



**LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED
OFFICER (LADO)
ANNUAL REPORT**

April 2016 – March 2017

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SUMMARY AND HEADLINES		
LADO	Reporting Period	April 2016 –March 2017
Key Findings and Activity 2016-2017		Purpose
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whilst changes in staffing due to separation of substantive post from Conference & Review Team Manager, have impacted on the robustness of the LADO service - practice has been maintained to keep children safe. 2. All contacts with the LADO service continue to be captured indicating a 58.5% increase in LADO activity on the previous year with above 90% of all contacts being responded to within 1 working day. 3. A dedicated 1 day per week business support function is now in place to assist with LADO administrative functions. A single role and dedicated LADO post is now being resourced. 4. A new LADO toolkit has been developed based upon learning from multi-agency audit activity which is now available via the intranet and internet to support professionals in managing allegations. 5. Performance data is now reported on a monthly basis within Children’s Services. 6. LADO cases are now part of the annual audit programme to ensure practice standards are maintained. 		<p style="background-color: #eee; margin: 0; padding: 2px;">Regulation 5 of the LSCB. Regulations 2006 1(iv) investigation of allegations concerning persons who work with children</p> <p style="background-color: #eee; margin: 0; padding: 2px;">Summary and Headlines for LADO activity 2016-2017.</p> <p style="background-color: #eee; margin: 0; padding: 2px;">Key activity planned for next reporting year</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to raise the LADO profile within Children’s Social Care and partner agencies with consistent and regular reporting to LSCB to ensure appropriate opportunity for challenge. 2. Improve data collection via improved data entry and monitoring using the performance scorecard dataset and monthly exception reporting. 3. Continue to liaise with ICT and Core Logic to enable LADO activity to be recorded on MOSAIC. 4. Develop an annual LADO Training calender for the year to deliver training on managing allegations to Education, Health, Social Care, Early Years Practitioners and voluntary sector agencies. 5. Ensure systematic collation of feedback of LADO experience to ensure learning is captured and used to improve performance of the function. 6. Improving interface with regional LADO network to support effective joint working and positive relationships.

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2. BACKGROUND

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) provides advice and guidance to employers and other individuals/organizations that have concerns relating to an adult who works with children and young people (including volunteers, agency staff, foster carers, religious leaders, school governors etc.).

The Allegation procedure applies 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 they may pose a risk of harm to children.

Section 11 of the Children Act, 2004 requires organisations that employ staff, contractors or volunteers who work with children to have a procedure in place for handling allegations against staff.

The LADO service in Bracknell Forest is undergoing development and transformation. In Bracknell Forest, the LADO is situated within the Strategy, Resources and Early Help Branch of Children, Young People and Learning which gives a greater degree of independence to the role. The role was previously held by the Manager of the Conference and Review Team who also has the responsibility for the IRO Service and Child Protection Conference process. Within 2016 -2017 this became untenable due to an increase in referrals and a commitment by the council to raise practice standards and to offer a more robust service to partners. A dedicated LADO post has now been developed and currently sits within the wider Performance and Governance Group and is directly managed by the Head of Service. This has enabled clear identification of shortfalls within the service and the development of an action plan to raise service standards.

Deputising for the LADO is now undertaken by permanent Team Manager of the Conference and Review team, who has previous experience undertaking the LADO function. The LADO provision has experienced a level of turbulence in staffing following changes to the role, with some challenges with recruiting a suitably experienced candidate. The post is currently held by an interim candidate who has previously covered the

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Conference & Review team manager post and thus offers a degree of consistency in the transition process. It is anticipated that no further changes to the staff resource will take place prior to the successful appointment of a permanent LADO.

3. PROGRESS CHECK FROM 2015-2016 REPORT

The LADO Annual Report from 2015/16 identified a set of recommendations. Progress against these is set out below as follows: -

- **The LADO to continue to contribute to training of managing allegations and promote awareness of procedures for managing allegations with partner agencies.**

The LADO has continued to contribute to Bracknell Forest's Managing Allegations Training via the LSCB in order to promote awareness of procedures for managing allegations and organisational responsibilities. The LADO has undertaken a workshop for Head teachers and Education Safeguarding Leads in March 2017. Furthermore the LADO service has regularly attended Team Meetings across Children's Social Care to highlight the role and clarify the process of Allegations Management. A new LADO Toolkit has been launched and is available on both the LSCB website and BORIS (intranet)

- **The LADO service to continue to strengthen links with key LSCB partner agencies and private sector employers and organisations to ensure there is a continued awareness about the thresholds and process for managing allegations.**

The LADO retains a strong link to safeguarding leads within education and CAIU Thames Valley Police, links with health are less robust. A clear link has been established with the Safeguarding Officer for Adult Services. Links with a number of private boarding school within the Bracknell area have been established alongside links with some private residential providers and day nurseries. Contact has ensured that these agencies are aware of the LADO service and how to seek advice and make a referral.

- **The LADO service to develop mechanisms for seeking feedback from professionals who have used the service and that consideration is given to how feedback can be gained from those subject to an allegation and subject therefore to the LADO process as well as from children and young people who have made an allegation.**

A feed back form has been developed and since April 2017 is sent to all agencies following contact with the LADO service. Specific feedback from Children and Young People who make an allegation is an outstanding area to be addressed. Alongside this, LSCB multi-agency audits on LADO cases was undertaken in November 2016 to ensure multi agency safeguarding responses were robust

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and consistent and identify areas within the LADO service that need development. The findings of this audit have been disseminated across the service and shared with the partnership.

- **Clear arrangements to be agreed for how the LADO service will be resourced within the Conference & Review Team, ensuring that all those acting as Designated Officers for the Local Authority receive specialist training in preparation for the role.**

In early 2016, agreement was obtained for a dedicated LADO resource separate from the Conference & Review Team Manager role set at 18.5 hours per week. Unfortunately, due to recruitment challenges and limited existing skills set, this post has not been recruited to and an interim arrangement has been in place with an increase in hours to 30 hours per week given the increasing demands on the role, based upon the rate of referrals. A review of the LADO demands is presently underway to assess long term demands based upon recent increase in case activity. The newly appointed Team Manager for Conference and Review is herself an experienced LADO and therefore is able to deputise for the LADO in her absence and specialist training will be offered to staff within the Conference and Review team to ensure sufficient cover and skillset/expertise within the LADO service. A part time administrative resource is in place and permanent recruitment to this role is a target for the year ahead.

- **The Head of Performance & Governance Service Manager to maintain regular and consistent oversight which is recorded on individual files.**

The LADO is now managed directly by the Head of Performance and Governance, who also manages the Conference and Review Team Manager who deputises for the LADO. This provides consistent supervision and oversight of cases. Management decisions are recorded on case files with quarterly management audits undertaken to ensure effective work is taking place.

- **The LADO Service to further develop sophisticated monitoring systems including an extensive database, ensuring that these are robust regardless of whether they meet the LADO threshold for involvement. It is important that cases where the LADO has only provided advice and information are detailed as some allegations, whilst on their own may not require a LADO response may, in future demonstrate concerns with the practice of individuals or settings.**

All contacts with the LADO service are recorded in an individual case file and on a LADO spreadsheet, this is subject to vulnerabilities in relation to tracking and searches of the files are heavily dependent on the quality of file naming and recording. Following exploration of options, from July 2017 all LADO recording will be undertaken on MOSAIC providing a robust database of all LADO Contacts to support and an already established recording system.

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4. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

4.1 Summary of LADO activity 2016-2017

Table 1 indicates a 58.5% increase in LADO activity on the previous year. All contacts with the LADO service continue to be captured and recorded regardless of whether these are for consultation and advice or progress to a full referral. Over 90% of contacts have been responded to within 1 working day. A number of factors will have impacted on the rise in the number of referrals as outlined below:-

- Greater awareness amongst employers about allegations and safer recruitment.
- Ofsted requirement that agencies consult with the LADO over all child safeguarding concerns
- Impact of new LADO toolkit, accessibility to advice and information due to increase in LADO hours.
- Improved recording systems – where all LADO contacts are recorded.

	2016-2017	2015-16
Contacts	130	82
Total enquiries	130	82

Table 1 -Number of LADO contacts

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Table 2 shows the variance within the year of both rates of contacts and the progression to Allegation’s Management meetings. An audit of cases in the period Q3 and Q4 has highlighted the low number of meetings in Q4 compared to the contact rate. An independent audit was completed in May 2017, which found that *“There is sufficient evidence to conclude that the practice has been safe for children and is defensible. There are cases where no Allegations meeting were held but the case was open for a considerable time. Holding an Allegations meeting would probably have been expeditious although the reason the LADO decided not to is clearly recorded”*. (p3 – BFC Evaluation of LADO Activity Report (June 2017))

2016-2017	No of contact/referrals	No of allegation meetings
Q1	35	10
Q2	22	6
Q3	40	12
Q4	33	5

Table 2 -Breakdown of contacts and allegation meetings by quarter

Table 3 indicates that the contact and progression rates for Bracknell Forest are similar to Wokingham which is our closest statistical Berkshire authority. At the time of writing of this report, data from West Berkshire, Reading and Windsor and Maidenhead was not made available.

Local Authority	No of Referrals	No progressed to LADO Meeting	% of referrals progressing to LADO mtg
Bracknell Forest	130	33	24.6%
Wokingham Borough	145	43	29.6%
Slough Borough	164	69	42%

Table 3-comparison neighbouring authorities

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Figure 1 below shows the categories of concerns reported to the LADO. The category of 'unsuitable adult behaviour' includes concerns about their behaviour outside the workplace to such an extent that it calls into question their suitability to work with children. Within 2016-2017 this has included professionals whose Children are subject to Child Protection Plans and/or Care Proceedings, those referred due to association of someone convicted of or under investigation of relevant criminal offence, concern relating to alcohol/drugs and domestic abuse. A small proportion of these referrals are where staff have not followed their employees policy and procedures.

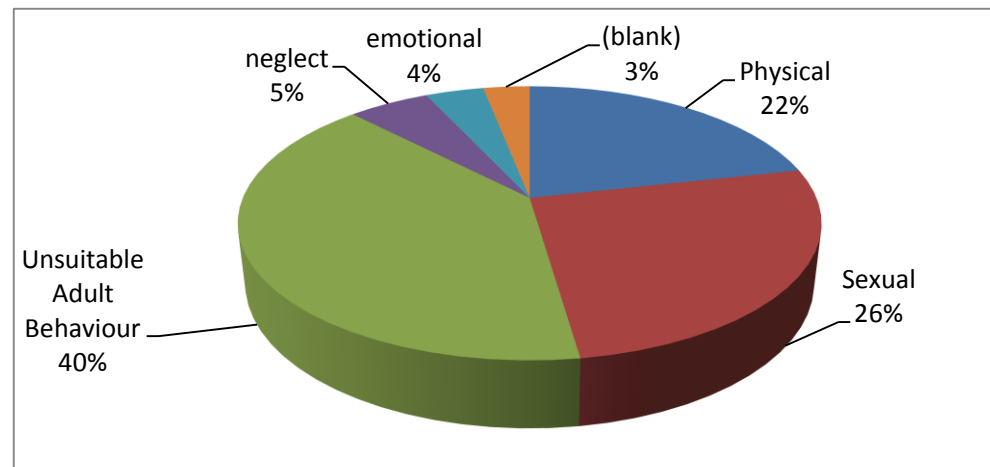


Figure 1 - Category of Concern

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4.2 Source of all referrals

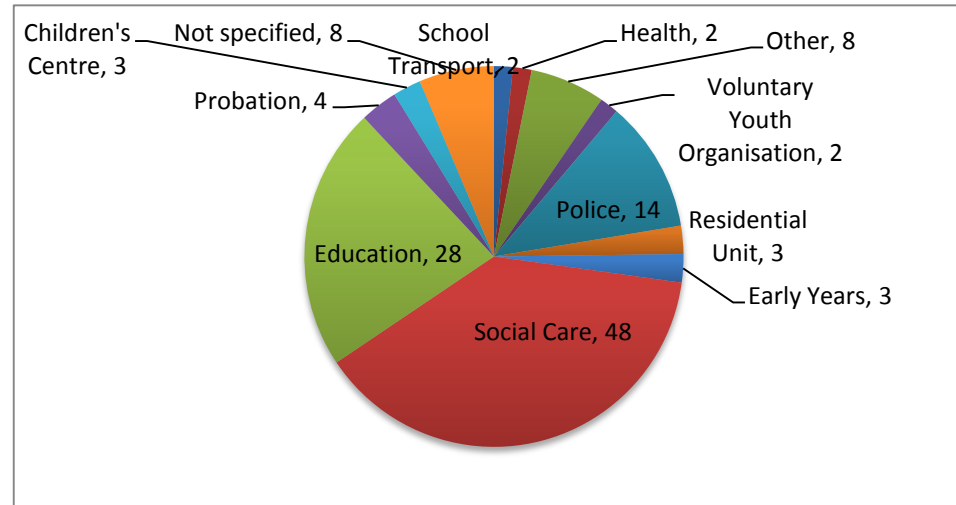


Figure 2 -Source of referrals

Referrals and consultations come from a range of agencies and members of the public. The majority of referrals have been from social care, education and the police. These are the agencies where training and awareness of the LADO role have been focussed within the year. The data highlights the need for the LADO in the coming year to work with the LSCB in improving awareness and links within Health and also the voluntary sector given the small amount of referrals received from these agencies but also their underrepresentation within the sector that the employee/volunteer works within.

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4.3 Allegations by sector in which the volunteer/employee works

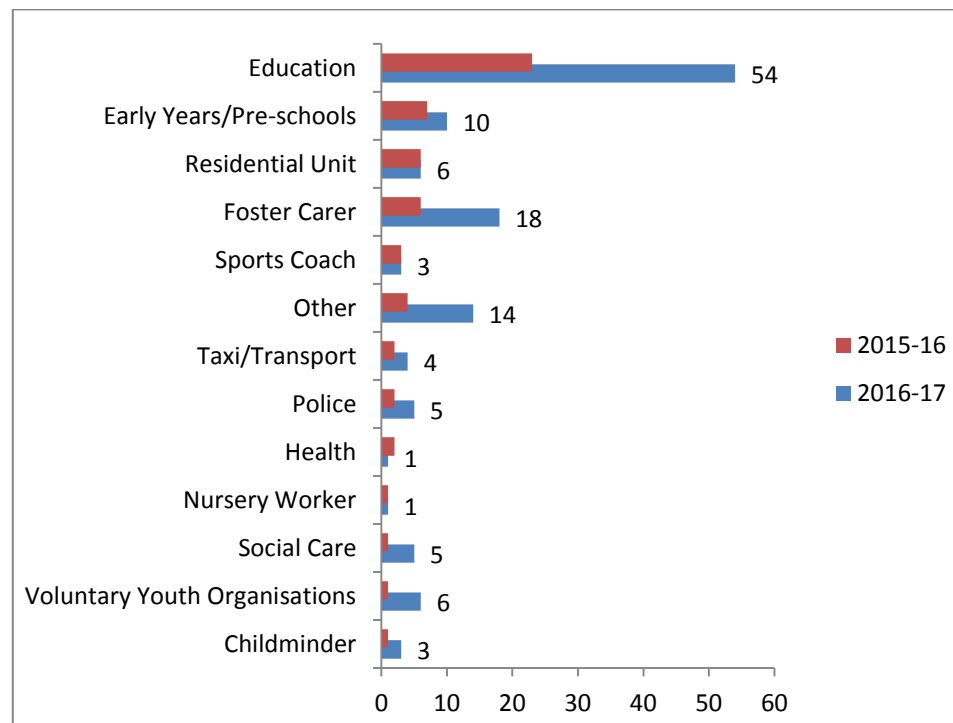


Chart 1 -Allegations by Sector

Allegations which relate to education settings include, teachers, supply teachers and non teaching site staff. Education staff and volunteers continue to be subject to the highest number of allegations locally and nationally due to the volume of education staff and the direct and frequent contact with large numbers of children. The increases shown within each sector compared to last year are in line with the significant overall increase in referrals; with the exception that the number of referrals relating to foster carers both in house and IFA has risen; indicating greater awareness in relation to formal LADO processes. Links between the LADO and the Fostering service are well established and issues that may previously have been dealt with as concerns or complaints are now being appropriately referred to the LADO service.

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5. OUTCOMES OF ALLEGATIONS

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 the allegation; the term therefore does not imply guilt or innocence.

'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015' has retained the 'false' category for education staff but has additionally allowed for the use of unfounded in line with other child care professions. However, this continues to present a level of inconsistency in that false is not a recognised category in respect of other professions. To ensure fairness, it is important to ensure that the outcomes are agreed for all allegations which are progressed to a LADO Meeting. Thus said, in accordance with internal procedures, the term 'false' will be applied where relevant based on a case by case arrangement.

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Table 4 shows the outcome of those allegations within the year that have been concluded, 6 cases are yet to be concluded due to ongoing police investigations/criminal proceedings – on these cases the LADO maintains an oversight to ensure safeguarding measures remain in place where appropriate until conclusion can be reached. Regular reviews take place on at least a monthly basis to ensure continued monitoring towards satisfactory resolution.

Due to issues with data recording throughout the year the outcome for the employee as to whether they have been suspended/dismissed, offered further training or convicted of a criminal offence is not available.

Category	Number
Substantiated	9
Unsubstantiated	11
Unfounded	0
Malicious	0
False (for education staff)	7
Final outcome not complete	6
Total	33

Table 4 -Outcome of referrals progressed to LADO Meeting

A pragmatic management decision by the Head of Performance and Governance has been taken that the extensive work it would take to resolve the data quality deficits would be disproportionate given the specific audits and work completed to date. The current LADO has devised strategies to ensure that the 2017/18 data is sufficiently accurate, with this being reviewed as part of monthly exception and quarterly reporting.

6. MULTI-AGENCY PROCESS

The LADO has contributed to the delivery of the managing allegations component within the Safer Recruitment training over the past year with Education staff and school governors. The LADO has attended a team briefing with the Fostering Service and a training programme is currently being drawn up for the 2017/18.

Work undertaken with Bracknell Forest Transport Providers has ensured that Safer Recruitment processes for the employment of drivers and escorts is now in place.

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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, the Early Years Service, Human Resources (Bracknell Forest Children Young People and Learning), Education Safeguarding Team Leader and Thames Valley Police.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The number of contacts to the LADO service has significantly increased and these have consistently been dealt with in a timely way throughout the year. There have been staffing challenges in relation to recruitment of a suitably experienced permanent LADO to give clear assurances to agencies surrounding effective oversight, however, an experienced interim LADO is in post and is willing to remain until the successful appointment of a qualified and experienced LADO and the roll out of training across the Conference and Review Service for designated officers to support the substantive LADO. The audits completed both at multi-agency and latterly, at local level reinforce the message that service standards have not been compromised and any learning is promptly captured and used to inform continuous improvement and accountability. The review and audit undertaken by the Head of Performance and Governance has ensured an emphasis in the forthcoming year on increased performance accountability and effective service delivery outcomes alongside increasing awareness and networking with partner and voluntary agencies.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to be implemented during 2017/18 and will be reviewed in line with quarterly performance reporting:-

1. Continue to raise the LADO profile across Children, Young People and Learning and partnership network with consistent and regular quarterly reporting to LSCB to ensure appropriate opportunity for challenge.
2. Improve data collection via improved data entry and monitoring using the monthly performance scorecard dataset and monthly exception reporting.
3. Continue to liaise with ICT and Core Logic to enable LADO activity to be recorded on MOSAIC with effect from July 2017.
4. Implement an annual LADO Training calendar in conjunction with Learning and Achievement to deliver training on managing allegations to Education, Health, Social Care, Early years Practitioners and voluntary sector agencies.

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5. Ensure systematic collation of feedback of LADO experience to ensure learning is captured and used to improve performance of the function, with a focus on measures to elicit the child's voice to inform continued practice.
6. Continue to improve interface with regional LADO network to support effective joint working and positive relationships.

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