



# **LOCAL AREA DESIGNATED OFFICER (LADO) ANNUAL REPORT**

## **April 2022 to March 2023 (2022-2023)**

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## Contents

1. Executive Summary	Page 3
2. Introduction	Page 4
3. The role of the LADO	Page 5
4. Breakdown and categories of LADO Referrals April 2022 – March 2023	Page 7
5. Progress against the 2021-2022; LADO Action Plan and developments	Page 9
6.. North Somerset LADO Action Plan April 2023 - March 2024	Page 10
7. Service Structure and Staffing, including Business Support	Page 13
8. Supervision and Training	Page 13

## 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 2022 – March 2023.

Referrals and notifications to the LADO service in North Somerset have increased in the past year. In the 2022/2023 reporting year, there were a total of 137 notifications of allegations in North Somerset. A 29% increase on the previous year. A similar trend has been reported by LADOs at the South West LADO Meeting and the National LADO Network Group.

These 137 notifications are broken down to 34 Referrals, where 'threshold' was met and 103 telephone enquiries, where advice was given, or cases were overseen by the LADO, but investigations were undertaken by individual organisations.

Categories	2020 / 2021	2021 / 2022	2022/2023
LADO Referrals	22	37	34
Telephone Enquiries	28	61	103
Totals	50	98	137

Raising the profile of the LADO role across the partnership has increased in the reporting year. The LADO undertook a series of three virtual presentations on the role of the LADO to the early years designated safeguarding leads, and the designated safeguarding leads in Education. The presentation included the role of 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 Children Services teams to ensure that colleagues 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

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 2022/2023.

### *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 is supported by Business Support Safeguarding Officers; all LADO enquiries are 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:

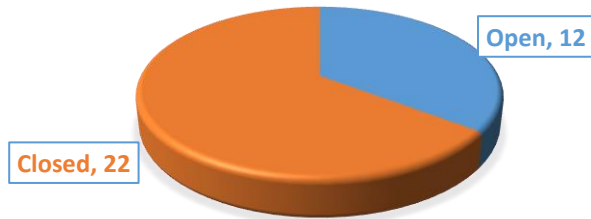
1. Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child;
2. Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child; or
3. Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she would pose a risk of harm to children.
4. Behaved or may have behaved in a way that 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 2022 – March 2023

##### Status of cases



Eleven of the open referrals are allegations of a sexual nature with lengthy Police Investigations and one involving a childminder which we are awaiting the outcome following the Ofsted inspection.

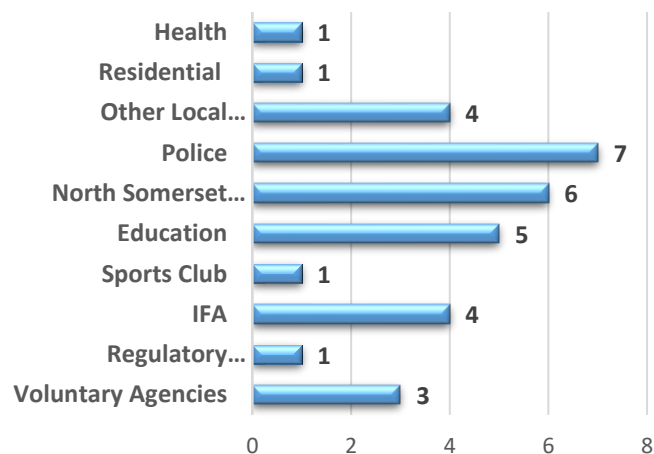
Of the 34 Referrals there were

- 11 Sexual
- 5 Neglect
- 1 Emotional
- 13 Physical
- 4 Other – for example a person in a position of trust downloading indecent images online

Outcome of these categories: -

- 10 Substantiated
- 9 Unsubstantiated
- 0 Founded
- 3 Unfounded
- 0 Malicious

## 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.

From the 34 referrals in this reporting year the average days a case was open was 17 days, (inclusive of weekends and Bank Holidays). It is important to note in this reporting period one case was open for six months, this is a lengthy Police investigation and remains ongoing. In the previous period 2021 - 2022 there were 37 referrals and the average days a case was open was 23 days, (inclusive of weekends and Bank Holidays).

There are 11 cases that went beyond this timescale. These are Police investigations where IT equipment and Social Media sites had to be searched, eight led to lengthy Disciplinary Investigations by Organisations that led to Dismissal, Written or Verbal warnings.



## **Signs of Safety**

LADO Allegation Meetings follow a Signs of Safety strengths-based practice 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 and what needs to happen/change.

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

## **LADO rota**

A LADO rota was introduced in January 2023 and is covered by the Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Officers. This brings an extra layer of resilience to the role as well as providing LADO cover during sickness and annual leave. There are plans in place for April/May 2023 to quality assure the impact of these changes, ensuring if the quality or consistency of the work has been affected we are agile in responding to this.

## **Peer Audit**

Previously Annual Peer Audits have been arranged with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in Bristol.

The South West LADO Group has introduced a Peer Audit involving every Local Authority across the South West. Peer auditing will be carried out through a face-to-face visit to the office to enable the auditor to access the LADO folder on the computer. North Somerset and Bristol will be undertaken this in May, this will also contribute towards reviewing the new LADO arrangements.

## **South West LADO Regional Group**

North Somerset LADO was Chair of this regional group until March 2022, the group meet monthly, and meetings take place virtually. 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. Other developments in this reporting year have included the introduction of the LADO Tri-X regional procedures and a peer auditing programme which includes a moderation group.

In March 2022, the LADO took up Vice Chair of the National LADO network and Chair of the National LADO Training Group.

## 5. Progress on the 2021 / 2022; LADO actions plan and subsequent developments

- Worked with adult safeguarding colleagues through case discussion, providing advice and jointly working on some cases where children and vulnerable adult's feature
- Continued as Chair of the Regional LADO Meetings, which have met monthly through the Covid 19 Pandemic and more recently elected as the Vice Chair of the National LADO Network and Chair of the National LADO Training Group
- The Tri-X children's services procedures have been implemented across North Somerset and the Southwest Region which includes the LADO function. This enables Practitioners to have an understanding of the referral process and the threshold for LADO intervention
- Cover arrangements are in place when the LADO is annual leave or off due to ill health to ensure consistency of practice and manage capacity. This ensures there is LADO availability and enquiries are dealt with in a timely way
- Attendance at the National Regional LADO meetings monthly and cascade practice and information across the South West region. The National LADO network draws up Practice Standards, works with Ofsted and Data Barring Service at a National level to ensure consistency for practice and links throughout the regions
- The LADO led on organising the National LADO Conference.

## 6. LADO Action Plan for April 2023 – March 2024

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 LADO		1.i.a. Attend Children's Services Team meetings annually including Front Door, Family Wellbeing (Early Help), YOS, Virtual Schools Team Meetings and Community teams to talk about the role of LADO and the Referral process.	This enables 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.	October 2023	Named LADO
1.	LADO Partnership Working		1.a. Attend the Scrutiny Panel, Children's Services Leadership Team.		May 2023	Named LADO
			1.b. Attend meetings with the 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 2024	Named LADO
			1.c. The LADO will continue links with Ofsted so when they undertake inspections in schools		March 2024	Named LADO

	What Needs to change, or continue?	RAG Rating	What needs to happen?	Outcome	When will this be done by?	Lead Professional
			and residential units in North Somerset; the LADO is consulted.			
2.	Maintain the strong working relationship with colleagues from Children's Services and Adult Safeguarding Services		This is to ensure a smooth transition for a referral to be made into PIPOT		March 2024	Named LADO and 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 requirements of <a href="#">Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020</a> (KCSIE 2020)		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 2023	Named LADO
4.	The LADO Service arrangements to be reviewed focussing on consistency and quality		Internal peer audit	Ongoing implementation of revised LADO arrangements	May 2023	Head of QA & Safeguarding  Named LADO
5.	The External Peer Audit arrangements will continue		Peer Audit programme has been extended across the SW Region to include peer audits for all LADOs including a moderation programme	Each LADO will audit 6 cases twice a year and a summary report with key findings and strengths and learning identified	May 2023	Named LADO
6.	To implement Managing Allegations workspace onto LCS		This will provide a secure system and consistency of dat recording.	To ensure compliance with revised standards and regulations.	June 2023	Head of QA & Safeguarding#  Named LADO

	What Needs to change, or continue?	RAG Rating	What needs to happen?	Outcome	When will this be done by?	Lead Professional
7.	Review complex cases from a published Rapid Review that are linked to LADO and revise the approach for assurance of the LADO function		Findings shared with the SW LADO group	This will enable learning from such reviews to be shared.	March 2024	Named LADO
8.	Develop and deliver a programme of training for the designated leads in Early Help on the role of the LADO that will form part of their Continual Professional Development (CPD).		Develop and deliver a programme	Ensure all attendees will have a comprehensive understanding of the role of the LADO from referral to outcome.	November 2023	Named LADO
9.	Implement and pilot allegations against foster carers policy		Workshop with Corporate Parenting and LADO's, update policy and pilot	All allegations made against a foster carer will be shared with LADO to	June 2023	Named LADO HoS Corporate Parenting
10.	LADO to challenge weaker practice across Organisations in North Somerset.		Team Development on; What a Good Investigation Looks Like?	To raise the standards of managing Allegations across North Somerset.	March 2024	Named LADO HoS Quality Assurance

## 7. Service structure and staffing, including administrative support

- The LADO is an experienced social worker, registered with Social Work England and fully meets the requirements of the revisions to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.
- The LADO role sits within the Children's Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service.
- The LADO is managed by the Head of Quality Assurance & Safeguarding within the Children's Services Directorate.
- Having a designated LADO provides consistency and the opportunity to develop good working relationships with partner agencies.
- The Independent Safeguarding Reviewing Officers supported by the Head of Service provide cover for the LADO function when the Designated LADO is on annual leave, training etc.

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:

- Vice Chair of the National LADO Network, Chair of the National LADO Training Group and Chair of the South West LADO Regional Meeting
- Attendance at the National LADO Annual Conference.