitor case progression and ensure drift / delay is identified and addressed.
* Regular Operational Meetings with the Fostering Service to monitor case progression, ensure drift / delay is identified and addressed and to identify emerging patterns / themes / areas for learning and development.
* Fortnightly-Monthly Safeguarding Meetings with Huntercombe Hospital and relevant health partners in response to a recent rise in referrals to LADO from this service.
* Regular attendance at Huntercombe Hospital by a named LADO to monitor case progression and identify themes / issues and areas for learning and development.
* Fortnightly liaison meetings between the LADO Service Manager and The School Improvement Service to highlight concerns in respect of Buckinghamshire schools and ensure a co-ordinated approach to such.
* Termly Strategic Education Safeguarding Meeting between the LADO Service Manager, Head of Achievement & Learning, School Improvement Service and ESAS Head of Service.
* Communication of key information to schools via the schools’ bulletin produced by ESAS.
* Regular liaison meetings with Early Years Service & Ofsted.

# Learning / impact from allegations

Following the conclusion of an allegation, the employer and the LADO should review the circumstances of the case to determine whether there are any improvements to be made to the organisation's procedures or practice. Within both the closure summary template and the review strategy meeting / POT meeting templates, there is an explicit section dedicated to learning identified to ensure that learning is captured from every case whether that be individual learning or organisational learning or both.

Learning from patterns of referrals is also important. This year’s data has highlighted a rise in referrals related to the personal lives of individuals working with children, particularly in respect of health and education professionals. This is perhaps unsurprising given the impact of Covid19 on all individuals and has led to an increase in LADO consultations / advice with regards to risk assessments. As a result, allegations management training is being adapted to reflect this trend and ensure that employers have a sound understanding of how to manage associated risk and support their workforce.

The LADO Service is looking to enhance support for employers by producing risk assessment templates and providing dedicated workshops in respect of transfer of risk assessments.

# Conclusion

LADO referrals have risen significantly this year. Organisations continue to require significant levels of advice, guidance and support and, with a nationally growing focus on the significance of low-level concerns, the role of the LADO has broadened significantly into a wider safeguarding function, contributing to organisational development of an embedded safeguarding culture. In order to fulfil this effectively, the LADO Service would benefit from increased resources in the form of additional LADO Capacity or Safeguarding Advisor capacity.

Consultations that do not progress to a formal strategy or Positions of Trust Meeting often require numerous hours of input from LADO in gathering information, evaluating risk, reviewing safeguarding policies and supporting organisations to implement improved safeguarding practices. Such work has been difficult to capture in data analysis but forms a significant proportion of LADO activity, and is a key function to support and improve safeguarding practice.

The LADO process continues to ensure that allegations against those who work or volunteer with children are not seen in isolation and that the welfare needs of children are prioritised and coordinated. It is important that the voice of the child is not lost within the Allegations Management process and, therefore, the LADO will ensure through the strategy meeting process that the child has been spoken to by the professional most appropriate in the circumstances and their views gained.

Ongoing efforts to increase awareness across the county appear to be reflected in the number of agencies and groups contacting the LADO. The service has continued to evaluate all enquiries in order to provide consultation and support to agencies and employers.

All allegations referred to LADO continue to be evaluated and tracked to a full conclusion. Through ongoing monitoring of trends and issues, the LADO has been able to identify learning and evidence impact.

# Recommendations

* Increased engagement of Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.
* Review resource in the form of the part time LADO post being extended to a full time post, to enable the service to support wider safeguarding practice development.
* Continued learning from FOI requests etc to ensure we are capturing informative data.
* Management Oversight to ensure application of thresholds remains consistent, LADO Pathways are implemented effectively, and recording is in line with revised protocols.
* Cases to be concluded in a timelier manner – aiming for 90% conclusion rate within 3 months.
* LADO Service to develop further resources / workshops to support employers undertaking transfer of risk assessments.

# Appendices

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| A. Protocols |  |
| B. Threshold Matrix |  |
| C. Flowchart |  |