



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

2018 – 2019

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 2018 to the end of March 2019.

2. STATUTORY FUNCTION AND GUIDANCE

Statutory guidance and procedures (Working Together 2018, 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 and school governors.

The allegations 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

The LADO service has remained stable over the past year, with a permanent, full time LADO remaining in post. The LADO service has continued to maintain consistent and strong working relationships with the police, education providers and residential facilities in the Bracknell Forest area.

The LADO is situated within Commissioning service alongside the Conference and Review Team, to ensure that the role continues to be independent.

4. UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

i. Continue to deliver the statutory duties of the LADO in managing allegations against adults who work with children.

The LADO role continues to be implemented in line with the Bracknell Forest LSCB Procedures Manual (January 2019) which sets out the LADO role and responsibilities. In addition, the role is compliant with the updated Working Together to Safeguard Children Procedures 2018, which states that the LADO must hold a social work qualification and be registered with the HCPC.

There continues to be a focus on providing a consistent and high-quality LADO service to our partner agencies, and the LADO service continues to be well

accessed by the multi-agency professional network. All contacts to the LADO service are dealt with within one working day, and, in the majority of contacts a telephone or face to face consultation is offered on the same day to assist in planning and safeguarding.

In February 2019 twelve randomly selected LADO cases were audited with the findings presented in Q4 to the Learning and Improvement sub-group of the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board. The audit concluded that significant progress has been made to increase the profile and function of the Bracknell Forest LADO, and that there is evidence an increasing number of professionals are able to recognise a need to initiate the allegations process. It found that the LADO continues to work with senior managers to recognise risk and that they were supported to optimise safety and ensure a robust and fair process. All recommendations from the 2019 audit had been implemented or embedded by March 2019.

ii. Provision of high quality and informative training regarding the management of allegations and the LADO role.

Twice yearly Safer Recruitment and Managing Allegations Training continues to be rolled out. This is a multi-agency training session running since 2017. It is generally well attended, with 30 people attending each training session undertaken in April and September 2018. Feedback provided has been positive, with attendees reporting an increased understanding of the LADO role and their own reporting responsibilities.

In addition to this, in Q1 personalised training was provided to SWAAY (Child and Adolescent Services), the fostering team, and to a small cohort of schools. Further training was provided to the Scouts Association, Wellington College, Warfield Church and Kennel Lane in Q2.

The LADO will also be attending the Children Looked After pod team meeting in May 2019 to undertake small group training with the workers.

iii. Continue to raise the LADO profile across Children, Young People and Learning and partnership network.

The LADO has continued to work closely with Children's Social Care, Early Years services, Human Resources, Education, Thames Valley Police and the Safeguarding Board. The provision of training continues to assist with the multi-agency interface, face to face and telephone contacts, and strategy meetings. The face to face consultations with colleagues in social care continue to increase, with both formal and informal discussions taking place.

Awareness continues to be raised via the safeguarding cue card and the Safeguarding Board and Bracknell Forest websites. In addition to this, performance data is reported monthly to the Business Intelligence Team within the department. All contacts are captured onto the LADO spreadsheet which is updated daily.

Regular liaison between the Berkshire LADOs continues to take place, with good attendance at the quarterly Berkshire LADO Network Meetings. The LADO also attends the yearly National LADO Conference, with the next one scheduled for the 10th May 2019.

News updates are received six times per year via email from the National LADO and are discussed at the Berkshire LADO meetings.

iv. Promoting the LADO role amongst faith groups and organisations to raise awareness around their responsibilities in terms of safeguarding.

A meeting has been held between the LADO and Warfield Church to discuss safeguarding and training needs as they run several youth and playgroups.

In Q4 an up to date list of all faith groups in the area was sourced from Involve, and they have now been emailed and invited to the forthcoming LADO training sessions.

The LADO will continue attempts to contact and involve the local faith groups, and to offer a more personalised training session if required.

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

Receiving consistent feedback regarding the LADO service has continued to be a challenge. Feedback forms continue to be sent out to all agencies using the LADO service; however, return rates below expectations. We are working on what we can do differently to achieve feedback from users. During 2019/20 the LADO plans to seek feedback from people attending Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers (ASV) meetings (previously called strategy meetings) at the end of the meeting. The child's voice is actively sought and recorded within the ASV meetings.

5. LADO PROGRESS AND ACTIVITY (1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019)

i. Summary of LADO activity

	2017/18	2018-19	2018-19
	Contacts to LADO service	Contacts to LADO service	Number progressed to ASV* Meeting
Q1	43	47	7
Q2	41	35	3
Q3	41	56	7
Q4	38	60	9
Total	163	198	26

* Allegation Against Staff and Volunteers Meeting

There has been a total of 198 contacts made to the LADO service this year. This is an increase of 35 from the previous year. It is hypothesised that this is attributable to the positive uptake of training over the past year.

In Q1 there were 47 contacts to the LADO service, which is an increase of 4 from the previous year. Of these 7 progressed to an ASV meeting. Out of the 7 meetings held, 2 were unsubstantiated, 2 were substantiated, 1 was recorded as false and 2 remain open to the LADO.

In Q2 there were 35 contacts to the LADO service, which is a decrease of 6 from the previous year. Of these 3 were progressed to an ASV meeting, with the outcome of all of these being recorded as unsubstantiated.

In Quarter 3 there were 56 contacts to the LADO service, which is an increase of 15 from the previous year. Of these 7 progressed to an ASV meeting, out of which 5 were unsubstantiated and 1 was recorded as unfounded. One case remains open to the LADO and is being jointly investigated with Thames Valley Police.

In Quarter 4 there were 60 contacts to the LADO service, which is an increase of 22 contacts from the previous year. Out of these 9 progressed to an ASV meeting, of which 2 were unfounded, 1 was unsubstantiated, 1 was substantiated and 1 was recorded as false. Four of these remain open to the LADO, all of which are being jointly investigated with Thames Valley Police. One case has also been managed via the complex abuse procedures.

There are two cases that remain open, one from Q3 2017/18 and one from Q4 2017/18. These are in relation to concerns around sexual harm and are both being jointly investigated by Thames Valley Police. Investigations are often protracted due to the sensitive nature of the cases and the time it takes to download information from electronic devices. These cases will be closed once the police investigations have concluded.

In total 26 ASV meetings have been held. This is the same total as last year, despite there having been an increase of 35 contacts over the year to the LADO service. This suggests that whilst the LADO profile has increased significantly, thresholds remain consistent in terms of convening ASV meetings.

The figures continue to show that most contacts received by the LADO service are in relation to consultation and guidance. This is consistent with other councils. Contacts 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 offered and often provided.

Advice, guidance and consultation therefore remains a key area of work within the scope of the LADO role and is essential towards appropriate and consistent threshold application to safeguard children. This also helps in maintaining a LADO presence and strengthening partner relationships.

ii. Breakdown of concerns

The LADO service applies the four main categories of concern as 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 raised within the service over the period 2018-19.

Primary Category of Concern	2017-18	2018-19
Emotional abuse	8	1
Neglect	14	0
Physical	59	67
Sexual	28	26
Unsuitable Adult Behaviour/Conduct	46	99
Other / miscellaneous	8	5
TOTAL	163	198

There were no concerns raised this year in relation to neglect, and only 1 in relation to emotional abuse. All but one of the concerns raised in 2017-18 in relation to emotional abuse and neglect were treated as consultation and advice.

The majority of concerns relating to physical abuse were successfully managed via consultation and advice with the LADO. The 12 that progressed to an ASV meeting involved 3 foster carers, 3 schools, 3-day nurseries, 2 recorded as other (taxi drivers) and 1 from Children's Services.

Out of the 26 contacts received in relation to sexual abuse, 7 progressed to an ASV meeting, with 4 remaining open to the LADO and being jointly investigated by the police. The remaining 19 cases were successfully managed via consultation and advice. The main reasons for this were around contacts being for information giving purposes only, or that the adults in question were not working with children or young people and was a criminal matter only. All contacts are recorded on Mosaic enabling the LADO to cross reference should a further contact be made in the future.

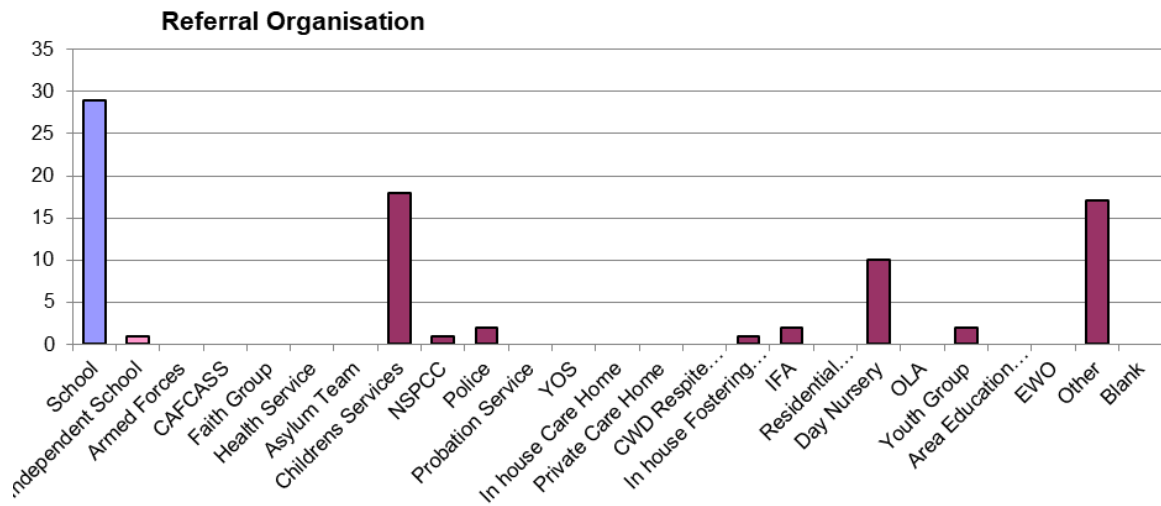
The majority of contacts this year related to unsuitable adult behaviour, compared to 2017-18 when it related mostly to physical abuse. Unsuitable adult behaviour covers a variety of concerns that do not otherwise fit into the four main categories, and include concerns raised about a professional in their own personal life. Out of these contacts, 6 progressed to an ASV meeting, with 1 remaining open to the LADO.

It is important to note that the LADO threshold is different to that for criminal proceedings, with an outcome of Substantiated being recorded if it is agreed on the 'balance of probability' where there is sufficient, identifiable evidence, rather than 'beyond all reasonable doubt.'

The majority of these are dealt with via the provision of advice and guidance by the LADO. This includes ensuring the referral organisation has in place appropriate policies and procedures to manage issues in a safe and timely manner.

iii. Source of all enquiries

68.6% of referrals (63) were received within the requisite 24 hours of the referrer being alerted. The data collection does not specify what the delay in referring to the LADO was, however this will continue to be addressed via ongoing training and support provided by the LADO over the coming year.



The majority of referrals and contacts continue to be made to the LADO service by schools (34.9%), with the second highest referrer being Children’s Social Care (21.7%). This is consistent with other councils. This figure is almost double the referrals received from CSC in 2017-18 which is positive in terms of safeguarding and in terms of an increase in knowledge of the LADO role. The third highest source of all referrals is classed as ‘other’ (20.5%), which tend to be organisations such as taxi drivers, out of school clubs and other youth activities. There have been no referrals from health, probation or the Youth Offending Service. This may be because their referrals have been sent through to the LADO via the MASH service.

There continue to be 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. Following on from the contact made with our local faith groups, some have now signed up to attend the Safeguarding Board training events this year. It is hoped that this will strengthen the relationship and increase understanding and awareness of the LADO role and implications on their individual and collective responsibilities.

iv. Outcome of allegations against staff and volunteer (ASV) 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 ASV meeting in the period 2018-19. This figure remains consistent with last year.

Category	Number 2017-18	Number 2018-19
Substantiated	5	2
Unsubstantiated	13	11
Unfounded	3	3
Malicious	0	0
False	1	2
Remain open to LADO	n/a	8
Total	26	26

Last year 4 cases were recorded as not concluded or outcome not recorded. All meetings in 2018-19 have been taken through to their conclusion to ensure that children and young people are appropriately safeguarded. The LADO is clear that an inconclusive outcome is not in the best interests of our young people.

Of those cases with an outcome recorded as False, clear actions have been discussed in relation to further investigation around why this has been. There is research to suggest that false outcomes may be indicative of abuse elsewhere.

For the 3 cases that were Unfounded, there was clear evidence that whilst an incident had occurred, it had been misconstrued and as such there was no evidence of harm that could be either unsubstantiated or substantiated.

Alongside a final outcome, planning and decision making is discussed and any opportunities for further training or learning identified at the meeting. All LADO strategy meetings have been well attended by the multi-professional group and police continue to be a strong presence.

In terms of comparative data, the table below shows that our figures are comparable in terms of our neighbouring boroughs. Figures for the number of referrals progressed to an ASV meeting for Windsor and Maidenhead were not available at the time of writing this report.

Borough	Referrals to LADO	Progressed to ASV meeting
Bracknell Forest	198	26
West Berkshire	155	22

Slough	208	40
Windsor and Maidenhead	150	Not available

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Referrals and consultations to the LADO service in Bracknell Forest increased in 2018-19. This was predicted in the previous annual report and is likely to continue in the next reporting year. Training remains a focus for the forthcoming year, to support and improve knowledge around allegations against staff and volunteers, the LADO role and the responsibilities of our partner agencies. The LADO will also make contact via email with local faith groups to advise them of the allegations training that is being run.

Although there has been an increase in contacts to the LADO service, the number of ASV meetings remain the same as last year. It is hypothesised that this is due to the LADO thresholds remaining consistent, whilst demonstrating an increase in the LADO profile. Both of which are positive outcomes for Bracknell Forest Council.

The high level of advice and consultation undertaken by the LADO continues to demonstrate a good working relationship with police, health and education. It is positive that organisations are contacting the LADO to seek advice, and it is envisaged that this will continue into 2019.

The LADO has a significant role in putting children and young people first in Bracknell Forest Council, where they are involved in activities supervised by adults. This ensures the best outcomes for children and young people and that they remain safeguarded from individuals who may pose a risk of harm to them in line with the allegation procedures noted in section 2 of this report.

In terms of moving forward with the LADO service in Bracknell Forest, the following recommendations are proposed for the coming year, 2019/20.

- i. Provision of high quality and informative training regarding the management of allegations and the LADO role, including meeting with individual teams following their restructuring, and attendance at the Quality Assurance Learning Event.
- ii. Continue to raise the LADO profile across Children, Young People and Learning and partnership network.
- iii. Making contact with the local faith groups and organisations to promote the role of the LADO and to raise awareness around their responsibilities in terms of safeguarding.
- iv. The LADO will continue to work in partnership with West Berkshire LADO's in terms of areas to improve around service provision and updating of LADO procedures.

Emma Langdon
Local Authority Designated Officer
26th April 2019