



ANNUAL
REPORT
2017-2018

Local Authority Designated Officer

Introduction

The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (WTSC 2018) requires local authorities to have a designated 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 employers, 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 LADOs and one dedicated Business Support Officer; they sit within the Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit.

Context

WTSC 2015 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.

Executive Summary

Service Delivery, Reflection and Improvement

Cheshire East Council is introducing the Signs of Safety model across Children's Services. This is a strengths based model which identifies: What is going well so we can build on existing strengths; what areas we are worried about or require more focus; what we need to change and how we will achieve it. The LADO service will begin implementing the model in 2018/19 and the summary report below uses the Signs of Safety headings.

What's going well?

- Implementation of a simplified, more transparent data recording and collection system continues to enable effective working arrangements between two or more people covering the LADO duties and supports greater management oversight.
- The improved recording of consultations, where the threshold for further action has not been met, is ensuring 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.
- The LADO continues to ensure allegations are managed consistently and in a timely manner.
- A LADO One Minute Guide and Cheshire East LADO practice standards are available on request and from the LSCB and Safeguarding Children and Families Assurance Unit websites. This ensures organisations providing a service to children have a quick guide as to when to make a referral to LADO and what to expect when they do.
- The LADO has contributed to a review of education transport arrangements for children in Cheshire East.
- The LADO delivers Managing Allegations training twice a year, with the support of the LSCB Training Manager. The training content is reviewed and updated following each session: Feedback remains 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: meeting the LADO gave them greater confidence in approaching the LADO for advice.
- The LADO Business Support Officer has delivered training to several members of the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Business Support Team to ensure high standards are maintained in her absence.
- The 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 a review of the current data set and development of joint protocols in relation to self employed / unregulated adults working with children.
- The LADO has been in contact with local services that have links to voluntary organisations and is compiling a list of voluntary organisations that provide services to children in Cheshire East.

What are we worried about?

- Referrals from and relating to those in the voluntary and faith sectors remain low. Given that these sectors are likely to provide support to some of our most vulnerable children and families it is imperative that managers in these sectors employ good safeguarding procedures which reference the LSCB's managing allegations procedures and the LADO's role within this.
- Adults who work/volunteer with children, their employers and children and their families need better access to information about the LADO service, in a format they understand.
- The LADO rarely receives feedback from children and adults working/volunteering with children about their experiences within the managing allegations procedures.
- The quality of investigations and investigation reports varies greatly and organisations would benefit from an agreed exemplar.
- Police Investigations, particularly those involving indecent images of children are consistently taking longer than 4 weeks, with interrogation of computer hardware/software and mobile phones currently taking an estimated 9 -12 months. This obviously has a negative impact on the welfare of children and adults directly involved, however the negative impacts can reach far wider:

e.g. A head of department in a secondary school is arrested in relation to child protection concerns and is suspended pending the outcome of police investigations. Financial restrictions prevent the head teacher employing a permanent replacement, resulting in temporary cover of the suspended teacher's lessons/additional duties (possibly 12 months or longer) and a 'knock on' negative impact on pupils GCSE grades and education outcomes.
- The LADO and Safeguarding Child Protection Manager have met with the Detective Inspector for Cheshire Police Public Protection Directorate to raise these concerns. This appears to have had a positive impact on the management of less complex police investigations which are being completed more quickly.
- Criminal investigations which progress to court proceedings are subject to further delay and in some cases this delay is significant.

What Needs to Happen?

Create stronger links between the LADO and voluntary organisations in Cheshire East:

- Reassurance that voluntary organisations are aware of their statutory responsibilities in relation to managing allegations and the LADO's role: The LADO will make contact with voluntary organisations in Cheshire East providing information, advice and support about the LADO role and managing allegations.
- Reassurance that sports clubs are aware of their statutory responsibilities in relation to managing allegations and the LADO role: The LADO will make contact with the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) County Lead, with the aim of working together to provide information, advice and support to sports clubs about the LADO role and managing allegations.

Ensure information about the LADO and the managing allegations process is accessible to all:

- The LADO will produce leaflets that provide information in an understandable format for employers, adults who work/volunteer with children and children and their parents.
- The LADO will work with employers/organisations to ensure that when an allegation is referred to the LADO, the leaflets are provided to the involved adult, child and their parents/carers.

Maintain positive relationships with partner agencies:

- Continue to adhere to the LADO Practice Standards and ensure allegations are managed consistently, fairly and in a timely way.
- Develop an exemplar for employee investigations.
- Develop a process for consulting with employers, organisations, involved adults, children and parents about their experiences within the managing allegations process.

Ensure the LADO's involvement has a positive impact on children's lives:

- Continue to keep children's wellbeing, views, wishes and feelings central to procedures about managing allegations.
- Promote good children's safeguarding procedures and support organisations to implement them where they are not already in place.
- Develop a process to invite children to provide feedback about their experiences within the managing allegations procedures.

Recommendations for the Board

- Low numbers of referrals from the voluntary and faith sectors is a recurring theme. The LADO would therefore welcome reassurance from the board that these sectors are being provided with adequate support to recognise and fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities especially in relation to managing allegations.
- The LADO is concerned that the significant delay in resolving allegations that progress to the court arena is having a substantial negative impact on the emotional well being of those involved. The LADO recommends that the LSCB uses its influence to challenge the judiciary about this.

LADO Performance Data: 2017/2018

Referrals

During 2017/18 there were 231 referrals to the Cheshire East LADO.

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:** Referrals 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 LADO strategy meeting is needed.

Of the 231 Referrals: 66 (28%) were categorised as Consultations; 101 (44%) as No Further Action after Initial Consideration; and 64 (28%) met the threshold for a LADO strategy meeting.

Table 1 Referral Comparisons 2013 - 2018

	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Referrals met LADO threshold	63 (19%)	46 (19%)	72 (22%)	57 (24%)	64(28%)
Not met LADO threshold (Consultations & NFA)	262 (81%)	193 (81%)	250 (78%)	176 (76%)	167(72%)
Total	325	239	322	233	231

- The number of referrals to LADO is largely consistent with last year.
- 28% of referrals met threshold for a strategy meeting, which is a slight increase, but largely consistent with previous years. The LADO role involves providing advice to employers and it is therefore expected that the threshold for a strategy meeting will not be met following every consultation/referral.
- It is encouraging that only 66 (28%) of the total referrals were categorised as consultations: Last year there were 91 (40%) consultations and the reduction this year suggests that agencies and professionals have a better understanding of the LADO role and when to make a referral.
- Referrals not meeting the threshold for a strategy meeting came from all organisations: there are no discernible themes in relation to particular sectors or organisations.
- The details of referrals that don't meet threshold are recorded for future reference. This ensures repeated referrals regarding an employee's/volunteer's concerning behaviour can be considered as potentially more serious and an indicator that they pose a risk of harm to children. This also helps to identify if a specific agency needs more support in understanding thresholds and the role of the LADO.

Referrals by Referring Agency (the agency making the referral)

The data in table 2 relates to the 64 referrals that met the threshold for a LADO Strategy Meeting.

Table 2: Comparison Referrals by Referring Agency April 2013 – March 2018

	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Early Years	4	4	5	4	2
Education	17	20	14	17	23
Fostering	13	1	12	5	11
Health	1	0	2	0	0
Sports Club	1	1	2	0	1
Ofsted	2	3	2	3	1
Police	5	6	4	8	5
Residential	11	3	8	5	7
Social Care	7	5	17	12	5
Transport	1	1	3	1	2
Vol Organisations	1	2	3	1	5
*Other				1	2
Total	63	46	72	57	64

*Other: Child Protection IRO; MARAC

- Most referrals were from professionals working in the Education Sector (36%) which is a consistent trend and linked to the majority of referrals relating to education staff.
- There were a total number of 70 contacts from education professionals of which 23 (33%) met the threshold for a LADO strategy meeting and 26 (39%) required some preliminary investigations by the employer. The amount of referrals categorised as consultations (LADO threshold clearly not met) have reduced from 50% to 28% which suggests that education professionals have an improved understanding of the LADO's role.
- There has been an increase in referrals from foster care agencies which made up 17% of the referrals meeting threshold this year as opposed to 9% last year. 73% of these referrals came from Cheshire East Fostering Service which is a 53% increase from last year.
- 80% of the total contacts made by Cheshire East Fostering met the threshold for a strategy meeting with the remaining 20% requiring some preliminary investigations by the fostering team manager. This indicates an improved understanding by Cheshire East Fostering of the LADO's role.
- Further analysis of referrals about foster carers have not revealed any obvious reasons for the increase in referrals; however in 4 of the 10 cases about foster carers (see table 3 below), foster carers cited a lack of support from their fostering agency and the placing local authority as a contributory factor in the allegation. The agency and local authority agreed with this in 2 of these cases.
- It was identified that in 3 of the 10 referrals relating to foster carers, children had not been well matched to their foster carers. In a further 2, the arrangements for other foster children joining the family had a negative impact on the family dynamics. This was identified as a contributing factor to the allegation and in 3 cases, the disruption of the child's foster placement.

- The referrals from social care which met threshold dropped by 13% in comparison to the previous year, however the number of total contacts from social care has only dropped by 7%. 19% of the total contacts made by social care met the threshold; this has reduced from 31% last year.
- Referrals from Cheshire Police have reduced from last year, however they are consistent with previous years. Although the police might not be the source of referrals, the LADO consulted with them on 93% of the cases where threshold was met for LADO involvement.
- Referrals from and about those working in the voluntary and faith sectors remains low and although there has been an increase in the number of referrals from voluntary organisations these were all from the Scouts Association. LADO's throughout the country have reported similarly low levels from these sectors.
- The LADO has met with the LSCB Voluntary sector representative and made contact with the Youth Fed. (who provide training to the voluntary sector across Cheshire East) and Cheshire East CVS to promote the LADO role. As a result, CVS will ensure their safeguarding training and forthcoming conferences include advice about the LADO role and managing allegations. The LADO is hoping to attend and promote the LADO role at 2 conferences with the Youth Fed in the coming year.
- The LADO is assembling a list of voluntary organisations providing services to children in Cheshire East with the aim of providing an information pack about managing allegations and the LADO role.
- There have been 20 referrals in relation to Children with Disabilities, of which 7 (35%) met the threshold for a LADO strategy meeting. All 7 allegations were thoroughly investigated and the child's specific needs were considered throughout the process.
- The LADO is confident, from her conversations with head teachers in specialist schools in Cheshire East, that they are aware of the LADO role and managing allegations procedures. Furthermore two newly appointed head teachers are attending the forthcoming managing allegations training. Referrals to the LADO from this sector have been appropriate.

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

The data in table 3 relates to the 64 referrals, which met the threshold for a LADO Strategy Meeting.

Table 3: Comparison Referrals by Employing Agency April 2013 – March 2018

	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Early Years	5	4	9	9	5
Fostering LA	10	1	13	2	7
Fostering Non LA	5	0	6	4	3
Social Care	2	1	6	2	1
Sports Club	1	1	0	0	2
Health	2	0	3	0	1
Residential	11	3	7	5	10
Education	19	23	18	27	21
Self Employed	4	5	3	1	2
Transport	2	2	5	3	3
*Other	0	1	0	1	3
Vol Organisation	2	5	2	3	6
Total	63	46	72	57	64

*Other: Private Care Agency; Youth Services; Police

- Most referrals relate to adults who work in schools or colleges (32%): broken down into type: primary school 28.5%; secondary school 28.5%; specialist school 38%; independent school 5%.
- Given the number of children who attend school and the significant amount of time they spend in school, it is expected that there will always be more referrals to LADO from this sector.
- 57% of referrals about adults who work in schools or colleges related to allegations of physical harm to pupils. 10% related to sexual harm of pupils and 33% related to adults posing a risk of harm to pupils. All allegations relating to risk of harm were about employees' alleged behaviour in their personal life.
- The amount of referrals about employees in residential settings has doubled since last year, however it should be noted that from the 10 referrals: 4 were about employees in the same setting and related to the same incident.
- The amount of referrals about staff in early years settings has reduced by 50%. The LADO has sought assurance that this is not due to a lack of knowledge about the LADO role. Cheshire East's Early Years Service and the Safeguarding Children in Education Team (SCiES) have confirmed that the LADO role and managing allegations is included in their children's safeguarding training to early years settings.

Categories of Harm

Table 4: Comparison Categories of Harm April 2013 – March 2018

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Emotional	4	0	2	2	5
Risk of Harm	25	11	15	14	18
Physical	27	22	40	33	31
Sexual	7	13	4	8	10
Neglect			1	0	0
Total	63	46	72	57	64

- Referrals relating to physical harm continue to account for the majority of referrals: 48%, however this is lower than the previous two years when approximately 55% of referrals related to physical harm.
- Referrals relating to risk of harm has increased from 20% to 28% of referrals. Almost all referrals in this category, 16 out of 18 (89%), related to the adult's alleged behaviour towards children in their personal life.
- Referrals relating to sexual harm have remained static, however those relating to emotional harm have increased from 4% to 8%.
- No referrals were due to neglect. This is to be expected, as neglect, when caused by an adult working or volunteering with children, is most likely to occur in foster care and residential homes. In such settings the care and outcomes of children is closely monitored, therefore preventing neglect (defined by the LSCB as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs).

Outcomes

The following data and analysis relates to the referrals that were concluded during the reporting period April 2017 – March 2018.

Table 5: Outcomes of closed referrals

	2016/17	2017/18
Substantiated	17	18
Unsubstantiated	17	15
Unfounded	12	18
Malicious	0	0
Total Cases Closed	46	51

- The amount of substantiated allegations have increased this year from 30% - 35% and unfounded allegations from 26% to 35%.
- Unsubstantiated allegations have fallen again this year from 37% - 30%. This can be viewed positively as allegations concluded as substantiated or unfounded provides greater clarity for both the involved children and staff members.

- The increase in unfounded allegations has been reviewed by the LADO. It was concluded that each case was managed appropriately and conclusions were fair to the children and adults involved.

Table 6: Employer Action Following Investigation

Cessation of Use	2
Dismissal	7
No Further Action	6
Resignation	3
Supervision/Risk Assessment/Training Needs	33
Total	51

- The majority of investigations (65%) identified a need for further training/supervision and/or the need for a risk assessment to ensure that the employee's conduct remains appropriate and children are safeguarded from harm. 89% of these cases related to unsubstantiated or unfounded allegations. For the remaining 11%, the LADO, employer and other involved agencies believed any residual risks posed by the employee/volunteer were sufficiently low and manageable for them to remain working with children.
- In four of the five cases where the employee/volunteer resigned, or their work with children ceased, a referral was made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). In the remaining case the employee was a temporary worker whose contract ended and neither they, nor the employer wanted to renew it. It was agreed that the threshold was not met for referral to the DBS and further training and supervision would have been provided had they remained in their role.
- Five of the seven employees/volunteers who were dismissed were referred to the DBS. The remaining two were dismissed for conduct issues not related to children's safeguarding.
- Four of the six allegations where no further action was taken related to unfounded allegations. These cases related to employees in residential settings where the young people making the allegations withdrew the allegations and there was enough information to conclude that the information was unfounded. The fifth allegation related to non recent unsubstantiated allegations where the employee no longer has direct contact with children. No further action was taken in the remaining allegation as the subject of the allegation died.

Table 7: Time from Referral to Completion April 2017-March 2018

Time taken	Total
Less than 1 month	4
1-3 months	33
3-6 months	9
6-12 months	2
12 months +	3
Total Cases	51

- The LADO has continued to ensure that allegations are managed in a timely way: 73% of referrals were concluded within 3 months and 90% within 6 months.
- The two cases taking between 6 and 12 months to conclude required a police investigation where multiple witnesses needed to be interviewed.
- The three cases which took longer than 12 months involved non recent allegations which were subject to police investigations and in one case a significantly delayed court hearing.
- As reported in last years report; the delay around court hearings appears to be linked to judiciary capacity and beyond the involved agencies control. Such delay is reported to have had a substantial negative impact on the emotional well being of both the alleged victims and the alleged perpetrators and their respective families.
- The LADO completes a 4 weekly review on all open cases to ensure there is no unnecessary delay and drift and involved agencies are updated with any new information.

Appendices

Appendix 1: LADO Business Plan 2018/19

[LADO Business Plan 2018 - 19.pdf](#)

Appendix 2: One Minute Guide



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