

Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report

April 2022 – March 2023

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1. Summary

The LADO service in Milton Keynes has continued to grow and develop with the employment of an additional full-time LADO in May 2021. This post was created following a 29% increase in contacts made into the LADO service for the period covering 2019/20. There continues to be an increase in contacts into the service – increasing over 60% in the last two financial years and 100% over the last 5 years. Demonstrating the local value and confidence in the service within the wider children’s workforce community. Milton Keynes continues to grow as a city, with new schools, clubs and provisions for children being established. There are many external factors that also may impact on the National LADO increase in work, with high profile cases where working with the LADO service has either been ineffective or lacking, and children have not been adequately safeguarded as a result. Ofsted inspections of Local Authorities have also focused on the role of LADO services within each Local Authority, far more closely than previous years and this appears to be a national picture.

Having two full time LADOs in post has allowed this service to develop further, offering bespoke training to a variety of provisions, reaching out to harder to reach communities and forge links, work more inclusively with departments within MKCC, etc.

Both LADO’S are designated to the LADO Service but do also support with additional tasks such as secure reviews and quality assurance file audits.

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 and Youth Custody Service in the centre in addressing any staff and practice issues and allegations that pose a risk to children in their care.

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. There continues to be service ambitions to develop the service further, to be able to unite more departments within MKCC, work in a more strategic manner to ensure the information held within our team is analysed and shared to improve service within the wider remit of safeguarding for 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. There is a current commitment by the Department of Education provide a more comprehensive definition of the LADO role in the next version of Working Together to Safeguard Children, which the National LADO Network are contributing to.

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. What people say

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



4. Activity data

Comparing last year's figures with this year:

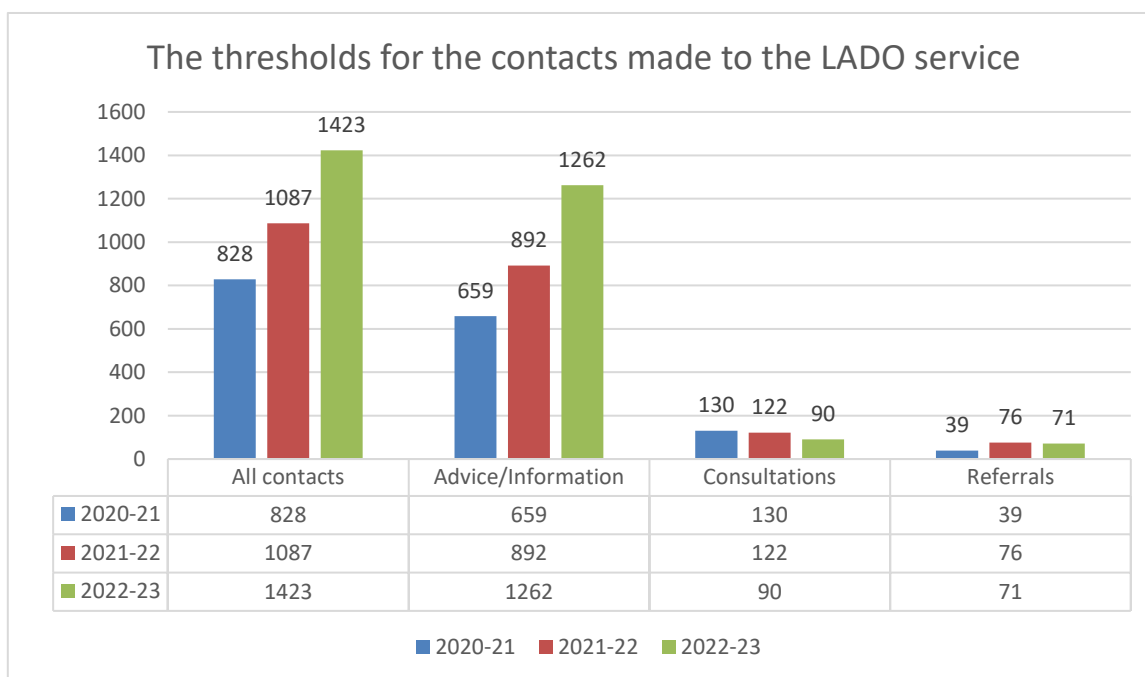
There has been an increase of 31% from last year on all contacts received into the LADO service. Towards the end of the year there was an increase in contacts relating to unregulated placements within the Milton Keynes area. These placements result in complexities and risks that are unprecedented. They are companies that we are not always aware of, housing some of the country's most vulnerable and complex children, often on DOLs and high staff to child ratio. Managing allegations for these provisions is extremely difficult and time consuming, the children are from other Local Authorities who have been unable to secure more appropriate accommodation for the child.

March 2022 was the busiest month for contacts on record, 190 in total – there was a significant increase in advice offered to schools 46% of all the advice offered this month was to schools. This may be because of the public knowledge of the sad loss of Ruth Perry, HT for Caversham Primary School in Reading, following a downgraded Ofsted outcome, due to inadequacies in the school’s safeguarding measures.

Locally schools are increasingly requiring advice and the percentage for these enquiries annually increases ever year:-

- 2020/21 – 19%
- 2021/22 – 28% and
- 2022/23 - 38%

No other sector has had a significant decrease or increase in the percentage of contacts. In Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022, the Farrer and Co Low Level Concerns guidance was included for the first time, and this may have prompted schools to make additional enquiries independently to ensure the safeguarding is robust.



5. Advice and information

Information and advice have been separated into two categories during this year – the advice remains the same criteria where a contact, 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 1262 contacts were received for Advice and information. This is an increase of 41% on these contacts from last year.**

However, we have during this year started to complete checks on all new employees to MKCC within the children’s work force, which has created a large task than previously, where we made checks for Chaperones and Fostering mainly. As a result, we have recorded all checks as information and the total numbers of checks completed for the year was 337. Unfortunately, there is no comparison as this is a new way of classifying the contacts.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Advice and information	659	892	1262 (Advice 925 Information 337)

6. Allegations resulting in consultations

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

A total of 90 contacts met the threshold for LADO involvement and oversight in the form of consultation.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Consultations	130	122	90

7. Allegations resulting in referrals

In these referrals the information clearly meets the definition of an allegation under the Managing Allegations procedures and requires active management by the LADO and other agencies, as appropriate.

A total of 71 Referrals met this threshold, resulting in 95 Managing Allegations Meetings as some cases required multiple meetings.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Referrals	39	76	71

8. 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.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Care provider	10	15	8
Child minder	1	2	2
CSC/YOT	4	6	6
Foster Carers	24	18	16
Health	7	2	12
Higher education	0	1	1
Other	1	2	2
Nursery/early years	9	11	9
Residential	32	13	18
School - other	9	15	9
School - Primary	27	22	20
School - Secondary	11	18	19
Secure Estate	25	56	34
Sports/Leisure	5	5	3
Transport	2	6	2
Youth Organisation	4	0	1

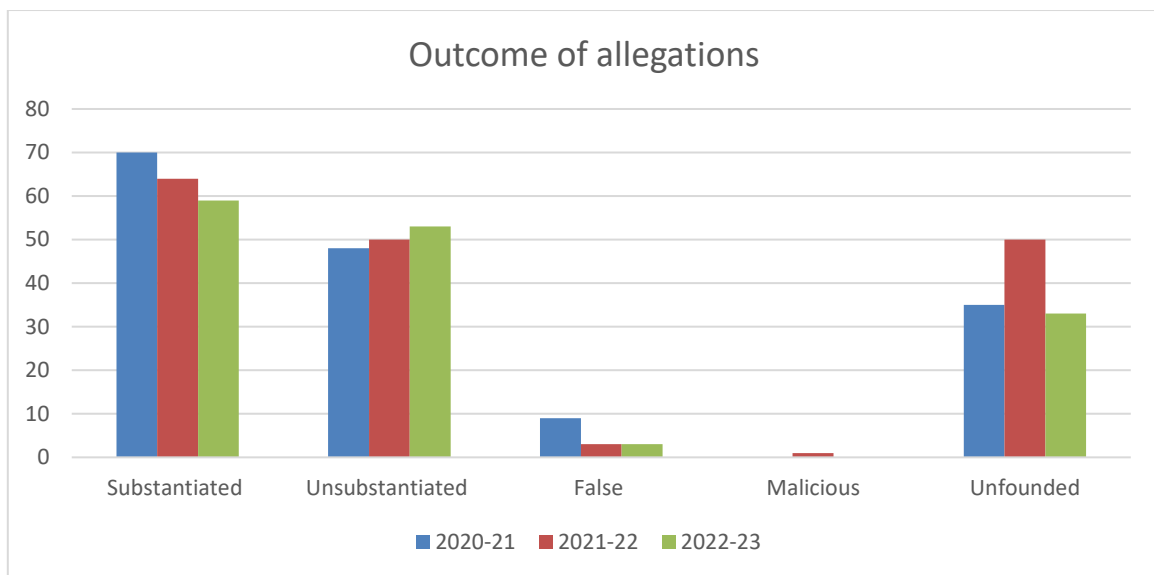
A lot of joint work has been conducted with the MKC fostering team, to address good practice and safeguarding, including delivering training about allegations specifically for foster carers, the impact of this can be seen with the allegation's figures reducing.

It is noticeable the decrease in referrals from our residential settings. Milton Keynes has several private residential homes and unregulated homes for children. There was an 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.

Oakhill Secure Training Centre experienced a turbulent period in 2021/22 where they placed under an Urgent Notification by the Government – this increased the number of contacts over a short period of time, where the LADO service were required to scrutinise a high number of concerns dated back over months that had not been shared previously. This was an unusual circumstance and the number of children being housed in this provision were halved. There were many improvements request and made by OSTC and the Safeguarding Team was increased and restructured leading to the lower number of concerns experienced during this year. OSTC has seen the introduction of females into the centre over the last year and although the females make up a very small number of the overall population staff now have different types of complexities in caring for the children.

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-23
All agencies, Consultation & referral	169	194	161
Oakhill Consultation and referrals	25 - 14%	56 - 29%	34 - 21%
Education consultations and referrals	45 - 27%	55 - 28%	39 - 24%

9. Outcomes of allegations



	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Substantiated	70	64	59
Unsubstantiated	48	50	53
False	9	3	3
Malicious	0	1	0
Unfounded	35	50	33

Currently there are 24 cases with unknown outcomes for 2022-23.

Substantiated:

There is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation.

False:

There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.

Malicious:

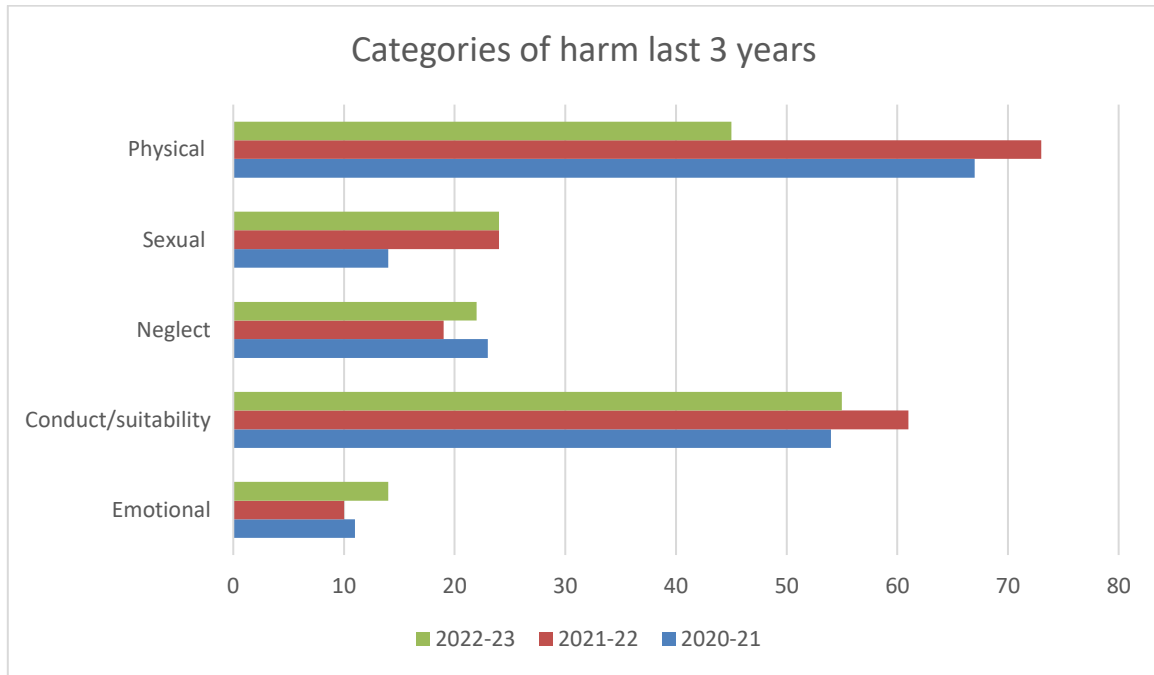
There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive or cause harm to the person subject of the allegation.

Unfounded: to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

Unsubstantiated:

There is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.

10. Categories of abuse



	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Emotional	11	10	14
Conduct/suitability	54	61	55
Neglect	23	19	22
Sexual	14	24	24
Physical	67	73	45

11. Training and awareness raising

The appointment of a second full time permanent LADO has continued to allow the service to develop further and maintain the increase of contacts being made to the service.

With this additional capacity we have continued to maintain the improvements from last year and developed this year:

- Work with MKCC HR to develop and launch the Codes of Conduct for all social care staff, this policy has recently been launched on the Meta-Compliance system and sent to all relevant staff to read and agree.
- To improve safer recruitment into the children’s workforce within MKCC, developed local checks system alongside the HR recruitment team. These checks commenced 24.10.22 and have already proved effective.
- Developed a LADO duty system and created and improved the training programmes, briefing PowerPoints, etc.

- We continue to attend additional meetings to promote collaborative multi-agency working:-
 - Regional and National LADO
 - MKCC Early Years and Ofsted
 - Eastern Safeguarding Network
 - Oakhill and the Youth Custody Service
 - Sec 47 Strategy and other LA allegation
- Continue to be pivotal in the onboarding of new staff, providing introduction briefings and meetings
- New monthly requests to partner agencies for feedback on our questionnaire to improve our service
- Introduction of training for school Governors, alongside our current training programme
- Piloting the change from desktop telephones to Teams and how this might work for the duty system in place.
- LADO briefings provided to:
 - Barnardos (at Oakhill Secure Training Centre)
 - Redway and Romanfield Schools
 - Primary and special schools DSL Forum
 - MKCC Family Time Team
 - MKCC Fostering Team
 - Thames Valley Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit
- The LADOs have attended the following CPD events: -
 - Managing and Minimising Physical Restraint (MMPR) Awareness Training at the National MMPR HQ in Rugby
 - Online training – Is Sport Safe.
 - The National LADO Conference in October which was held on-line
 - IICSA Findings Briefing (on-line)
 - Cultural Diversity Training
- We have hosted a neighbouring LADO to review our recording systems and practice.

12. Scrutiny and reporting

To maintain a level of autonomy and independence, the LADO roles are situated within the wider Safeguarding Team, alongside the Independent Chairs. Given the lack of flexibility within the service, due to there being only two LADOs to cover the increasing contacts and work, the Independent Chairs provide occasional back-up to manage the workload.

The role of managing the LADO service used to fall to the Head of Safeguarding and Quality (now redefined as Head of Children's Quality Assurance and Performance and Safeguarding) but due to wider service restructures, new personnel and changing roles, etc. to create stability the interim arrangement is for the LADOs to continue to be the previous HO Safeguarding and Quality (now in the position of Group Head for Children and Families)

This enables the continued links into strategic 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. Milton Keynes City Council is due another Ofsted inspection, hopefully inspectors will see that there have been improvements since 2021, albeit they were content with the management of position of trust concerns.

Both LADO’S attend quarterly regional LADO network meetings to share information, policy and practice developments. They also attend 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.

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 with 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.

Every 6 months, agencies who have used the LADO service are sent a survey requesting their feedback on the service offered. The results from January 2023 demonstrated that 90% were very satisfied and the other 10% were satisfied with the overall service. 97% were extremely confident in the support offered and 3% confident. 100% stated that the process assisted in managing the allegation/concern.

13. Actions for 2023 - 2024

- Quality Assurance to enable confidential 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. Whether this needs to be considered in conjunction with neighbouring LADOs etc.
- 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 National LADO Network, MKCC 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.
- 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.
- Continue to review the increased workload, to champion additional resources to enable resilience within the service, including the Customer Liaison Officer role that provides the business support for the service's increased administrative needs.
- 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.
- Continue to offer training and briefing to provisions, widening the remit, and developing bespoke training packs to target specific audiences
- Continue to develop effective working relationships within MKCC with relevant services and become more active within the strategic debates and action plans in respect of the risks in the children's workforces locally.

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A large, stylized graphic of the letters 'MK' in a dark teal color, positioned in the bottom right corner of the page. The letters are thick and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance.