

Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report

April 2021 – March 2022

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1.Summary

As we have come out of lockdown and considering the implications on staff and services due to Covid, with wider community services and activities resuming, the LADO service remains a busy service. Overall, there has been an increase of 32% in contacts from the last year (2020 / 21). This may be in part to do with Covid and the lockdowns, but figures continue to increase year on year, which is positive in demonstrating the increased awareness and use of the LADO service. During the last year community activities remained limited until May 2021 and all Covid restrictions not removed until July 2021, but this restraint on schools, clubs and activities who are running back to normal have not impacted on reducing our figures. To meet this increased need and address the short fallings in being able to fully develop this service, as of May 2021 second permanent LADO has been employed.

Both LADO'S are designated to the LADO Service but do also support with additional tasks such as secure reviews and file audits. This has led to an opportunity to develop the service, offering wider scope of support and advice to employers and local services providing regulated activities for children in our community. As a consequence of this additional staffing, we have been able to raise our profile, meeting and speaking to social care teams in the Local Authority, schools, and childcare providers. In addition to developing the role more strategically, linking formally with agreements of working practice between services, such as HR and adult services, fostering.

As with all services LADO is being affected by the growth of Milton Keynes, an annual increase of approximately 1,766 new dwellings, which in turn brings with it new schools, with 4 new schools over the next few years. Increased dwellings and schools within new estates being built, this brings new community centres and family and community activities, some which will be providing children's activities. Raising our profile and contact through local organisations such as The Football Association, British Gymnastics and Badminton, and links with local care providers, assists with raising the profile so agencies know who we are and what we do.

A further significant provision effecting the LADO Service is Oakhill Secure Training Centre in our locality, run by the company G4S. There are close ties to this provision, and we work closely to support the Safeguarding Team in the centre in addressing any staff and practice issues and allegations that pose a risk to children in their care. This year the inspectorates have issued an [Urgent Notification](#) to the Secretary of State for Justice, to look to address the concerns in the centre. We have worked hard alongside our Police colleagues and other agencies to ensure safeguarding is raised in a timely manner and the children remain safe in the centre.

It is positive that the LADO service is developing into a more robust service and becoming a consistent point of contact for employers for generic advice as well as more serious concerns. Forging working in a multi-agency way drawing on key agencies when there are allegations made, is also assisting in our credibility and clear joint working for safeguarding children.

2. The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer

The role of the LADO was best defined in the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguarding Children (HM Govt) in 2010 and is referenced in subsequent revisions. All Local Authorities should have designated officer(s) new appointments should be Social Worker qualified as of 2018. The MK Together (Safeguarding Board arrangement for Milton Keynes, of which the Local Authority is a key statutory partner) displays LADO guidance in the multi-agency safeguarding procedures chapter on Managing Allegations against Staff, Carers and Volunteers. Local multi-agency practice guidance Managing Allegations and Concerns about Adults who work with Children: practice guidance for cases involving the LADO can be found on the MKSCB website.

The LADO must be contacted without delay and within one day in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that 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; or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

There may be up to three strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- a police investigation of a possible criminal offence;
- enquiries and assessment by Children's Social Care about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services; and
- consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in respect of the individual.

The LADO is responsible for:

- Providing advice, information and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations around allegations and concerns regarding paid and unpaid workers.
- Managing and overseeing individual cases from all partner agencies, chairing managing allegation meetings.
- Ensuring the child's voice is heard and that they are safeguarded.
- Ensuring there is a consistent, fair and thorough process for all adults working with children and young people against whom an allegation is made.
- Monitoring the progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with fairly, robustly and as quickly as possible.
- Recommending a referral to Children's Social Care and attending any subsequent Sec 47 strategy meeting in cases where the allegation requires investigation by police and/or social care.

- Provide training, leaflets and information to the wider workforce to be confident that agencies are working efficiently in reporting allegations and managing the immediate concern to ensure the safety of children, as well as considering their duty of care to their employee.

3. Progress this year

The most significant progress that has impacted on the ability to provide and develop the LADO service is the recruitment and appointment of a second full time permanent LADO. The team now consists of 2 full-time LADOs and a full-time Customer Liaison Officer.

With this additional capacity we have developed this year:

- A rotating duty system to divide work between the 2 LADO's
- Leaflets for employers, employees and general LADO advice
- Ratification of the process for managing complaints and LADO decision challenges
- Strengthening the policy for working with MKC Fostering services regarding managing allegations
- Supported partnership working and working agreements between LADO and adult safeguarding including people in a position of trust (PiPot)
- Improving effective working practices between LADO and MKC Human Resources, with regular meetings.
- Providing bespoke training for Foster Carers around managing Allegations.
- Forging closer working with the MKC Professional Development Centre (PDC) to facilitate briefings for new staff to the Local Authority regarding Allegations and using the PDC network to target a wider audience for Managing Allegations training for agencies in the community as part of the community children's work force.
- Updating the Tri X, LADO and MK Together websites with information about the LADO service.
- Preparation so all records are ready for the electronic move over to Cloud and the updated recording systems for the LA.
- Setting up regular meetings with school improvement partners, to discuss issues of safeguarding in our schools, and regular meetings with Human Resources.
- Looking at how we work with the Oakhill STC Safeguarding Team and the Youth Custody Service, meeting more regularly to discuss current themes and review cases.
- Setting up regular meetings with Thames Valley Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit to review and get updates on outstanding Police investigations.
- Set up a training data base to track agencies we have provided training to and help identify key areas that would benefit from this.

4. What people say

We have been sending all agencies that have contacted the LADO service a survey monkey survey to gain feedback on the service provided. These are some of the comments received:



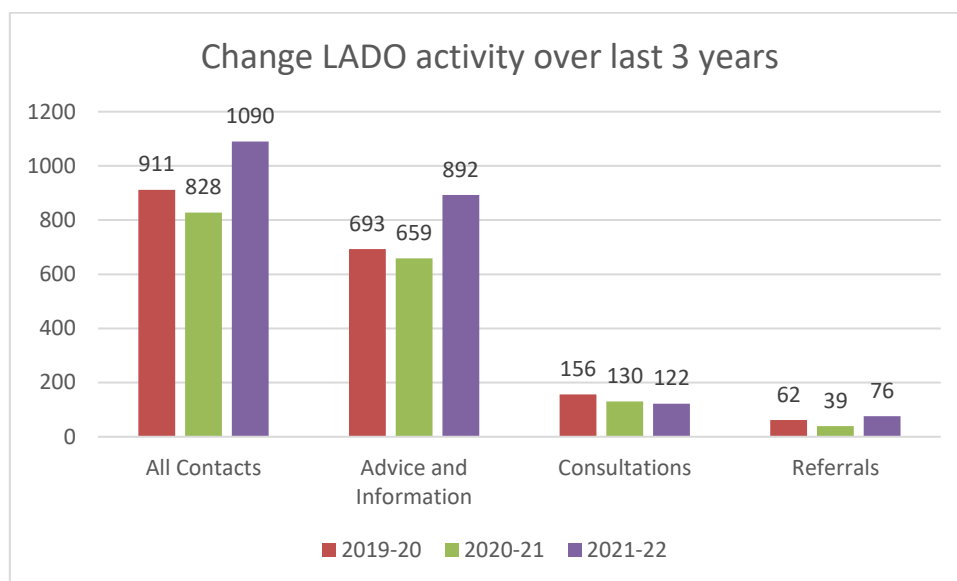
5. Activity data

Comparing last year's figures with this year:

There has been an increase of 32% from last year on all contacts received. There appears little impact of national lockdowns due to covid, the LADO services has been consistently contacted to discuss concerns and increasingly using our duty service to test out incidents to see if it meets threshold and get secondary advice in regards actions they are taking internally. As a consequence, there has been an increase in advice and information given by 35%. Many agencies have limited access to human resources advice, and this becomes more complex when linked to safeguarding. It is important the LADO is able to provide timely and consistent responses, drawing on their knowledge and contacts for advice and supporting queries.

There is a decrease in Consultations by 6%, on reflection this may well be due to a general consensus of the benefits of multi-agency working and being able to discuss cases in a Managing Allegation Meeting rather than in isolation. Which re-inforces good practice that the concerns are fully explored, tested and there is scrutiny of the allegation.

Through this methodology of practice there has been an increase of referrals that led to Managing Allegations Meeting by 95% from last year. Due to some meetings requiring a review meeting there was a total of 91 meets held which is an increase of 112% on last year



6. Advice and information

This is contact with the LADO which, after consideration, is deemed not to meet the definition of an allegation (as above) or there is not enough information to determine the alleged perpetrator or an allegation. **This year 892 contacts were received for Advice and information. This is an increase of 35% on advice contacts from last year.** As the service is developing and the role of the LADO being embedded into safeguarding practice across agencies, it is positive to see agencies increasingly approach us for advice and information and test out allegations and staff concerns they have with the LADO service.

Examples could include the following although this is not an exhaustive list:

- the subject of the allegation/concern cannot be considered to be 'a person who works with children'
- there is no identifiable safeguarding children concern
- where the worker concerned cannot be identified, despite further enquiries

- the allegation/concern is more appropriately described as a practice issue and should be dealt with by the employer

In these situations, the LADO will only record that the contact has taken place, the name of the professional and agency making the contact and brief details of the circumstances including the name of the child and adult involved, if available. However, this is a vital service for all the agencies in the childcare workforce and ensures employers are advised of best practice and remain alert to concerns. This also demonstrates how agencies address lower-level concerns and provides external evidence of the matter should it be required at a future date. It has been shown time and time again that the LADO service hold more robust records of concerns about position of trust workers than do many employers. This frequently leads to liaison with such agencies as Ofsted and Police to verify information and clarify relevant agencies have been informed in a timely manner.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Advice and information	693	659	892

7. Allegations resulting in consultations

Consultations have met the safeguarding threshold but do not require a multi-agency Managing Allegations Meeting but will require an employer investigating into the safeguarding concern and an agreed safeguarding outcome.

A total of 122 contacts met the threshold for LADO involvement and oversight in the form of consultation. This is a decrease of 6% on last year. It is likely that this is because we are taking more cases to Managing Allegations Meetings and referral stages, due to more serious issues being presented and complex wider issues. This supports us in challenging organisational issues as well as the direct allegation. It is also reflective of increased multi agency working, bringing other relevant agencies round the table to discuss the concerns such as Social Workers and Ofsted etc.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Consultations	156	130	122

8. Allegations resulting in referrals

In these referrals the information clearly meets the definition of an allegation / serious concern under the Managing Allegations procedures and requires active management by the LADO and other agencies, as appropriate. **A total of 76 Referrals met this threshold, resulting in 91 Managing Allegations Meetings as some cases required multiple meetings. This is an increase of 112% on meetings held last year and is an increase of this level of referral by 95% on last year.** We consider this reflects how serious employers are taking safeguarding concerns and the conduct of employees. Also, the recognition of the need to involve the LADO is increasing.

The police are a significant contributor to such meetings, MK LADO gains from the benefit of 2 designated Detective Sergeant's based in the Child Abuse Investigation Unit, that work with the LADO when allegations are first referred to us and in attending these meetings. Their sound and detailed advice really supports the LADO work.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Referrals	62	39	76

9. Allegations according to agency

The table below highlights the sources of concern in respect of where workers are based and provides a three-year comparison of when the threshold has been reached (Referral/Consultation). The figures in 2020- 21 demonstrate the provisions that may have had less allegations due to the restrictions on working arrangements due to Government Covid legislation and advice.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Care provider	2	10	15
Child minder	8	1	2
CSC/YOT	2	4	6
Faith Groups	2	0	0
Foster Carers	24	24	18
Health	12	7	2
Higher education	1	0	1
Other	4	1	2
Nursery/early years	17	9	11
Residential	19	32	13
School - other	2	9	15
School - Primary	39	27	22
School - Secondary	17	11	18
Secure Estates	46	25	56
Sports/Leisure	3	5	5
Transport	7	2	6
Youth Organisation	2	4	0

We are seeing an increase in allegations about care providers, this is agencies providing care in the community, primarily to our children with disabilities, within their own homes. There is high demand for such services, and as part of the allegations processes, we have worked with providers to look at safer recruitment process, induction, and training for staff. In addition, specific guidance for staff working waking nights. Increasingly parents are using Web Cams to monitor their children and care provided, it is through this we are being alerted to an increase in staff sleeping whilst on waking nights.

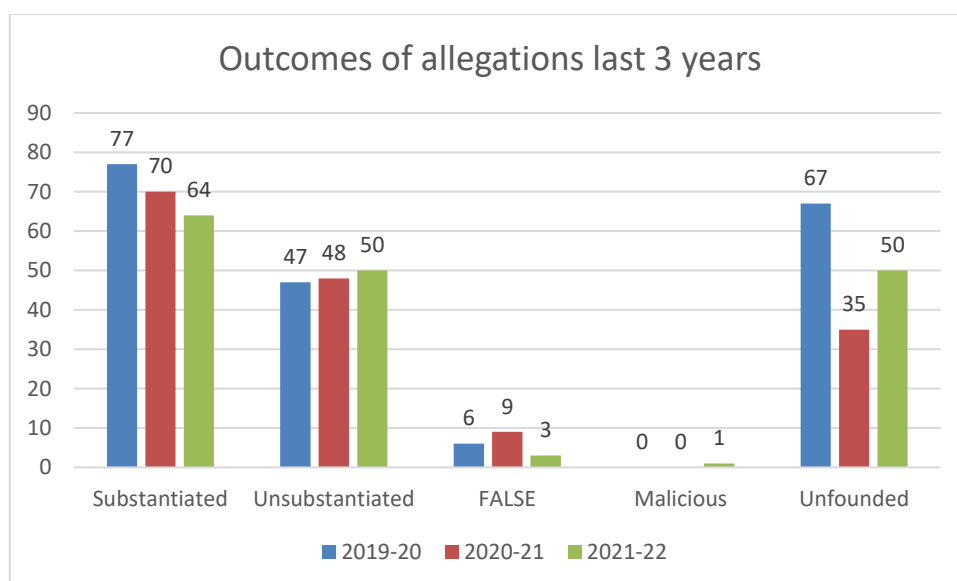
A lot of joint work has been conducted with the MKC fostering team, to address good practice and safeguarding, including delivering training about allegations specifically for foster carers, the impact of this can be seen with the allegation's figures reducing.

It is noticeable the decrease in referrals from our residential settings. Milton Keynes has a number of private residential homes and unregulated homes for children. I consider the decrease in referrals is linked to last year's exceptional high referral rate when homes were in lockdown due to Covid and residents and staff were not able to access the normal support services, they require.

The biggest increase in allegations is for the secure estate. Again, this is in part indicative of the lower referral rate in 2020 /2021 due to covid lockdowns and for a significant period of time Oakhill STC, altered their normal regime to cope and manage Covid safely for staff and children in the centre. Which in turn reduced the mixing of children and therefore incidents that may have ordinarily occurred. There was an influx of cases referred and reviewed in the early autumn 2021, This was felt to be a specific event, but linked to the UN Notice and additional external scrutiny and reviews required. It is not reflective of the level of allegations since. This high scrutiny of incidents in Oakhill STC remains, which includes a reduction in the numbers of children allowed at Oakhill at any one time. Currently there are no Milton Keynes children in Oakhill STC.

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
All agencies, Consultation & referral	218	169	194
Oakhill Consultation and referrals	45	25	56
% Of LADO work in Oakhill	21%	14%	29%

10. Outcomes of allegations



Currently there are 25 cases with unknown outcomes for 2021-22, this is due to cases that were referred towards the end of March and have still not concluded, or due to ongoing live police investigations still to conclude to determine our outcome.

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.

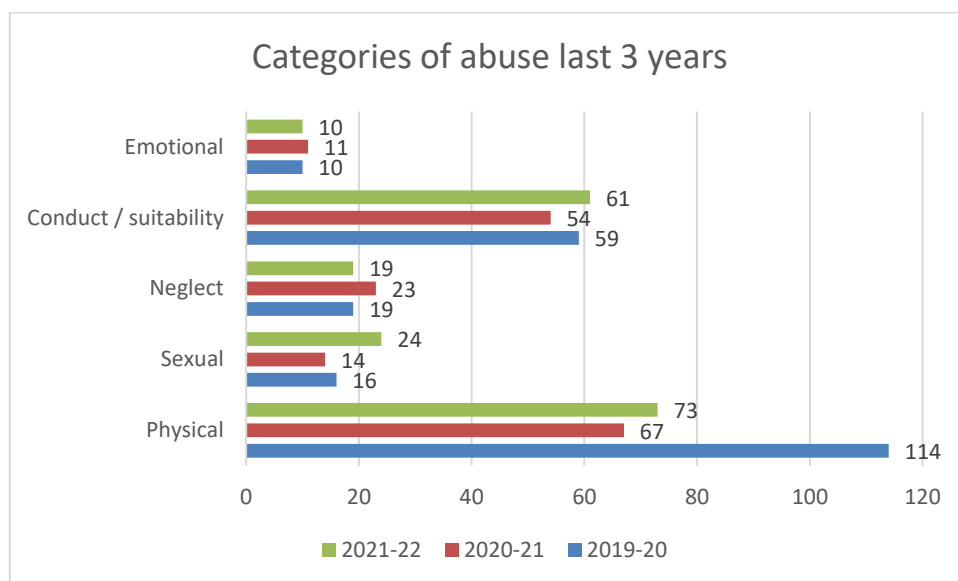
Unfounded:

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.

11. Categories of abuse



Physical harm remains the dominant concern in allegations. We are seeing schools dealing with children with additional needs, where there is a hands-on approach to assist in the children being safe, when they are distressed or presenting with challenging behaviour and staff keeping themselves safe. We consider this is adding to allegations of physical harm. Conduct and suitability also remains high and demonstrates a recognition of service users, parents and professionals challenging poor practice and bringing to our attention repeat low level concerns. With a persistent approach to improve culture and practice this can in turn only improve the care provided for children in our community. With sexual harm, we are seeing historical cases being referred, with

older children and adults disclosing abuse in their past. So, this figure is not indicative of current levels of sexual harm in the community, that comes under the LADO remit.

12. Training and awareness raising

This last year we have built on the interagency training provision, to provide a greater knowledge of the LADO Service and better practice for preventing and managing allegations:

We have spoken to the following teams with a variety of briefings and full day training, to these teams that are part of the children workforce in Milton Keynes:

- MKC Family support, children in care, 16-25 teams
- MKC Children with Disability Team
- MKC Children and Family Practices
- MKC Youth Offending Team
- MKC Youth Services
- MASH
- MK Hospital Safeguarding Team
- Supplementary schools
- Supported lodgings
- New Head teachers and foundation schools
- MKC Foster carers & Fostering Team
- MKC residential units
- Oakhill STC

13. Scrutiny and reporting

Although the LADO services is sited within the wider Safeguarding Team, direct leadership is now provided by the Head of Safeguarding and Quality. This enables the services to link in more strategically with key departments within the Local Authority, assisting in developing the role of the LADO and an understanding of safeguarding in this context. Including, adults Safeguarding, Education, Human Resources, MK Together as well, as specific social care teams within the Local Authority.

Milton Keynes Children Social Care was inspected by Ofsted during 25 October to 5 November 2021. As part of this process the LADO service was also reviewed and met with one of the inspectors, demonstrating the record keeping, processes and decision making as part of the service provision. It was reported that *“Allegations of abuse, mistreatment or poor practice by professionals and carers are managed and monitored efficiently and effectively”*. There were no direct actions required of the LADO Service following this inspection.

Both LADO'S attend quarterly regional LADO network meetings to share information, policy and practice developments. The LADO also attends a regional quarterly Southeast Safeguarding Network Group, where guest speaker's present information and legislation, policy and best practice is discussed. One of the LADO's is a representative for this region at the National LADO Network to consider LADO practice issues, develop national guidelines, liaise with relevant bodies, e.g. DoF, DBS, NSPCC etc, and consider future developments and status of the LADO role and services.

As part of linking to wider networks and the work of LADO's we are part of and contribute the review of the updates for the Keeping Children Safe in Education Policy. That was updated in 2021 and is being revised for 2022. This has assisted with considering Low Level Concerns, when building a bigger picture in considering peoples suitability to work with children.

Oakhill Secure Training Centre is situated in Milton Keynes, as part of the scrutiny of this provision, the LADO'S meet monthly with the Youth Justice Service and separately the Oakhill Safeguarding Team. Reviewing cases, and exploring key themes and issues, providing advice and support.

The National Youth Custody Service (YCS) Safeguarding Team continues to organise quarterly meetings chaired by them to include all the LADOs from the Local Authorities that have a secure estate within their area. This is a useful meeting to establish a national oversight of the children's secure estates, LADO practice and also to be briefed by the YCS on the trends, guidance, useful information from the youth justice arena. The LADO service currently has a good working relationship with Oakhill STC and regular communication with the Safeguarding Team and departments within the wider setting. There is also collaborative working and communication between the LADO service and the YCS monitors present at the Training Centre.

We have started to use Survey Monkey to reach out to agencies that have contacted the Service to get their feedback. This helps in understanding whether we are providing the right level of support and advice and if this assists agencies in managing allegations.

One of the key areas for development is internal scrutiny of the work of the LADO and the development of case audits. This will help identify practice learning and any differences of how the 2 LADOs are working.

14. Actions for 2022- 2023

- Quality Assurance with File Audits of LADO cases: creating a Performa to look at processes and decision making. Considering consistency in how the LADO's work and the service provided.
- Continue to work with Oakhill STC, the YCS and MK Together (Local Safeguarding Partnership) to assess the safeguarding issues within the secure estate, ensuring the correct agencies are actively scrutinising and challenging the use of force and care of the children

within the establishment. Continue to raise awareness and offer support to Oakhill STC to ensure the young people are adequately safeguarded within the secure estate.

- Work with the Safeguarding Partnership and Thames Valley Police to ensure information sharing occurs from TVP when the criteria set out in Working Together is met for a serving officer and that there is liaison between Professional Standards and the LADO service. Also, to develop closer working relationships with the DBS department locally to ensure the appropriate exchange of data.
- Developing a LADO Induction Pack that clearly sets out all the aspects of the LADO services and the intricacies of how it works to enable any new or seconded staff to assist with the service.
- With the successful recruitment of a second LADO to assist with the increased workload, build in more resilience to the Customer Liaison Officer role that provides the back support for the service.
- There are key agencies primarily the Teacher Regulation Authority, Social Work England and Disclosure Barring Service, that we link with when there is a substantiated concern regarding an individual. As a service we need to explore how we can work more closely with them in receiving outcomes of cases referred to them.

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[Concern about a person working or volunteering with children | Milton Keynes Council \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](#)