



# Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)



# Annual Report

April 2023 – March 2024



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# 1. Introduction

This is the annual report for Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC) Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The purpose of this report is to provide evidence and assurance in respect of the overall effectiveness of the management of allegations in the Local Authority for 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The LADO Team is underpinned by statutory guidance that includes Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and the London Child Protection Procedures. The National LADO Network principles, minimum standards, and LADO threshold document guides Milton Keynes LADO's practice. The role is mandated by the Local Authorities duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004

## 2. Summary

The MKCC LADO service has continued to operate with two full time LADOs and one full time Business Support employee. During the past year there has been a consistent increase in the number of contacts into the LADO service which has placed at times exceptional pressures upon capacity. Whilst greater capacity is evidenced as needed within the LADO service to meet demand, unfortunately due to cost pressures within the Local Authority, business cases to increase LADO and Business Support establishment have been unsuccessful to date.

The greatest factor in increased demand is likely to be the growth of Milton Keynes which has been expanding rapidly and population growth continues to be at a faster rate than national and regional averages. At the beginning of April 2024 the population was recorded as 288,200 and the population had increased by 18000 in the year of 2023/4<sup>1</sup>. The impact of year-on-year growth of a new town, now having achieved City status, is significant and impacts on the resilience of services seeking to catch up with increased demand.

Milton Keynes continues to have above national average numbers of children and young people within its population. Locally this will impact on demand for the LADO in its statutory role to oversee and manage allegations against persons in a position of trust working with children. The growth in population will necessitate corresponding increases to educational and early years provisions as well as growth in the statutory services such as Health, Police and Social Care. Milton Keynes also has a growing economy with 81.7% of adults of working age in employment and with Milton Keynes having one of the highest business start up rates

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<sup>1</sup> MK Statistical Profile 22/23 ; Milton Keynes Council  
<file:///C:/Users/KN15709/Downloads/MK%20Stats%20Q1%202022.23.pdf>

in the region<sup>2</sup>. The lower-than-average employment rate 3.2% (national average 3.8%)<sup>3</sup> will impact on an increased need for childcare provision, wrap around child care and holiday camp type providers to support employed carers and parents. These provisions for children flourish in Milton Keynes alongside an active leisure industry. Volunteers and employees work with children within youth rugby and football, ice hockey, gymnastics, performing arts, Uniformed and Cadet organisations and many other providers undertaking regulated and unregulated activity with children. With these sectors expanding as Milton Keynes grows, there will inevitably be increased demand on the LADO service to support employers manage safeguarding concerns within the children's workforce.

Previous annual reports have noted the year-on-year increase in contacts to MKCC LADO service. 23-24 has continued the same trend with an overall increase of 30%. This is a 1% decrease on 22/23 however what is significant is the increase of contacts where 69% met threshold to be overseen as a Consultation and 77% as a referral, both of which require more active oversight by the LADO. A need for more proactive management by LADO results in greater administrative time per case than for advice matters, so the pressures on the service evidenced in 23-24 are likely to be located in this area of increased demand.

Milton Keynes are due an ILACS inspection by Ofsted. This did not take place in 23/24 so there has been no Ofsted inspection of the effectiveness of the LADO service since 2021. However, feedback has continued to be collected periodically from those accessing the service through an emailed survey link. Feedback has also been collected from attendees at training events and this has continued to be extremely positive.

The last remaining Secure Training Centre – Oakhill STC in the UK continues to be located within Milton Keynes and run by the company G4S. There continues to be close links to this provision and the LADOs work closely to support the STC Safeguarding team and Youth Custody Service in any addressing any staff and practice issues as well as overseeing the management of allegations against employees who pose a risk to children in their care. The STC has run at near full capacity for male children throughout 23/24 and has a small number of female children. Demand on the LADO service from the STC has continued to be the second highest after Education.

In spite of the increased demand, the LADO service has continued to provide a consistent point of contact for employers for generic advice as well as more serious concerns. The provision of LADO checks to support safer recruitment processes within MKCC Human resources for recruitment into the Children's Workforce has resulted in a 16% increase in

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<sup>2</sup> MK Statistical Profile 22/23 ; Milton Keynes Council  
<file:///C:/Users/KN15709/Downloads/MK%20Stats%20Q1%202022.23.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://totalpopulation.co.uk/authority/milton-keynes> accessed 02/10/2024



checks of prospective employees in 23/24. Whilst there continues to be ambition to develop the service further, the overall 30% increase of contacts into the service in 23/24 and the increased numbers of cases meeting threshold, this ambition will be difficult to realise unless the capacity of the team is addressed in 24/25.

### **3. 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.

## 4. What People Say

Feedback has continued to be collated from those contacting the LADO service who are able to complete a brief survey through an email link. There is usually a twice yearly drive to seek more responses, however this was not achieved in 23/24 due to capacity limitations.

Nevertheless 17 responses were received across the year and out of these:

- 94% of respondents said they were ‘Very Satisfied’ with the service which is an increase of 4% in 22/23.
- 94% were ‘extremely confident’ with the advice and guidance provided.
- 1 respondent (6%) was very satisfied with the service but only ‘somewhat confident’ with advice given.
- 1 respondent was ‘fairly satisfied and ‘somewhat confident’.
- 100% of respondents said the process assisted them in managing the allegation or concerns.
- 0% of respondents reported to be neutral or dissatisfied with either the service, processes or advice provided.

Comments received alongside these responses, as well as some from training events are shown below:

- “The LADO was always professional yet approachable. Very helpful”.
- “Always helpful and give good advice”.
- “The team are always very helpful with offering advice every time I have rung. If there are times when I am unsure about something they are helpful and offer advice without judgement. I have always felt well supported by the team”.
- “Clear, regular communication allowing for a speedy resolution to concerns raised”.
- “Responses were helpful and timely”.

- “I really appreciated the feedback I received following my phone call”.
- “I think it would be useful for the DSL to meet with the LADO face to face when new to role”.
- “Only thing would be - Once an internal investigation is completed, it would be nice to receive a final outcome, i.e. - was the teacher dismissed”.

Only one concern was raised in April 23 which was in relation to the need to make repeat phone calls due to the phone not being answered. This appears an isolated incident but likely due to the set-up of the service with all callers having direct access to the LADO duty number and only one duty LADO available. A LADO answerphone service is accessible for service users if the LADO is otherwise unavailable.

#### **Training feedback received 23/24:**

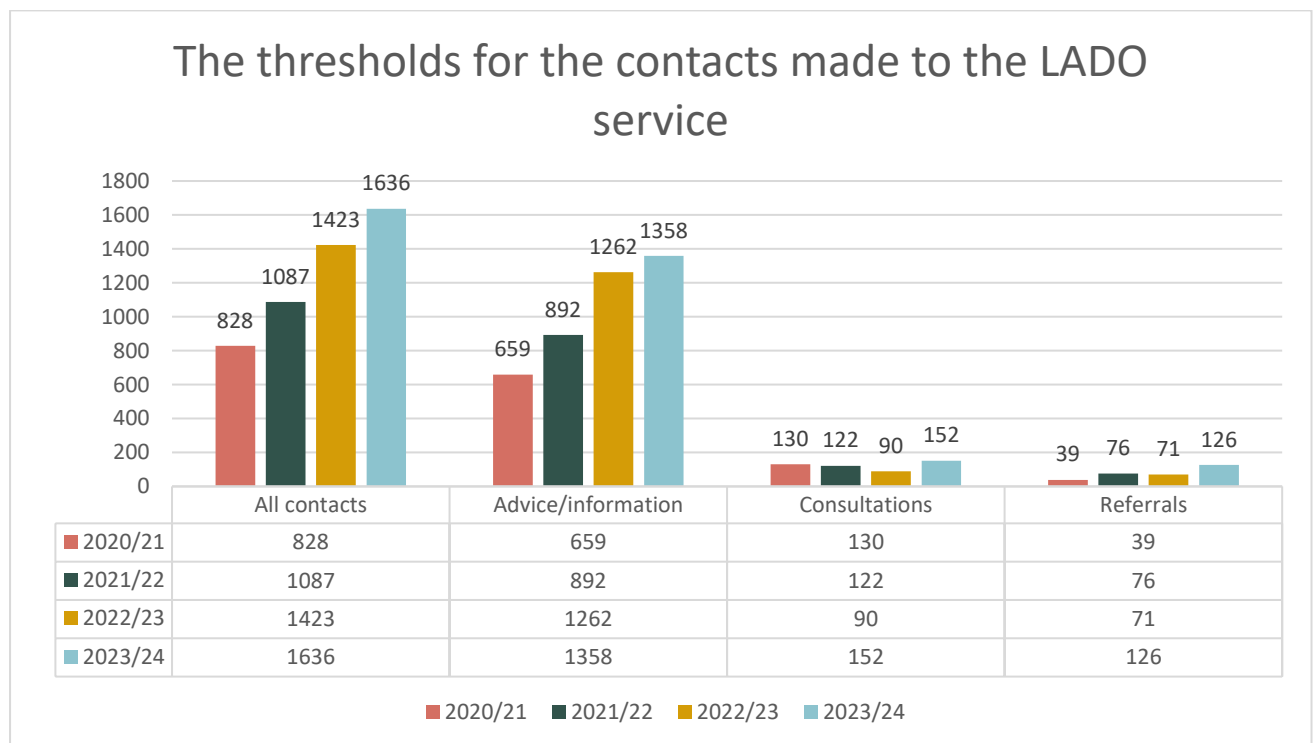
- “Further training courses please”
- “This is good reminder that the best way for foster carers to protect themselves from allegations is to follow process, have an up-to-date safer caring policy and accurate logs”.
- “Interesting to hear the different data around allegations Learnt that there are different thresholds Was reassured about the process”.
- “Presented well, good knowledge, informative”.
- “Good understanding, presented with good knowledge explained”.
- “It will be useful in my current role and responsibilities within the governing board and will allow me to seek answers to questions I might not have known to ask or request evidence to ask for”.
- “It was well balanced and extremely informative; I enjoyed the session and feel I learnt a lot”.
- “This training reinforced learning from safeguarding training and provided more detailed local knowledge / insight into reporting structures and information gathered”.

## **5. Activity data**

Comparing 22/23 statistics with this year’s, there has been an increase of 30% from last year on all contacts received into the LADO service. This has continued at a similar rate to 22-23 when all contacts increased by 31%. It is noted that there has been year-on-year increase in all contacts to the LADO service since 2019. It is likely this is related to the continuing growth of Milton Keynes which includes growth in schools both capacity and number of settings, growth in Early Year provisions to support the increasing population and with a young and diverse population, growth in wrap around care, holiday clubs, uniformed

activities for children, health and social care providers. Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050 forecasts growth of the City’s population to 410 000 and with economic growth predicted of 50,000-90,000 new jobs.<sup>4</sup> As the supporting health, social care, education and leisure services develop to meet the population need, then it is to be anticipated that demand on the LADO service will continue to increase.

In 23/24 LADO contacts were highest in the months of November 23 and January 24 with the service receiving an average of 170+ contacts per month. Schools accounted for 29% of all contacts in November and 37% in January 24, with Primary schools the single highest source of enquiries during these months. Foster carer related contacts were the next highest (this would have included recruitment and household review checks for Fostering and Adoption teams) followed by equal proportions of contacts from Health providers and the Secure Training Centre at Oakhill.



## 6. Information and Advice

<sup>4</sup> MK Statistical Profile 22/23 ; Milton Keynes Council  
<file:///C:/Users/KN15709/Downloads/MK%20Stats%20Q1%202022.23.pdf>



Information and advice has been separated into two categories – 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 1358 contacts were received for Advice and Information. This is an increase of 8% in ‘Advice and Information’ contacts but only a 4% increase in the contacts deemed to require ‘Advice’ only.

In terms of **Information** requests 2022-23 was the first year that LADO checks were completed on all new employees to MKCC within the children’s workforce, widening it from the previous checks completed in respect of foster carer and chaperone recruitment checks. This year we have comparative data and in 23/24 note that 55 more checks were requested which is an increase of 16% from 22/23. This evidenced an increased take up of LADO checks which should enhance existing safer recruitment processes for children within MKCC. However, it has placed a pressure on the already stretched capacity of the LADO service. The ongoing impact of the recruitment checks on capacity will need to be monitored closely given this is not a statutory requirement to provide these and when delayed, may negatively impact on ‘onboarding’ timescales.

In terms of contacts that fell under the category of **Advice** matters, schools continued to be the sector making the highest number of contacts with the LADO service in 23/24 at 40%. Whilst the year-on-year increase in contacts from schools has continued, it significantly slowed this year, increasing at a rate of only 2% this year in comparison to 9% and 10% the previous 2 years.

- 2020/21 – 19%
- 2021/22 – 28%
- 2022/23 -- 38%
- 2023/24 -- 40%

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Advice and information	659	892	1262 (Advice 925 Information 337)	1358 (advice 966 Information 392)

## 7. Allegations Resulting in Consultations

Consultations are contacts that 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 152 contacts met the threshold for LADO involvement and oversight in the form of Consultation in 23/24. This was an increase of 62 cases and concerningly, a 69% increase on 2022-23 figures.

Work is needed to analyse whether the increase is generalised across providers or is from specific sectors, in order for LADO to target training and support potentially to those provisions and sectors. This analysis has not been possible to achieve during 23/24 but will be put as an action 24/25.

The impact of school growth through the opening of 2 new schools will also have had some impact given schools continue to be the sector accessing the LADO service most regularly. September 2023 saw the opening of Watling Vale Primary school in the Western Expansion area of the city, with 3-year groups from reception to Year 2 opening. Then in January 2024, Glebe Farm School opened Year 5 and 6 classes with up to 30 places in each year group to meet demand from the local housing development. As the Glebe Farm area continues to expand there are more classes in several year groups forecast to open at both St Marys C of E Primary school and Glebe Farm school in the academic year 24-25.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Consultations	130	122	90	152

## 8. 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 126 Referrals met this threshold, resulting in 127 Managing Allegations Meetings across the year- these average at just over 10 per month. This increase in meeting threshold, mirrored the significant increase in contacts managed as Consultations, but was a higher increase at 77% on 22-23 Referrals. Whilst anecdotally nationally and regionally, LADOs are reporting increase in contacts to their services also, MKCC need to explore why these statistics have increased so significantly during this time period.

MKCC LADO has experienced several changes to personnel during the 23-24 year however the increased contacts and cases meeting threshold are quite evenly distributed during the year and there is no obvious link to suggest a change in personnel has led to a misapplication of thresholds. Again, the growth of the city which results in an increase to services for children and therefore the children’s workforce will account for much of this, however the increase needs careful monitoring and analysis in 24/25 to ensure we know our service well and can build resilience.

With the increase in cases managed as a Referral there has been an increase of 80% in the number of Managing Allegation Meetings held this year from 71 to 126. There have been approximately 20 cases which have discussed a number of employees from the same setting where allegations related to one matter, or linked concerns have been discussed within one Meeting. (For example where an allegation has been made by a child about several persons in a position of trust or where perhaps there are concerns such as in the local Secure Estate about connected allegations around suitability) This combined meeting whilst efficient for the service and attendees, results in an under reporting of meeting statistics. How this data is captured moving forward will be an action for review in 24/25.

	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
<b>Referrals</b>	39	76	71	126

## **9. Allegations According to Agency**

The table below highlights the sources of concern in respect of where workers are based and provides a four-year comparison of when the threshold has been reached (Referral/Consultation).

	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
<b>Care provider</b>	10	15	8	13
<b>Child minder</b>	1	2	2	2
<b>CSC/YOT</b>	4	6	6	4
<b>Foster Carers</b>	24	18	16	28
<b>Health</b>	7	2	12	23
<b>Higher education</b>	0	1	1	0
<b>Other</b>	1	2	2	4
<b>Nursery/early years</b>	9	11	9	14
<b>Residential</b>	32	13	18	23
<b>School - other</b>	9	15	9	30

<b>School - Primary</b>	27	22	20	40
<b>School - Secondary</b>	11	18	19	38
<b>Secure Estate</b>	25	56	34	43
<b>Sports/Leisure</b>	5	5	3	11
<b>Transport</b>	2	6	2	3
<b>Youth Organisation</b>	4	0	1	2

It is noted that there has been an increase in consultations and referrals across all agencies except for Youth Offending Service and Children's Social Care employees in 22-23 which have seen a decrease in contacts that met threshold. Childminders remained at the same rate as 22-23 but with childminder figures also remaining fairly static since 22-23 this is not unexpected. Allegations meeting threshold from both Primary and Secondary schools have doubled this year to 40 Primary cases and 38 Secondary respectively. Allegations against foster carers also increased by 75% this year and within the Health Sector which includes Central and North West London (CNWL) -CAMHs and Milton Keynes University Hospital (MKUH) as well as community health services and GPs, allegations increased by 92%.

The largest increase in allegations however has been within other schools which includes Alternative Educational provisions, Supplementary and Private schools. These have increased from 9 cases meeting threshold to 30 in 23/24. This category of 'other' covers specialist provisions and local schools meeting SEMH, SBD, and children with physical and learning disability needs. These establishments support some of the most vulnerable students within Milton Keynes and in the independent sector also take children from neighbouring educational authorities. It is anticipated that where there is a need for personal care, manual handling and physical interventions occurring as part of safe care and management of children's needs, a higher rate of concerns would be anticipated.

Allegations in respect of employees within Residential provisions have increased by 28% in 23/24 compared to 22/23. Milton Keynes has seen the commission in contracts of regulated and unregistered providers for Childrens Social Care double by late 2023. The out of area providers operating within Milton Keynes LA boundary has also more than doubled during this time period. This has increased demand on both the Childrens Quality and Commissioning team and the LADO service who liaise closely when concerns arise.

Milton Keynes like other areas across the UK, has also seen an increase in children being placed in unregulated placements in the Milton Keynes area. This has been a contributory factor in the 62% increase in allegations that met thresholds in relation to the Care Providers used by Local Authorities to support children that councils are unable to find a secure or residential placement for and place children in domestic properties with carers. These children usually present with complex needs, significant trauma histories and high levels of challenging behaviour. They are often subject to DOLs requiring 2:1 or 3:1 staffing

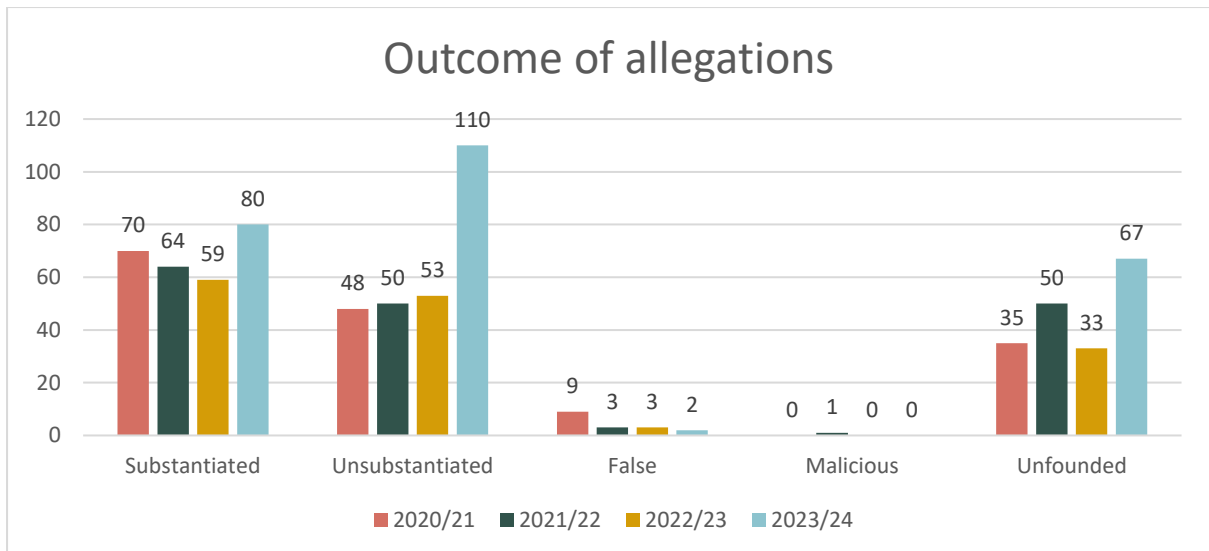
24 hrs a day. The shortage of secure placements is a known national issue which has led to the emergence of unregistered provisions across the UK. Allegations are often made by the child in the context of physical interventions/ restraints by staff. Allegations can be multiple and frequent, and often complex to manage when children may also be non-verbal or unwilling to engage in investigation processes with professionals or police. The employees within these unregulated settings are often inadequately trained and/or sufficiently experienced to be supporting children presenting with such complex needs, vulnerability, and trauma histories. These children may be waiting for or may have been declined Secure placements; this may be due to concerns around the level of risk they pose in those specialist settings. Yet Providers and Local Authorities are trying to safely support them in a domestic property with care staff whose experience is often from the adult care sector.

The second highest need for active allegations management support by LADO continues to be Oakhill Secure Training Centre. 23-24 saw an increase from 34 in 22/23 to 43 cases in 23/24 meeting threshold as allegations requiring investigation. Whilst LADO saw many more cases meeting threshold across majority of agencies this year, this proportionally results in Oakhill's showing as a percentage decrease in 23-24 to 15% of all cases meeting threshold. It is important to note however that there were 7 more cases that did meet threshold which required increased LADO oversight than in 22/23 from Oakhill. The impact on capacity is that for each additional case meeting threshold (from any agency) there will be a resultant increase in administration time for the LADO than advice matters.

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-23	2023-24
All agencies, Consultation & referral	169	198	161	278
Oakhill Consultation and referrals as percentage of those meeting threshold	25 - 14%	56 - 29%	34 - 21%	43 - 15%
Education consultations and referrals as percentage of those meeting threshold	45- 27%	55- 28%	39- 24%	108- 39%

## 10. Outcomes of Allegations





Once a case has been investigated there is a requirement for LADO to conclude a safeguarding outcome with the agencies involved.

- Of note in 23/24 there was an increase in outcomes being recorded as **Unsubstantiated** at 42% in comparison to 36% in 22/23.
- 31% of outcomes in 23/24 were recorded as **Substantiated**. This is a slight decrease from 34% in 22/23.
- 1% of referrals were recorded as **False** in 23/24 a slight decrease from 2% in 22/23 and zero allegations were found to be **Malicious** which was the same in 22/23.
- In terms of allegations being concluded with a safeguarding outcome of **Unfounded** this was 21% in 22/23 and saw a slight increase to 26% in 23/24.

Currently there are 19 cases that remain open to LADO from 2023-24. These are matters which are still under investigation by employer or police. These continue to be tracked on a regular basis to ensure safeguarding outcomes are reached once the investigation stage has been completed. LADO are mindful that part of the LADO Managing Allegations Process remit is to seek a timely conclusion to any investigation process for the child and the person in Position of Trust. However, most cases which remain open beyond 6 or 9 months tend to be related to police investigations or due to delays in the criminal justice process and are beyond LADO control.

**Substantiated:** There is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation.

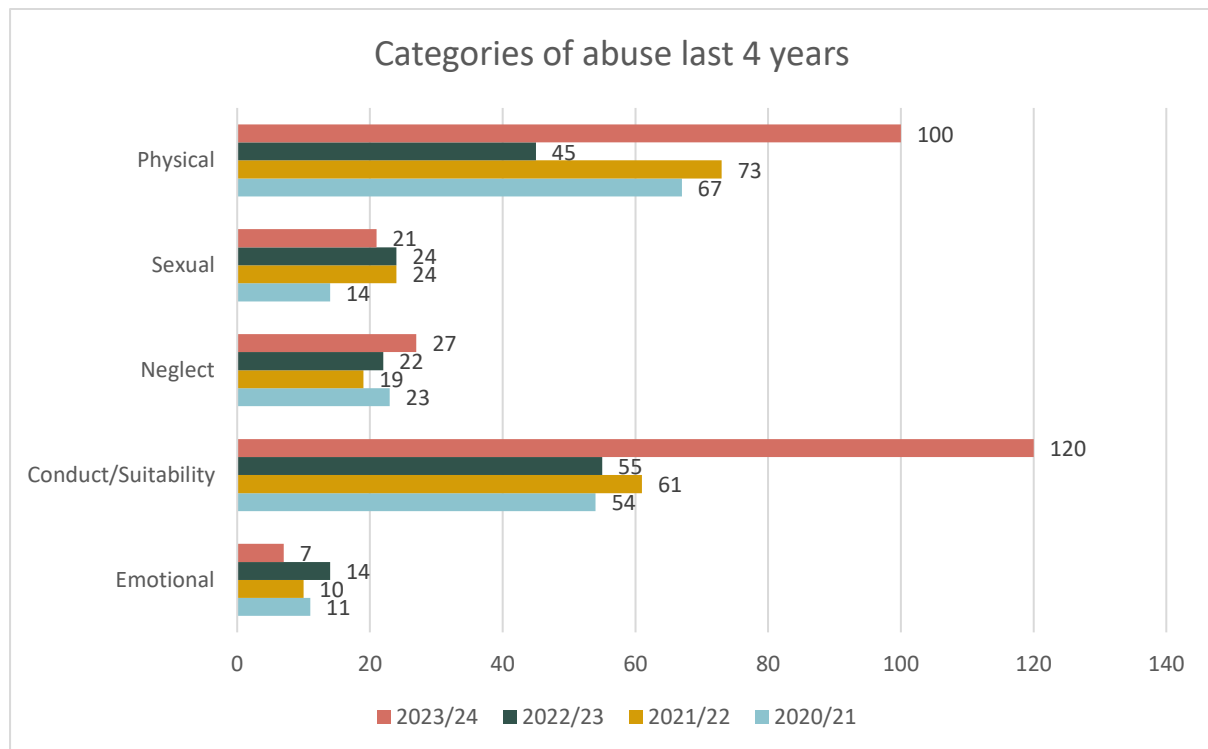
**False:** There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.

**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.

## 11. Categories of Abuse



The highest number of allegations in 23/24 have been referred under the criteria of 'Conduct and Suitability'. The criteria of suitability was included in KCSIE in 2022 and addresses safeguarding concerns which may cause transferrable risk to children in the employee's work role, but which have occurred in the employee's private life or through their associations with others, who may pose a risk of harm to children. Allegations under this criterion have increased from 34% in 22/23 to 43% in 23/24. The service would benefit from analysing this increase to ensure the threshold for this criterion is being appropriately and consistently applied and this will be added as an action for this year.

There has been a similar rate of increase in allegations being made under the criteria of physical harm from 28% in 22/23 to 36% in 23/24. Given the Secure Training Centre in Milton Keynes and numerous educational provisions which support children with high levels of challenging behaviour, this is not unexpected as this criterion covers allegations related to possible excessive use of force which may have resulted in physical harm or injury.

In relation to the other categories there has been a reduction in allegations being received under the criteria of sexual harm and matters meeting threshold under this criterion have reduced from 15% in 22/23 to 8% in 23/24. We know sexual abuse is under reported

nationally as outlined in the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse <sup>5</sup>, which was published in October 2022. With education being the highest referrer to the LADO team, sexual abuse is not a category where we would expect to see a significant rise. However, given the findings in the Sexual Abuse report and known under reporting of sexual abuse against children this decrease from 15% of allegations in 22/23 to 8% in 23/24 is of concern. Work is planned in 24/25 within Milton Keynes Childrens Social Care about the identification and management of sexual abuse concerns. LADO will need to consider how to raise the understanding of all agencies when delivering managing allegations training, on the detection and reporting of sexual abuse concerns, including grooming and exploitation.

There has been a decrease in the number of allegations being made under the criterion of neglect from 14% in 22/23 to 10% in 23/24. Some analysis is needed to explore whether concerns around 'neglectful practice' are being referred and managed as 'conduct' concerns because it is deemed the threshold for 'Neglect' and especially threshold for 'Criminal Neglect' is more difficult to evidence.

Likewise, there has been a significant decrease in the number of allegations referred in under the criteria of emotional harm 23/24 with only 3% being referred under this category in comparison to 9% in 22/23. This may be due to improved awareness within educational settings to pick up and manage concerns early under the providers low-level concerns policies. Therefore, concerns around staff interactions would more usually come to LADO under this criterion should there be evidence of recurrence (indicating pattern) and worries that there is *intent* to cause emotional harm.

It is important to note that these criteria statistics are based on what an allegation is opened to Lado under at the point of it meeting threshold for Lado oversight. The final criteria that is recorded in terms of concluding safeguarding outcome following investigation may be subject to change.

## 12. Training and Awareness Raising

The LADO service establishment has continued to consist of 2 full time LADOs supported by one full time Customer Liaison Officer. The team have experienced a change in personnel part way through 23/24 due to secondment and progression of both ~~LADO's~~ [LADO's](#). In July 23 Mrs Young joined the team to work alongside Ms Clifford and in October 23 Ms Newman joined to cover Ms Clifford's secondment to another role within MKCC.

During 23-24 in spite of increasing demand on the service, LADO has continued to deliver regular training in Allegations Management to Designated Safeguarding Leads,

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<sup>5</sup> The Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse October 2022 ;ILCSA Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

School Governors, Foster carers and Kinship Carers. Take up at these different events has been variable and due to LADO reduced capacity in the Spring of 2024, one course for 'Advanced Decision Makers' had to be cancelled. Positively the 'Managing Allegations Training' for School Governors introduced last year was delivered again in 23/24. This was well attended with very positive feedback from attendees. This now forms part of the annual training offer to maintained schools across the city.

An additional awareness training session has been completed jointly with the Service Manager from MKCC Adult Safeguarding Team to 'BLMK' Health Safeguarding Leads in March 24. This was a virtual briefing session which was well attended by GPs and Safeguarding Leads at Health Centres and GP practices across the Bedford, Luton and Milton Keynes area. The benefits of joint delivery by PiPOT and LADO was noted by attendees who were able to gain knowledge of thresholds and referral processes (in respect of safeguarding allegations in relation to employees) working in both the adult and children's workforce from this one session.

LADO have attended local Secondary schools' 'Quadrant' meetings to introduce themselves and their role and also attended the Secondary schools 'Designated Safeguarding Leads' meeting to build networks and share information on the Managing Allegations Processes. LADO continue to work close with MKCC 'Education Improvement and Effectiveness Service' and have attended joint meetings with the Early Years Improvement Partners and Ofsted.

Safer recruitment processes have continued to be supported within MKCC this year through the widening of checks to all MKCC children's workforce. In addition, occasional LADO checks have also been requested by non-MKCC employers where their due diligence as part of safer recruitment, has raised some concerns and they have wanted greater assurance. It is positive that agencies are feeling confident in approaching the service to seek advice and request checks as part of vetting processes.

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 meetings and other LA allegations meetings
- Childrens Commissioning Meeting (joint CSC/Children with Disabilities Team/LADO)

Due to the increased demands on the service, there has been limited opportunity for attendance at external training or network events. The LADOs have prioritised internal mandatory training and online CPD to ensure compliance with Social Work Professional Registration, as well as inhouse briefings in respect of service restructures and transition from the Family Support to 'Child First' approach. It is hoped that both LADOs will be able to attend Oakhill to observe the 'Managing and Minimising Physical Restraint (MMPR) Awareness Training for new starters in 24/25 and also the National LADO conference in October 25.

## **13. 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. In the past, given the lack of flexibility within the service and the increased demands on the service, occasional support from Independent Chairs has been provided. Unfortunately, due to pressures within the wider safeguarding team during this financial year, this was not sustained and there was very limited support in 23/24. It is recognised by Senior Managers that demand on the LADO service continues to increase and already significantly outstrips capacity. Business papers have been submitted in the latter half of 23-24 to increase the establishment of the team, however due to cost pressures within the organisation all submissions have been declined to date.

The resultant impact has been a slower response to LADO checks; an inability to deliver regular external briefings and limited capacity to complete visits to different sectors in the children's workforce. It has at times impacted on the frequency of tracking open cases to move them towards closure due to the need to prioritise new incoming and high-risk matters.

Milton Keynes Children's Social Care was last inspected in an Ofsted ILACs inspection in 2021 and is expecting an inspection Autumn 2024. It was noted in that inspection that "Allegations of abuse, mistreatment or poor practice by professionals and carers are managed and monitored efficiently and effectively." It is hoped that the ILACS inspection will continue to note the positive take up of LADO advice by employers in Milton Keynes and that trust and confidence in the service continues to grow.

As part of the scrutiny of Oakhill Secure Training Centre, 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. During these meetings there is opportunity to view CCTV footage of incidents to inform discussions and determine where concerns meet threshold as allegation or practice concerns. The National Youth Custody Service (YCS) Safeguarding Team continues to organise quarterly meetings



to include all the LADOs from the Local Authorities that have a secure estate within their area. This is a useful meeting to gain 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. Two such meetings have been attended by LADO in 23/24.

## 14. Actions for 2024-2025

- To review existing LADO processes to ensure they remain a best fit for the needs of the Managing Allegations Process and meet data collection requirements and are as effective and smart as they can be given capacity issues.
- To develop a Quality Assurance Process to enable confidential audits of LADO cases: to explore consistency in how the LADO's work and the service provided. This could be considered across BLMK network in conjunction with neighbouring LADOs.
- 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.
- DBS information requests to MKCC LADO process is frequent and managed through an established process is in place. LADO wish to implement a tracking system in 24/25 to ensure all responses receive timely responses to support safer recruitment.
- LADO to analyse data monthly in terms of referral sources and 'hotspots' to target training and support to provisions /sectors most needed.
- Service Manager to continue to monitor the capacity of the service to ensure LADO can continue to meet its statutory obligations.
- To build on initial explorations completed in 23/24 about developing the existing use of Liquid Logic allegations module to collect all data and recording within the LADO service, reducing reliance on spreadsheets and improve data collection, analysis and reporting of Managing Allegations work within MKCC.

### Sources:

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