



ANNUAL
REPORT
2015-2016

Local Authority Designated Officer

Introduction

The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 (WTSC 2015) requires local authorities to have a particular officer or a team of officers to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children. The officer or team of officers should be sufficiently qualified and experienced to fulfil this role effectively. It also requires newly appointed officers to be qualified Social Workers.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf

The LADO oversees individual cases, provides advice and guidance to employer's, voluntary organisations and liaises with the Police and other agencies as required. The LADO has a responsibility to monitor the progress of individual cases to ensure they are dealt with quickly, fairly and consistently, as well as identifying significant patterns and trends across the workforce.

In Cheshire East there are currently two part time LADO's and a dedicated Business Support Officer; they sit within the Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit.

Context

WTSC 2013 provides the threshold criteria for the management of allegations regarding individuals who work with children and young people. The guidance not only applies to allegations where it is considered that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer harm but also allegations, which suggest that a person has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child.
- Possibly committed an offence against, or related to, a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that they may pose a risk of harm to children.

These procedures should be applied where there are allegations or concerns that an individual may pose a risk of harm and they are employed on a paid or voluntary basis including casual, agency, commissioned and self-employed workers. The procedures capture concerns, allegations or offences emanating from outside of work, as well as within a person's paid or unpaid role working with children.

WTSC clarifies that the guidance applies in its entirety to all schools, including independent schools, academies and free schools, who all have duties in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils, consistent with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

LADO Performance Data: 2015/2016

Referrals

The LADO's response to referrals are categorised into 3 areas:

- **Consultation:** Referrals where the LADO threshold is not met (as per WTSC 2015 guidance).
- **No Further Action after Initial Consideration:** This relates to a referral where some preliminary investigation is required by the referrer or employer to determine whether further action is required under LADO procedures.
- **LADO Threshold is met:** An investigation with LADO oversight is required and a strategy meeting was held.

During 2015/16 there have been 171 referrals relating to allegations about adults who work with children in Cheshire East.

Table 1: Comparison Referrals April 2012-March 2016

	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
*Referrals met LADO threshold	78 (38%)	63 (19%)	46 (19%)	72 (42%)
Not met LADO threshold	127 (62%)	262 (81%)	193 (81%)	99 (58%)
Total	205	325	239	171*

There is some difficulty providing comparative data as the recording systems of the LADO service has changed several times since 2012. It does appear from the table above that the numbers of referrals to the LADO this year have significantly decreased from 2014/15, however this is not the case. The recording of contacts and referrals has changed: in 2014/15 all contacts with LADO were reported as referrals; however this is no longer the case and inappropriate referrals and additional tasks completed by the LADO such as Safe Recruitment checks are now recorded separately.

*In addition to the referral numbers above, in 2015/16 there have been a further 151 contacts with the LADO service, these contacts range from general complaints about settings to safe recruitment checks. This increases the total figure to 322 indicating an increase in the total number of contacts to the service.

Referrals by Referring Agency (the agency making the referral)

Table 2: Comparison Referrals by Referring Agency April 2012 – March 2016

	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	Total
Early Years	6	4	4	5	19
Education	25	17	20	14	76
Fostering	12	13	1	12	38
Health	0	1	0	2	3
Leisure LA	0	1	1	2	4
Ofsted	4	2	3	2	11
Police	5	5	6	4	20
Residential	4	11	3	8	26
Social Care	18	7	5	17	47
Transport	3	1	1	3	8
Vol Organisations	1	1	2	3	7
Total	78	63	46	72	259

- Most referrals were received from Children's Social Care (24%), Education Settings (21%) and Fostering Agencies (17%).
- There has been a decrease in referrals from schools who made the most referrals in the previous 4 years. However, this may well reflect that school's increased understanding of LADO thresholds as there has been a 13% decrease in the referrals from schools where threshold for LADO involvement was not met. This reflects the work undertaken by the LADO and SCIES with schools. To ensure that this trend continues there will be targeted training/awareness sessions during 2016/17 with Cheshire East Head Teachers, including academy and Independent Head Teachers. Further details of how this will be achieved are recorded within the 2016/17 Business Plan (appendix 1).
- The increase in referrals from Children's Social Care (25% increase) is also likely to be partly attributable to raising awareness of the LADO role with CSC Managers.
- 35% of referrals made by CSC relate to their own employees, with the remainder relating to professionals across partner agencies.

Referrals by Employing Agency (the agency where the adult is employed)

Table 3: Comparison Referrals by Employing Agency April 2012 – March 2016

	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2016/2015	Total
Early Years	7	5	4	9	25
Fostering LA	7	10	1	13	31
Fostering Non LA	7	5	0	6	18
Social Care	2	2	1	6	11
Other	1	0	0	0	1
Leisure LA	1	1	1	0	3
Health	0	2	0	3	5
Residential	8	11	3	7	29
Education	32	19	23	18	92
Self Employed	7	4	5	3	19
Transport	3	2	2	5	12
Other	0	0	1	0	1
Vol Organisation	3	2	5	2	12
Total	78	63	46	72	259

- The majority of referrals, 26%, relate to foster carers; 18% of whom were Cheshire East Local Authority Foster Carers. The remainder were those employed by other Local Authorities or Private Fostering agencies whilst being resident in our area.
- Referrals about foster carers have increased significantly in comparison to 2014/15 (24%), however the increase is less pronounced in comparison to the two previous years (17% and 11% respectively) it is therefore likely that 2014/15 was an anomaly.
- 25% of referrals relate to education professionals, with early years professionals accounting for 13% and residential child care workers accounting for 10% of referrals. These four agencies have had the highest amount of referrals in the previous four years. This trend is mirrored in other northwest local authorities and relates directly to these settings having high levels regulated activity with children and young people.
- There has been a 5% increase in referrals relating to transport (taxi drivers, coach drivers and escorts). The need to scrutinise this increase is reflected in the LADO Business Plan (appendix 1) as is the need to strengthen the links between the LADO and Cheshire East Transport Solutions and Licencing.

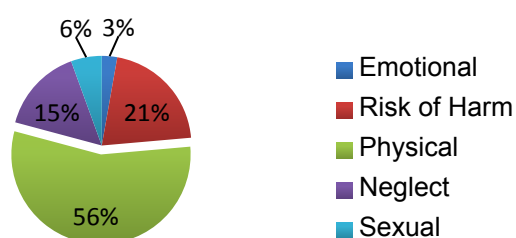
Categories of Harm

Table 4: Comparison Categories April 2012 – March 2016

	2013 / 2012	2014 / 2013	2015 / 2014	2016 / 2015
Emotional	2	4	0	2
Risk of Harm	38	25	11	15
Physical	31	27	22	40
Sexual	7	7	13	4
Neglect	not categorised			11
Monthly Total	78	63	46	72

- Referrals relating to physical harm continue to account for the majority of referrals: 56% in 2015-16 and 48% in the previous year.
- The amount of referrals relating to the more general category 'risk of harm' has remained static at approximately 20%. This category is often used when there is not an allegation about one specific child, but there is significant concern about an adults suitability to work with children.
- There has been a decrease in the referrals relating to sexual harm from 28% of referrals in 2014-15 to 15% in 2015-16. Scrutiny of the data and case records does not provide any apparent themes or explanations for this reduction.

Referrals by Category of Harm April 2015-
March 2016



Outcomes

The LADO needs to be informed of outcomes of any investigations undertaken under the LSCB Managing Allegations against Staff or Volunteers Working with Children Protocol and the following national categories and definitions are used.

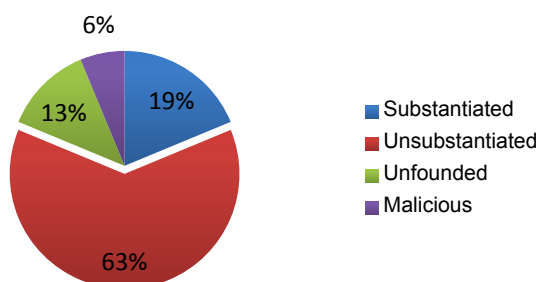
1. **Substantiated:** there is sufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation;
2. **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation;

3. **Malicious:** there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false;
4. **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
5. **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.

NB. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015 has removed the definition 'unfounded'. The North West LADO forum has made a decision to keep this definition

- The majority of allegations, 62%, were unsubstantiated with 19% being substantiated. This contrasts sharply with the previous year when 52% of allegations were substantiated. However, internal audit by the Safeguarding Manager has provided assurance that current practice is consistent and robust. A peer review will be undertaken early in 2017 to offer independent scrutiny.
- In addition, shared data from the North West Regional LADO Group confirms 5 out of the 9 reporting authorities recorded unsubstantiated as the most common outcome.

Outcome of Investigation: Closed Cases April 2015-March 2016

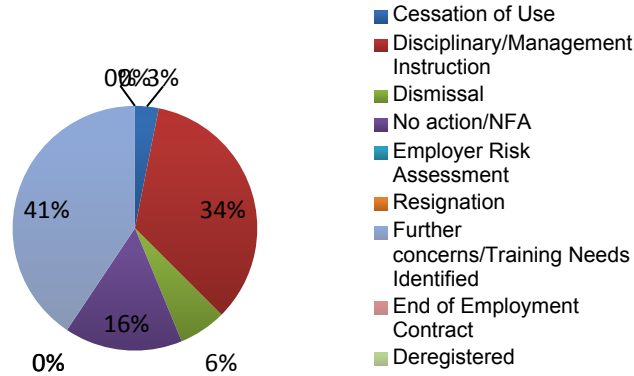


Employer Action Following Investigation on Cases Closed April 2015-March 2016

- There were a high proportion of disciplinary procedures/management instructions and identification of further training needs, 69% combined; this correlates with the high proportion of unsubstantiated cases. It is likely that investigations have concluded that there is not enough evidence to substantiate allegations that a child was wilfully harmed, but there was an

element of misconduct in the employee's actions which can be addressed via training.

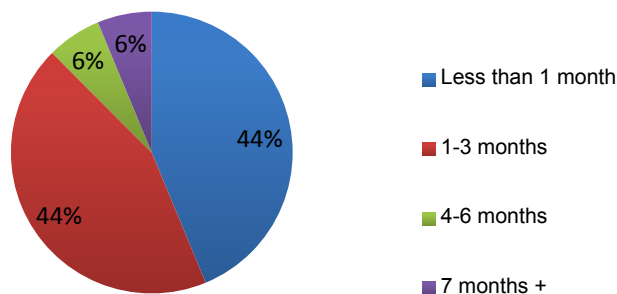
**Employer Action following Investigation of Cases
Closed April 2015-March 2016**



Time from Referral to Completion April 2015-March 2016

- The LADO has continued to ensure that allegations are managed in a timely way and between 2015-16 88% of referrals were concluded within 3 months; a slight improvement on the previous year's 82%.
- Those cases that extend beyond 6 months are most frequently cases where there is a complex or lengthy police investigation, when there has been, for example, an historical allegation of sexual abuse.
- The LADO completes a 4 weekly review on all open cases to ensure there is no unnecessary delay and drift. When investigations are not completed within agreed timescales and there is no reasonable explanation, the LADO escalates their concerns, seeking resolution with the designated senior manager of the agency causing delay. The LADO also reports unnecessary delays to the agency's regulating body.

Time from Referral to Completion April 2015-March 2016



Service Delivery, Reflection and Improvement

- Staff changes within the LADO service has brought about a natural review in service delivery and reflection on how the service can be improved to deliver best quality practice to children and the children's workforce in Cheshire East.
- Implementation of a simplified, more transparent data recording and collection system has enabled effective, shared working arrangements between two or more people covering the LADO duties and supported greater management oversight.
- 2016/17 will see the launch of the Cheshire East LADO practice standards, setting out shared expectations between LADO and organisations providing services to children in Cheshire East.
- The LADO has developed a joint protocol with Cheshire Police ensuring that disagreements between the respective services can be addressed, escalated and resolved, quickly, fairly and consistently.
- The LADO is in the process of developing a pathway to ensure that children and young people who have been assaulted by a professional can access a child protection medical without the unnecessary involvement of children's social care.
- The LSCB procedure 'Managing Allegations Against Adults Who Work and Volunteer with Children' has been updated and Cheshire East LADO will meet with PAN Cheshire LADOs within the next 6 months to ensure that procedures remain up to date; reflecting current legislation, shared local practice and the development of shared regional and national LADO standards.
- The LADO One Minute Guide has been updated to reflect changes from WTSC 2015 and to include information on the LADO / managing allegations process and is available on the LSCB website.
- The LADO delivers Managing Allegations training twice a year, with the support of the LSCB Training Manager. The training content was updated ahead of the most recent training event in June 2016 and now offers more succinct advice and guidance with increased delegate interaction via group exercises. Feedback has been positive with delegates citing trainer knowledge and experience as key aspects of their learning experience. Delegates also commented on the benefit of being trained by practitioners:

being able to put a face to the name and meet the LADO gave them greater confidence in approaching the LADO for advice.

- Cheshire East LADO continues to attend quarterly North West Regional LADO meetings and participates in joint development initiatives via a shared regional work plan. Current Work Plan activity includes the development of a shared threshold in relation to LADO strategy meetings.
- The North West Regional LADO Group has developed a peer review process which Cheshire East will be undertaking in early 2017.
- Cheshire East LADO attended the National LADO conference in March 2016 and continues to provide feedback on development initiatives which aim to provide a collective LADO voice regarding the development of legislation and statutory guidance regarding the managing of allegations.

Summary

- Development in the LADO service over the past 12 months, and in particular how LADO receives and records contacts, has resulted in positive feedback from partner agencies in the latter part of the 2015/16 with greater accessibility being most cited.
- The improved recording of consultations with LADO, where the threshold for further action has not been met, is ensuring that information regarding individuals who potentially pose a risk of harm is being collated for future reference. This provides greater safeguards for children in Cheshire East.
- Improving relationships and promoting the LADO role with partner agencies will remain a priority in the coming year. Further analysis of the 2015/16 LADO performance and training data is being carried out to identify which agencies would benefit from targeted training, advice and support. This will be reported in more detail in the LADO business plan (appendix 1).
- Analysis to date shows that referrals from voluntary agencies and faith organisations remains low and LADO will therefore prioritise the promotion of the LADO/managing allegations procedures with relevant local agencies and organisations.
- The increase in referrals about foster carers and transport services staff will be addressed via meetings/task and finish exercises with appropriate service managers to ensure that agencies are providing safeguarding and positive behaviour management training to foster carers and adults involved in the transportation of children respectively.

Appendices

Appendix 1: LADO Business Plan 2016/17



LADO Business Plan
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