

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny Panel

DATE: 23rd August 2019

REPORT TITLE: Annual LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) Report

REPORT AUTHOR/S:

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PURPOSE OF REPORT:

The purpose of this report is to update the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the management of allegations against Professionals and Volunteers and the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in the London Borough of Enfield, for the period of 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

SUMMARY:

The role of the LADO is set out in the “Working Together to Safeguard Children” (2018). The guidance requires Local Authorities to have an officer or a team of officers to manage and oversee allegations against people who work with children and that this officer or team of officers are sufficiently qualified and experienced to fulfil this role effectively. It also requires newly appointed officers to be qualified social workers.

Bruno Capela is now the appointed LADO for Enfield and he is managed by Maria Anastasi, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Service.

A new electronic system to record Allegations against Professionals and Volunteers is currently being implemented.

The total number of allegations between 1st April 2018 and the 31st March 2019, which met the threshold for formal LADO involvement was 66. In addition, there have been approximately 92 recorded consultations.

The LADO actively contributes to the training of the Enfield Children’s Workforce, including School Staff and Foster Carers.

Although, in February 2019, Ofsted provided good overall feedback regarding the work achieved by the LADO, the Service recognizes that there are many challenges ahead.

1. BACKGROUND

- a) Children can be subjected to abuse by those who work with them in any and every setting. All allegations of abuse or maltreatment of children by a professional, staff member, foster carer or volunteer must therefore be taken seriously and treated in accordance with consistent procedures in line with the Children Act 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018).

- b) The LADO, in summary, is responsible for receiving reports about allegations and to be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases; provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations; liaise with the police and other agencies; monitor the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process; and provide advice and guidance to employers in relation to making referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and regulatory bodies such as Ofsted.
- c) Due to the diversity of environments employing staff or volunteers to work with children and young people, it is essential for the LADO to continue to develop their knowledge and expertise in understanding the work and management of organizations as diverse as Local Authority Schools and Academies; the whole spectrum of faith organizations, including implications of, for example Canon or Islamic law on management of staff and ordained members; youth organizations; non-regulated professionals, for example tutors and childminders; foster and residential placements; NHS staff; or Police amongst many other settings where individuals are employed to work directly with children.
- d) In addition, it is essential that the LADO has excellent knowledge of child protection law; child protection processes and knowledge and experience of risk assessments; as well as an understanding of criminal and employment law.
- e) Although children are paramount in all child protection processes, it is acknowledged that being subject to an allegation is usually very distressing and unsettling for the member of staff. The LADO process must also consider the wellbeing of the member of staff.
- f) In Enfield, the role of the LADO was until January 2019 undertaken by the Head of Safeguarding and Quality Service (SQS), Maria Anastasi. A part-time LADO, Bruno Capela, was appointed in January 2019. Bruno Capela was already part of the Safeguarding Service as a Child Protection Chair and Independent Reviewing Officer and is managed by Maria Anastasi, the previous LADO and Head of Safeguarding and Quality Service. This has ensured continuity.
- g) The Child Protection Conference Chairs/Independent Reviewing Officers in the Safeguarding and Quality service have continued to lead on some investigations in the absence of the LADO as well as offering advice and guidance to agencies, when there may be concerns about a person's conduct and when the threshold for a formal investigation has not been met. These, recorded as consultations, have often ensured that advice and guidance has been given to managers when there are low level concerns.

2. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- a) Following a period of testing and planning for the implementation of the Allegation Workspace in Liquid Logic, this was formally started on the 1st April 2019. The new system required to revise work processes - developed in partnership with the Meetings, Panels and Events (MPE) Operational Support - as well as training for all Child Protection Conference Chairs/Independent Reviewing Officers.
- b) Since 2018, the meetings chaired by the LADO are no longer referred to as "strategy meetings". As per new guidance within Working Together 2018, they are, instead referred to as "Allegations against Staff and Volunteers" meetings, abbreviated as "ASV".
- c) Another significant change which impacts on these investigations is the change in police guidance on arrest. It is now the case that the defendant will not be arrested unless there is a need for bail conditions.
- d) Following the implementation of the Allegations Workspace in Liquid Logic and the abolition of the GCXS e-mail, the LADO referral form in Enfield has again been revised to reflect these changes and adjust to the new processes. Most agencies provide the necessary detailed information about the alleged incident and the staff involved, in advance of the Allegation against Staff and Volunteers (ASV) meeting. This has had a positive impact on the quality of referrals and has continued to reduce the time previously spent by the LADO gathering information from different sources.
- e) However, the new Children's Portal will again require for processes to be reviewed, however it is anticipated that, once established, the Children's Portal will reduce administrative tasks for the LADO as referrals will be loaded directly into Liquid Logic.
- f) The Local Enfield LADO Protocol has also been redrafted to reflect progress in guidance, legislation and procedures. The purpose of the protocol is to ensure that key persons and bodies in Enfield work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the discharge of their duties and functions under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 when concerns emerge regarding a professional or volunteer working with children within the Enfield Borough.

3. BREAKDOWN OF ALLEGATIONS

- a) The total number of allegations between 1st April 2018 and the 31st March 2019, which met the threshold for formal LADO involvement was 66.
- b) The sources of referrals for both allegations and consultations include direct contact from young people and parents; police; schools; other partner agencies; OFSTED and other local authorities. Several referrals were also received from within children's social care, including the MASH, allocated Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers.

- c) The majority of allegations which progressed to formal LADO involvement were made within education settings, 36, which includes primary and secondary schools within the London Borough of Enfield. The high number of allegations within schools, compared to other settings, is to be expected as this is where children spend most of their time outside the home. Also indicates that most Senior School staff, within the Local Authority, receive regular training regarding LADO processes and have a good working relationship with Safeguarding and Quality Service, including the Head of Service, and therefore may be prone to discuss ongoing issues as well as being clearer about expected standards of care for children within their schools.
- d) The second highest group is Fostering, including carers from Independent Fostering Agencies, 3, and other Local Authorities carers, 3. In addition, these allegations that progressed to a formal ASV Meeting, the LADO is often consulted in issues over Standards of Care which don't quite meet the threshold for a meeting, but the LADO monitors the outcome of the intervention.
- e) The majority of contacts that led to an ASV Meeting being held, 35, refer to allegations of physical abuse, mostly where it is alleged that professionals used unreasonable force to address behavioural issues or impose their will over children.
- f) There were also nine cases of Sexual Abuse, 17 of inappropriate conduct; 1 case of emotional abuse and 4 cases where a professional or Volunteer behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns about their ability to work with children safely, for example if their own children are subject to Child Protection Plans.
- g) The number of allegations which met the threshold for formal LADO involvement in the last year has increased compared to previous 4 years. However, the increase has been gradual and not considered to be of particularly significant.
- h) In addition to the above 66 allegations, there have been approximately 92 recorded consultations with the LADO, where the threshold for LADO intervention had not been met. In these cases, advice was offered on managing low and medium level concerns and a system has been put in place to record this activity and report. Some of the Consultations refer to conduct issues for staff in all settings and standard of care issues for foster carers.
- i) Although some allegations are addressed within one ASV Meeting, many require multiple ASV meetings. In 2018/2019, the 66 allegations involved 97 ASV Meetings to enable either criminal investigations and/or further information to be gathered for example via Children's Services assessment or obtain statements from witnesses prior to an outcome being decided.
- j) Between the ASV Meetings, the LADO monitors and records the progress of each case, either fortnightly or monthly depending on its

complexity via direct liaison with the police, LA children's social care, or employer, as appropriate.

- k) The final outcome of an Allegation should be decided by all agencies involved in the process led by the LADO. The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome of allegation investigations: Substantiated; Malicious, False, Unsubstantiated, and Unfounded.
- l) In 2018/2019, there were 16 Substantiated allegations. These resulted in one dismissal and two people resigned from their positions. DBS referrals have been made or are being processed in these cases.
- m) 10 allegations have been of a complex nature and were not concluded within the financial year. These have been police led where further time was needed to undertake lines of enquiry, for example examination of electronic devices. This has had a significant impact on the professionals being investigated and the agencies employing them. It also has an impact on children/young people who have made the allegations, and when appropriate, they have been signposted to agencies for support.

4. OTHER LADO RELATED ACTIVITIES

- a) In addition to the above activity, the LADO also frequently assists in answering Freedom of Information (FOI) enquiries; and provide comparable figures to assist Regional or the National LADO Network in identifying trends or areas of commonality or disparity; as well as provide accurate figures and/or information to Ofsted/DfE when required.
- b) The Training of the senior management of the Children's Workforce is an integral part of the LADO role and essential to staff development and awareness of procedures and thresholds for LADO involvement.
- c) In 2018/2019, the LADO service has delivered six half training sessions to Enfield foster careers around safe caring and managing allegations. Since 2017, the LADO has also contributed to the "Skills to Foster training for prospective foster carers.
- d) The LADO has also delivered 5 half day trainings sessions on managing allegations to LSCB partner agencies and contributed to the Designated teachers' training with specific reference to LADO issues and processes.

5. CONCLUSION

- a) The approach to Allegations in Enfield has continued to be effective and robust. An Ofsted inspection in February 2019, concluded that, in Enfield, *"the management of allegations and concerns against adults who work with children is timely and proportionate. A well-managed system prioritises and focuses on allegations in a timely manner in order to safeguard children"*.

- b) Although Ofsted provided good overall feedback regarding the work achieved, the Service recognizes that there are many challenges ahead. These challenges have informed the LADO Workplan for the current financial year.

6. RECOMMENDATION

That the scrutiny panel notes the findings of this report.

7. NEXT STEPS

ENFIELD LADO WORKPLAN 2019 – 2020		
Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Present and approve the updated “Enfield LADO Protocol” to the Enfield Safeguarding Children Partnership Board.	Maria Anastasi/Bruno Capela	October 2019
Continue with developing and delivering awareness raising sessions within the statutory and voluntary sector and identify and give specific attention to agencies where there are few or no referrals, including faith organizations.	Bruno Capela	Ongoing
Design leaflets for parents and for professionals regarding LADO processes.	Bruno Capela	September 2019
Design leaflets with information specifically for children about what to do if they or a friend believe they are being abused by an adult who works with them. The information should also be added to Enfield Safeguarding Children Partnership Website.	Bruno Capela	November 2019
Peer on Peer Review of LADO processes	Anne Stoker/Maria Anastasi/Bruno Capela	November 2019
Ensure systematic collation of feedback of LADO experience to ensure learning is captured and used to improve performance of the function, with a focus on measures to elicit the child’s voice to inform continued practice.	Bruno Capela, in connection with the London and National LADO group	Ongoing
Support implementation of LADO referrals via the Children Portal.	Bruno Capela	Ongoing