

LOCAL AREA DESIGNATED OFFICER (LADO) ANNUAL REPORT

April 2019 to March 2020 (2019-2020)

“The designated officer ensures that allegations against those working with children are comprehensively considered. Investigations are thorough and purposeful, and children are effectively protected as a result”.

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1. Executive Summary

This report sets out the key findings from North Somerset's Local Area Designated Officer for Allegations (LADO), and activity using both data analysis and commentary between April 2019 – March 2020.

Referrals to the LADO service in North Somerset have decreased in the last year. In the 2019/2020 reporting year, there were a total of 125 notifications of allegations in North Somerset.

This is broken down to 25 Referrals, where threshold was met and 100 telephone enquiries, where advice was given, or cases were overseen by the LADO, but investigations were undertaken by individual organisations.

In the 2018/2019 reporting year, there were a total of 166 notifications of allegations in North Somerset. This is broken down to 54 referrals, where threshold was met and 112 Enquiries, where advice was given, or cases were overseen by the LADO, but investigations were undertaken by individual organisations. For the period 2019/2020 there was a decrease in referrals but an increase in telephone enquiries on the previous period.

In the 2017/2018 reporting year, there were a total of 113 notifications of allegations in North Somerset. This is broken down to 64 referrals, where threshold was met and 49 enquiries, where advice was given.

Categories	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020
LADO Referrals	64	54	25
Telephone Enquiries	49	112	100
Totals	113	166	125

Following the first peer audit in the 2018/2019 reporting period undertaken by the Bristol LADO, significant changes have been made in the recording of cases on receipt of the initial enquiry.

The profile of the role has also been heightened by the LADO visiting early help and social work teams and agencies within North Somerset, including the police, probation service, designated leads for early years and education. The visits included a presentation on the role of the LADO and the referral process, discussion around anonymised cases and a Q & A session at the end.

There has been continuous promotion of the managing allegations procedures across North Somerset to ensure that agencies and organisations are familiar with the local child protection procedures in relation to the reporting of allegations concerning the children's workforce as well as the time frames for reporting which are within one working day.

The LADO process continues to ensure that allegations against those who work or volunteer with children are not seen in isolation and that the welfare needs, and safety of children are prioritised and implemented. Cases are well recorded, including all consultations and discussions. The LADO continues to work closely with multi-agency partners including Education, Health, Early Years, Police, Probation Service, Voluntary Organisations e.g. religious groups and sports clubs

2. Introduction

North Somerset have used the term Designated Officer for Allegations (DOfA) for the past three years, in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015. The term LADO is used nationally and the authors of Keeping Children Safe in Education, have taken the decision to continue to use the title LADO, North Somerset have therefore decided to now adopt the title of LADO.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the management of allegations against the children's workforce within North Somerset over the reporting period 2019/20.

Statutory Guidance

All agencies that provide services for children, provide staff or volunteers to work with, or care for children are required to have a procedure in place for managing and reporting allegations against staff, which meets the requirements of the statutory guidance published by the DfE *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013, 2015, 2018*, *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (DfE)*, and *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 (Part Three)*.

Working Together Guidance:

- outlines the requirement for the LADO to oversee the effectiveness, transparency and record retention of the process, not only in terms of protecting children, but also ensuring that staff who are the subject of an allegation are treated fairly and that the response and subsequent action is consistent, reasonable and proportionate
- provides guidance on how arrangements for allegations are set up locally whilst being explicit that Local Authorities should have designated a particular officer, or team of officers, to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children
- ensures that the designated officer is sufficiently qualified, competent and experienced to be able to fulfil this role effectively and should be a registered qualified social worker.

Section 11 of the Children Act, 2004 requires organisations that employ staff, contractors or volunteers who work with children to have a procedure in place for handling allegations against staff.

The current arrangements in North Somerset are compliant with statutory guidance and with the introduction of Business Support Safeguarding Officers all LADO enquiries are now being received by one team and passed to the LADO, thus, preventing confidential and sensitive information from being shared to other departments within the Council.

3. The role of the LADO

The LADO's key roles are to:

- provide advice/guidance to employers or voluntary organisations within the Local Authority;
- liaise with the police and other agencies, including Ofsted and professional bodies;
- monitor the progress of referrals to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly and consistently as possible with a thorough and fair process;
- provide the oversight of the investigative process through to its conclusion;
- chair LADO strategy meetings and establish an agreed outcome of the LADO investigation;
- facilitate resolutions to any inter-agency issues
- liaise with other local authority LADO's where there are cross-boundary issues
- collect strategic data and maintain a confidential database in relation to allegations
- disseminate learning from LADO enquiries throughout the children's workforce;
- reporting to the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive Meetings on an annual basis

- attend Children’s Social Care and Police Strategy Meetings where there are concerns regarding the children’s workforce.
- ensure Schools, Governors, Early Years setting are clear about allegations against staff and regularly provide briefings to these groups provide briefings to these groups

LADO allegation referrals may also apply to an individual who works with children, but the allegations or concerns arise in his/her private life.

Allegations can also relate to the partner of the person who works with children, whose response or attitude suggest that his/her ability to fulfil their role might be compromised.

Behaviours are considered in the context of the four categories of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.

Behaviours associated with inappropriate relationships or abuse of trust also comes under this remit.

Statutory Guidance places a clear responsibility on organisations to report to the LADO where it is alleged that a person working with children has:

1. Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child;
2. Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child; or
3. Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she would pose a risk of harm to children;
4. Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Referrals do not always result in an allegation meeting, but instead the LADO provides advice and support in relation to disciplinary matters, health and safety measures or identified training needs.

The Childcare Act 2006 prohibits anyone who is disqualified themselves under the regulations, or who lives in the same household as a disqualified person, from working in relevant settings. Relevant settings may include some schools. The LADO has taken responsibility for providing briefings to schools, governors and other settings, including the early years teams, regarding these regulations.

4. Breakdown and Categories of LADO Referrals April 2019 – March 2020

Status of cases



Of the 25 Referrals there were

13 Sexual

4 Neglect

4 Emotional

3 Physical

1 Other – for example a teacher in position of trust using HATE propaganda on their Facebook page and students having access to it.

Outcome of these categories: -

16 Substantiated

4 Unsubstantiated

0 Founded

3 Unfounded

0 Malicious

There isn't an outcome for two cases as these are Police Investigations, unfortunately the Covid 19 pandemic has created a delay as the Police have been redeployed to deal with this crisis.

Agencies reporting allegations

Staff are required to declare if they are living in a household with an individual convicted of certain offences that are not considered spent conviction (Rehabilitation of Offenders act 1974). This being the case, then staff are required to seek a waiver from Ofsted / DfE to continue working in such settings.

The timeliness of a LADO case from open to close was raised by Ofsted during the Inspection in June 2017; following this the LADO spreadsheet has been developed so that this data is available. From the 25 referrals in this reporting year the average days a case was open was 18 days, (inclusive of weekends and Bank Holidays). In the previous period 2018 - 2019 there were 54 referrals and the average days a case was open was 24 days, (inclusive of weekends and Bank Holidays).

The decrease in the length of time the cases are open means that children and staff members aren't waiting as long for an outcome from the allegation.

There are eight cases that went beyond this timescale. All of which were Police investigations where IT equipment and Social Media sites had to be searched, two led to Criminal Prosecution and six led to lengthy Disciplinary Investigations by Organisations that led to Dismissal, Written or Verbal warnings.

Evaluation Forms

Following development, the LADO has sent Evaluation Forms, to 19 out of the 25 professionals who have referred into the LADO Service in the reporting year; 76%. They have all responded and have given the service they received 10 out of 10.

Signs of Safety;

LADO Allegation Meetings follow a Signs of Safety model which helps to identify Safety Planning for children after the initial allegation has been made; it identifies the impact of the allegation on the child where there are identified concerns and where things are working well.

The actions from the Allegation Meeting have been revised to highlight the changes needed, by whom and the date by which they are to be reviewed by the LADO.

A scaling question has been introduced to allow Agencies to identify the risk they assess for the child(ren).

Peer Audit

Annual Peer Audits have been arranged with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in Bristol; this is the only example of this practice currently in the region. The second peer audit was undertaken in February 2020; using a sample of LADO referrals which were tracked from the beginning to the end.

The peer audit model and outcomes were rated good against Ofsted standards, but one area was highlighted as requires improvement in one record where there was a query regarding whether the case met the threshold of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 (KCSIE).

During the Ofsted Inspection of NSCs Local Authority Children's Services in 2020 this case was discussed and the NSCs LADO's judgement was supported by the Ofsted inspector.

However, some learning from the peer audit was identified and as a result the following changes in North Somerset's LADO process have been introduced

1. The LADO recording form has been revised to include the name of the child and parent / carer, the name of the person named in the allegation
The format of the form has also been changed to make it easier to complete the case record and extract information
2. The LADO now also records the rationale and evidence that supports the outcome of an investigation.
3. The LADO now requests formal individual agency reports that are relevant to the investigation including outcomes from disciplinary hearings.

4. South West LADO Regional Group

North Somerset LADO is currently Chair of this regional group and has been since November 2019, the group meet quarterly. North Somerset has hosted the meeting on two occasions. A Senior Ofsted Inspector is also joins the group meetings once a year. The South West Group is developing a number of templates to standardise reporting across the region; this includes a template for the LADO Annual report and a model for other organisations to complete their investigations.

The LADO also represents the South West Regional LADO Group on the National LADO Network.

5. Progress on the 2018-2019; LADO actions plan and subsequent developments

All but one action that was identified in the 2018/19 LADO Annual Report have been achieved and these include: -

- Monthly meetings with the Safeguarding Lead in Education
 - Presented the Role of LADO at the Designated Leads in Education Training
 - Presented the Role of LADO at the Designated Leads Nursery's/Childminders Training
 - Attendance at the Early Years Annual Meeting with Ofsted
 - Meetings with School Transport Colleagues
 - Annual visits to the two North Somerset Residential Units and attendance at their Team Meeting
 - Met with the Ofsted inspector in the latest round of Safeguarding Inspections
 - Collate Quarterly Statistics from the LADO Evaluation Form
 - Attendance on the One Front Door Operational Board Meeting
 - Developed closer working relationships with adult safeguarding colleagues through case discussion, providing advice and jointly working on some cases where children and vulnerable adults feature.
 - Established closer working relationships with the Ofsted Inspectors
 - Elected Chair of the Regional LADO Meetings
- The action that was not completed in this period was a request from the Service Lead for Quality Assurance that a webinar was developed and delivered to all relevant organisations in North Somerset on the role of the LADO; this was later reviewed by the Service Lead and it was agreed that this was delivered by a series of face to face presentations instead.

6. LADO Action Plan for April 2020 – March 2021

The following areas have been identified:

	What Needs to change, or continue?	RAG Rating	What needs to happen?	Outcome	When will this be done by?	Lead Professional
1.i	Continue the development of collaborative working relationships across children's services and		1.i.a. Attendance at Children's Services Team meetings (including One Front Door), YOS, Early Years, Virtual Schools Team Meetings and Community teams to talk about the role of LADO and the Referral process. 1.i.b. attendance at the Scrutiny Panel, Workforce Development Group, Children's Governance Senior Leadership Group.	This will enable coordinated and consistent approach to allegations management for children in North Somerset and support the development of organisational responsibility and cultural changes which facilitate safeguarding.	March 2021	Julie Bishop, LADO
1.ii	LADO Partnership Working		1.ii.a attendance at Police, Independent Fostering Agencies, CAMHS, Probation, Health Visitor, School Nurse and Midwives, Education Safeguarding Leads and Governor's, Voluntary and religious groups to talk about the role of LADO and the Referral Process.		March 2021	Julie Bishop LADO

	What Needs to change, or continue?	RAG Rating	What needs to happen?	Outcome	When will this be done by?	Lead Professional
			<p>1.ii.b The LADO has established links with Ofsted so when they undertake inspections in schools and residential units in North Somerset; the LADO is consulted.</p> <p>1.ii.c The Lead Ofsted Inspector for the region has been invited to attend the SW LADO group meetings for discussions in key work development areas to ensure synergy across the region.</p>		<p>April 2020</p> <p>April 2020</p>	<p>Julie Bishop LADO</p> <p>Julie Bishop LADO (Chair of SW LADO Group)</p>
2.	Maintain the strong working relationship with colleagues from Children's Services and Adult Safeguarding Services		A protocol is to be implemented that manages the transition from childhood to adulthood in the reporting and investigation of allegations.	To ensure that young people continue to receive the support and safeguarding services they need via a joined-up approach with Health, Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA), Domestic Abuse (DA), Police and adult victims	February 2021	Julie Bishop James Wright (Adult Safeguarding manager)
3.	The LADO to liaise with the chair of the Learning and Development Sub-Group of the North Somerset Safeguarding Partnership, (NSSCP) and the School's safeguarding leads to implement a revised training programme to ensure we meet the		The LADO to deliver nationally accredited safe recruitment training which is open to all agencies via Learning and Development Sub-Group of the North Somerset Safeguarding Partnership, (NSSCP)	Employers have the relevant information available to them so they can be confident in reporting and managing allegations against their staff.	December 2020	Julie Bishop

	What Needs to change, or continue?	RAG Rating	What needs to happen?	Outcome	When will this be done by?	Lead Professional
	requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 (KCSIE 2020)					
4.	Implement the South West Child Protection Procedures (SWCPP) where they relate to the LADO service in North Somerset		TRI.X (procedures for all staff) has been reviewed and a new set of South West LADO Procedures are to be written and introduced into North Somerset LADO Policy and Procedures and updated on the NSSCP Website.	The South West LADO's will be following the same set of procedures which will enable consistency in managing allegations.	January 2021	Julie Bishop LADO
5.	The LADO Service to be included in North Somerset Children's Services revised Quality Assurance (QA) Framework.		Revision of North Somerset's QA Framework	Implementation of revised Quality Assurance (QA) Framework.	On-going	Julie Bishop LADO
6.	The External Peer Audit arrangements will continue		Peer Audit programme to be scheduled for the next reporting period with the Bristol LADO using the audit tool that has been developed and tested.	12 cases audited per year which have measured quality, case recording. This will ensure the views and experiences of agencies representatives and young people	December 2020	Julie Bishop Nicola Laird LADO Bristol City Council
7.	To undertake any practice and system changes to reflect any revised Government regulation and guidance, in particular		If required implement changes in practice.	To ensure compliance with revised standards and regulations.	March 2021 and ongoing	Julie Bishop

	What Needs to change, or continue?	RAG Rating	What needs to happen?	Outcome	When will this be done by?	Lead Professional
	Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 and Working Together 2018					
8.	Review complex cases from a published Rapid Review that are linked to LADO		Findings shared with the SW LADO group	This will enable learning from such reviews to be shared.	March 2021 ongoing	Julie Bishop LADO
9.	To build resilience within the role of LADO in the Independent Safeguarding Review Officer (ISRO) Service.		To introduce a LADO duty system with the ISRO's. Training the ISRO's on the role of the LADO and the existing recording system.	This will build resilience within a small Local Authority in the LADO role and support the Council's designated LADO	November 2020	Julie Bishop LADO
10.	Revise the approach for the Quality Assurance of the LADO function in North Somerset		LADO to ensure quarterly reviews are undertaken and reported	To verify the quality and standard of completed investigations which in turn will ensure the safeguarding needs of children have been met	March 2021 ongoing	Julie Bishop LADO

7. Service structure and staffing, including administrative support

- The LADO is an experienced social worker, registered with Social Work England and fully meet the requirements of the revisions to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.
- The LADO role sits within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service.
- The LADO is managed by the Service Leader of the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service within the People and Communities Directorate.
- Having a designated LADO provides consistency and the opportunity to develop good working relationships with partner agencies.
- The Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Officers provides cover for the LADO function on a rota system.

The LADO has access to a Business Support Officer whose role includes

- Maintaining an up to date database and file system by recording all LADO contact, including consultations and referrals;
- Arranging LADO meetings and reviews
- Maintaining contact with partner agencies when necessary;
- Taking accurate minutes of LADO meetings and distributing these securely;
- Maintaining, collating and updating the LADO case spreadsheet

8. Supervision and Training

The LADO has undertaken a range of training during this recording period, including:

- Signs of Safety, Eileen Munroe;
- Neglect conference
- Chair of the South West LADO Regional Meeting
- Attendance at the National LADO Annual Conference;
- The LADO attended several training courses throughout the year