



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

April 2017 – March 2018

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT:

This report provides information, overview and analysis regarding the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) role and responsibilities within Children's Social Care in Bracknell Forest for the period beginning April 2017 to the end of March 2018.

2. STATUTORY FUNCTION AND GUIDANCE

Statutory guidance and procedures (Working Together 2015, Section 11 of The Children Act 2004 and Section 175 of the Education Act 2002) place duties on organisations to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. In line with this, all local authorities must have a designated officer to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children.

The LADO provides advice and guidance to employers and other individuals or organisations that have concerns relating to an adult who works with children and young people. This is inclusive of volunteers and 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.

3. STAFFING UPDATE

There has been a number of changes in staffing of the LADO service during the past year. Whilst it is acknowledged that this has had an impact on the robustness of the LADO service at times, effective measures have been taken to ensure the ongoing safety and wellbeing of children in the area. The LADO service has continued to maintain strong working relationships with Police, education providers and residential facilities in the Bracknell Forest area.

A new LADO has now been appointed to the role and started with Bracknell Forest in March 2018. This is a permanent, full time appointment. The LADO is situated within the Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention branch alongside the Conference and Review Team; to ensure that the role continues to be as independent as possible.

Deputising for the LADO has been consistently undertaken by the Team Manager of the Conference and Review Team and Principal Social Worker, who has previous experience of this role.

4. UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

i. Continue to raise the LADO profile across Children, Young People and Learning and Partnership network with consistent and regular quarterly reporting to the LCSB to ensure appropriate opportunity for challenge.

Ongoing efforts have been made across the past year to raise the profile of the LADO, both within Children's Services and also across our partner agencies. There has been a major focus on improving service delivery through the provision of advice and consultation with partner agencies. The LADO role in Bracknell Forest Council has to date been staffed by temporary workers, however significant efforts have been made to ensure that the LADO's have responded to allegations and concerns in a consistent, professional and proportionate manner.

A permanent LADO has recently been appointed to the post and is already engaged in meeting and consulting with our partner agencies and in reviewing how best to continue to raise the LADO profile.

In the interim, awareness continues to be raised via the safeguarding cue card and the LCSB and Bracknell Forest websites.

The LADO has continued to work closely with Children's Social Care, the Early Years Services, Human Resources (Bracknell Forest Children, young People and Learning), Education, Thames Valley Police and the LSCB.

ii. Improve data collection via improved data entry and monitoring using the monthly performance scorecard dataset and monthly exception reporting.

This has been implemented with performance data reported on a monthly basis to the Business Intelligence Team within the department. This information is filtered through into the safeguarding cue card. Alongside this, all contacts are plotted on the LADO spreadsheet which is updated on a daily basis.

LADO cases continue to be routinely audited as part of the Children's Social Care Audit programme. Multi –Agency audits will be undertaken annually by colleagues from the LSCB.

iii. Continue to liaise with ICT and Core Logic to enable LADO activity to be recorded on MOSAIC with effect from July 2017.

There was some initial delay reported in the implementation of this due to issues with Core Logic, however LADO activity is now live and all contacts are recorded on MOSAIC. Documents are recorded on SMARTOPEN with secure and limited access in place to support with consistent and accessible record keeping.

The current LADO has also now ensured that all significant information from open cases that were prior to the implementation of MOSAIC have been inputted to ensure that there is a clear data trail and that information is easily accessible.

In May 2017 all open and closed cases from Q3 & Q4 2016-2017 were reviewed by an independent auditor and whilst there was some variability in service delivery the review concluded that practice had been safe for children. All of the recommendations from the review regarding recording and file naming have been implemented.

iv. 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.

The previous LADO undertook to offer regular training and surgeries to teams across Children Young People and Learning, in order to raise awareness and promote learning and understanding of the LADO role.

Twice yearly Safer Recruitment and Managing Allegations Training has been implemented. This is a multi-agency training session that successfully ran in 2017-18, and has been implemented again for 2018-19, with one session already completed by the current LADO at Easthampstead House.

Attendance at the Early Years practitioners groups took place in October 2017, and alongside this the previous LADO undertook a session as part of the Safer Care Training for foster carers in early March 2018. The feedback from this was very positive and we are in discussions around further sessions.

In terms of future planning, the current LADO has agreed a training session for the Management Team and staff of the Scouts Association in August, and will also be conducting training for 165 members of teaching staff at Wellington College. Discussions are underway around provision of training for SWAAY and for a local teaching supply agency. Alongside this a number of local primary and secondary schools have been approached and offered training around the LADO role.

v. Ensure systematic collation of feedback of LADO experience to ensure learning is encapsured and is used to improve performance of the function, with a focus on measures to elicit the child's voice to inform continued practice.

A feedback form has been developed and since April 2017 is sent to all agencies following contact with the LADO service.

The form asks the following:

- How was initial contact made?
- Did you receive a response in a timely manner (within 1 working day)?
- How helpful and supportive did you find the LADO in their response?
- Did the LADO strategy meetings provide a clear outlined of concerns?
- How effectively did the meeting consider the allegations and risk?
- Were you clear in relation to next steps and timelines?
- Did you feel the LADO was approachable during the process?
- Did the service meet your expectations?
- What could we have done better?

Unfortunately the take up response to this has been very poor, with only three forms completed in the last year. This will be taken forward as an action in the coming year.

No specific collation of feedback has taken place in terms of eliciting the child's voice, however this continues to be encouraged via the professionals who are working with the children themselves and good practice continues to be seen within Bracknell Forest Council. Moving forward, there will be more focus on ensuring that all employers and professionals are clear on the LADO process and that they follow the procedures in order that children's welfare is safeguarded in a timely manner. It is planned that this will be entrenched via further training over the coming year.

vi. Continue to improve interface with regional LADO network to support effective joint working and positive relationships.

Regular liaison between the Berkshire LADO's continues to take place, with good attendance at the quarterly Berkshire LADO Network Meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for the 16th May 2018.

News updates are received six times per year from the National LADO Network.

5. LADO PROGRESS AND ACTIVITY (1st April 2017 – 31st March 2018)

i. Summary of LADO activity

	2017-18	2016-17	2017-18
	Contacts to LADO service	Contacts to LADO service	Number progressed to Allegations Strategy Meeting
Q1	43	35	10
Q2	41	22	9
Q3	41	40	5
Q4	38	33	2
Total	163	130	26

In total there have been 163 contacts to the LADO service over the period April 2017 – March 2018. This is an increase of 33 from the previous year and an increase of 104 from 2015-16. It is clear from this that referrals and consultations to the LADO service are increasingly significantly, and will undoubtedly continue to do so as our profile within organisations increases.

Out of the referrals and consultations received in 2017-18, 26 have progressed to an allegations strategy meeting. In Q1 5 cases were unsubstantiated, 1 was substantiated, 1 was false and 2 were unfounded. One case remains open from that period.

In Q2 3 cases were substantiated, 4 were unsubstantiated and 2 were not progressed past an initial discussion.

In Q3 2 cases were unsubstantiated and 3 were not progressed past an initial strategy meeting.

In Q4 1 case was unfounded and 1 remains open to date.

The cases that remain open from that period are as a result of protracted Court proceedings and will be closed down once a final hearing has been held. All of the cases that progressed to Court are in relation to concerns about sexual harm.

As these figures show, the majority of contacts received by the LADO service are in relation to consultation and guidance. These can vary in complexity in terms of the issues discussed and many will require further unpacking and exploration in order to ascertain how best to safeguard in terms of future actions.

All advice to our partner agencies is recorded on MOSAIC and a summary of the discussion and actions agreed is sent out to the employer via email. Follow up consultations are often provided.

Advice, guidance and consultation therefore remains a key area of work within the scope of the LADO role and is essential in terms of maintaining a LADO presence and in strengthening partner relationships.

ii. Breakdown of concerns

The LADO service uses the four main categories of concern used in child protection (physical, sexual, emotional and neglect) as well as a fifth, unsuitable adult behaviour or contact. Below is a breakdown of all the concerns (inclusive) raised within the service over the period 2017-18.

Primary Category of Concern	No's 2017-18	No's 2016-17
Emotional	8	5
Neglect	14	7
Physical	59	28
Sexual	28	34
Unsuitable Adult Behaviour/Conduct	46	52
Other / miscellaneous	8	4
TOTAL	163	130

Out of the concerns identified as emotional, one progressed to an allegations strategy meeting and was substantiated, with the employee being suspended.

All but one of the concerns raised in relation to neglect were treated as consultation and advice. The one that progressed to an allegations strategy meeting was in relation to an in house foster carer and was substantiated.

Out of the physical concerns, 13 were progressed to an allegations strategy meeting. Three were foster carers (2 in house), 6 were schools (1 independent), 1 was a day nursery, 1 was a residential placement, 1 was a child-minder, and 1 is recorded as 'other'. This has been the category with the highest recorded increase in referrals and consultations, and further exploration around this may be beneficial.

There were 28 incidents recorded in relation to sexual issues. 12 of these progressed to an allegations strategy meeting. The majority of employees in this category were suspended, with one being placed on restricted duties. 7 of these cases were recorded as unsubstantiated, 1 was substantiated, 1 was not progressed and 3 of these cases remain open to date as a result of criminal proceedings.

In terms of unsuitable adult behaviour/conduct, 2 progressed to an allegations strategy meeting, with 1 being substantiated. Both of these were schools.

It is important to note that the LADO process is of course different to that of criminal proceedings, with an outcome of substantiated being recorded if it is agreed on the 'balance of probability' rather than 'beyond all reasonable doubt.'

The majority of these are again dealt with via the provision of advice and guidance to ensure that the agency provider has in place appropriate policies and procedures to manage issues in a safe and timely manner.

iii. Source of all enquiries

61.5% of referrals were received within the requisite 24 hours of referrer being alerted. The data collection does not specify what the delay in referring to the LADO was, however it could be surmised from this that further training and support is required around timescales and employer requirements. This will be further explored in the coming year.

The majority of referrals and contacts were made to the LADO service by schools (46.6%), with the second highest referrer being Children's Social Care (14.6%), then in house fostering service and day nurseries (6.8%), other local authorities (5.8%), youth groups (3.9%), and police, private care homes and residential special schools (2.9%). It is difficult to ascertain whether the high amount of referrals from schools and children's social care is as a result of the high level of children they work with, or an increased understanding of the LADO process. An additional 5.8% of referrals are also classed as 'other', and these tend to be organisations such as taxi drivers and other clubs such as athletics or football.

Interestingly there have been no referrals from faith groups. The main and most reliable indicator in terms of the religious beliefs of the Bracknell residents is sourced from the national census, which was conducted in 2011. In this census 61% of residents identified themselves as Christian, 1.61% as Hindu, 1.13% as Muslim, 0.73% as Buddhist, 0.40% as Sikh and 0.16% as Jewish. It is clear from this that Bracknell Forest is an increasingly diverse borough and that further work with faith groups and organisations is something that needs to be promoted in the coming year.

iv. Outcome of allegations strategy meetings

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.

26 cases progressed to an allegation strategy meeting in the period 2017-18. This is a decrease of 6 from 2016-17.

Category	Number 2017-18	Number 2016-17
Substantiated	5	9
Unsubstantiated	13	11
Unfounded	3	Not recorded
Malicious	0	Not recorded
False/Unfounded (for education staff)	1	7
Not concluded / outcome not recorded	4	5
Total	26	32

The current LADO is not able to make comment on why 4 meetings are recorded as not concluded / outcome not recorded and further exploration will be required. All meetings are taken through to their conclusion to ensure that children and young people are appropriately safeguarded.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion it is clear that referrals and consultations to the LADO service in Bracknell Forest have shown an increase in 2017-18. With the increased profile of the LADO service amongst our partner agencies, it is likely that we will continue to see an increase at the conclusion of 2018-19.

The high level of advice and consultation undertaken by the LADO also demonstrates a good working relationship with police, health and education. It is positive that organisations are contacting the LADO to seek advice, and we hope that this will also continue to expand as the new LADO embeds further training and secures professional knowledge and relationships.

In terms of moving forward with the LADO service in Bracknell Forest, the following recommendations are proposed for the coming year, 2018/19.

- i. Continue to deliver the statutory duties of the LADO in managing allegations against adults who work with children.
- ii. Provision of high quality and informative training regarding the management of allegations and the LADO role.
- iii. Continue to raise the LADO profile across Children, Young People and Learning and partnership network.
- iv. Promoting the LADO role amongst faith groups and organisations to raise awareness around their responsibilities in terms of safeguarding.

- v. Revisit mechanisms for seeking feedback from professionals who have used the LADO service and promoting the inclusion of the voice of the child.

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27th April 2018