

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

April 2019 – March 2020

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 2019 to the end of March 2020.

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 remained stable in 2019/20 with a permanent, full time LADO in post. The LADO service 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. LADO PROGRESS AND ACTIVITY (1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020)

i. Summary of LADO activity

	Contacts to LADO service 2018/19	Contacts to LADO service 2019/20	Number progressed to ASV* Meeting 2019/20
Q1	47	58	10
Q2	35	45	7
Q3	56	51	6
Q4	60	52	6
Total	198	206	29

* Allegation Against Staff and Volunteers Meeting

There were a total of 206 contacts made to the LADO service during the year. This is an increase of 8 from the previous year.

In Q1 there were 58 contacts to the LADO service, which is an increase of 11 from the previous year. Of these 10 progressed to an ASV meeting. Out of the 10 meetings held, 5 were Unsubstantiated, 3 were Substantiated, 1 was recorded as False and 1 remained open to the LADO. This is because the LADO was waiting for police to download the electronic devices of the person against whom the allegation has been made.

In Q2 there were 45 contacts to the LADO service, which is an increase of 10 from the previous year. Of these 7 were progressed to an ASV meeting, with the outcome of 5 of these being recorded Unsubstantiated, 1 recorded as not meeting threshold, and 1 remaining open due to parallel police investigations.

In Quarter 3 there were 51 contacts to the LADO service, which is a decrease of 5 from the previous year. Of these 6 progressed to an ASV meeting, out of which 4 were Unsubstantiated and 1 was recorded as false. 1 case remains open to the LADO and is being jointly investigated with Thames Valley Police.

In Quarter 4 there were 52 contacts to the LADO service, which is a decrease of 8 contacts from the previous year. Out of these 6 progressed to an ASV meeting, of which 2 were Unfounded, 2 were Unsubstantiated and 1 remains open to the LADO as it is being jointly investigated with Thames Valley Police.

There is still one case from February 2018 that remained open at the end of the year. This is in relation to concerns around sexual harm that continued to be 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. This case will be closed once the police investigation has concluded.

In total 29 ASV meetings were held. This is three more than the previous year. This indicates that thresholds remain consistent in terms of convening ASV meetings.

The figures continue to show that the majority of 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 case working 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 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 assists 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 procedures (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	2018/19	2019/20
Emotional abuse	1	1
Neglect	0	0
Physical	67	58
Sexual	26	27
Unsuitable Adult Behaviour/Conduct	99	119
TOTAL	198	205

There were no concerns raised again this year in relation to neglect, and in line with 2018/19, only 1 in relation to emotional abuse (consultation and advice).

The majority of concerns relating to physical abuse were successfully managed via consultation and advice with the LADO. The 8 that progressed to an ASV meeting involved professionals from the health service, education, children’s services and youth groups.

Out of the 27 contacts received in relation to sexual abuse, 13 progressed to an ASV meeting, with 2 remaining open to the LADO and being jointly investigated by the police at the end of the year. These included teachers, foster carers and a taxi driver.

In terms of unsuitable adult behaviour/conduct, there were 8 that progressed to an ASV meeting, with 2 remaining open to the LADO and being jointly investigated by the police. The majority of these contacts continue to be managed via consultation and advice, due to not reaching threshold for LADO involvement after further investigation. 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 during the year remained under the category of unsuitable adult behaviour. This category 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.

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

75% of referrals (154) were received within the requisite 24 hours of the referrer being alerted. Data collected does not specify the cause of delay for the remaining 25%, however, this work to promote referrals within 24 hours will continue via ongoing training and support provided by the LADO over the coming year.

The largest number 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 number of referrals received from CSC is almost double the figure from 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 'other' (20.5%). These include 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.

29 cases progressed to an ASV meeting in the period 2019/20. This figure reflects a small increase from last year.

Category	Number 2018/19	Number 2019/20
Substantiated	2	3
Unsubstantiated	11	17
Unfounded	3	2
Malicious	0	0
False	2	2
Remain open to LADO	8	4
Total	26	28

All meetings in 2019-20 were taken through to their conclusion to ensure that children and young people are appropriately safeguarded. The LADO was 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 2 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.

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

Comparative data was not available from our neighbouring boroughs at the time of writing this report.

5. UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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.

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 rolled out in May and September, however due to lack of numbers the May 2019 session was cancelled. Eleven people attended the session in September 2019.

In terms of further promoting the LADO role within Children's Services, the LADO attended the following meetings:

- Children Looked After pod team meeting in May 2019 to undertake small group training with the workers,
- FSM team meeting in October 2019,
- ASYE social workers in November 2019.

In addition to the above, case discussions have been held with the CLA team in relation to some of their connected person carers.

In terms of wider agency discussions, in June 2019 the LADO met with the East Berkshire Probation Service to undertake a presentation on the LADO role and multi-agency responsibilities in relation to this.

The Berkshire LADO's have also updated the PAN Berkshire LADO procedures.

ii. 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, the Early Years Services, Human Resources, Bracknell Forest People's Directorate, 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.

The LADO has participated in the staff induction event for new social workers in both October 2019 and January 2020, both of which were well attended. A further session was booked for March but was cancelled due to the covid-19 pandemic.

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.

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

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.

In Q4 of 2019 an up to date list of all faith groups in the area was sourced from Involve, and they were contacted in relation to the forthcoming LADO training sessions. Great Hollands Free Church and Winkfield and Cranbourne Church both sent representatives to attend the training.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Referrals and consultations to the LADO service in Bracknell Forest increased in 2019-20. 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 comparable with 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 2020.

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, 2020/21:

- 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.
- iii. Continue to work in partnership with West Berkshire LADOs in terms of areas to improve around service provision and sharing of information.
- iv. Continue to adapt to provide the best possible LADO service during the COVID pandemic

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Local Authority Designated Officer
16th April 2020