

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report 2021-22</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 November 2022
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson

## OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

This report provides a summary of the activity relating to the management of allegations against adults who work and volunteer with children in Wokingham Borough for 2021-2022. It sets out how children are safeguarding in activities with adults in positions of trust. This report also provides analysis of the data and highlights the themes identified by the Designated Officer (LADO).

## RECOMMENDATION

That this report is considered by the overview and scrutiny panel. For information and questions.

## SUMMARY OF REPORT

**Allegations Criteria:** The Allegations procedure applies whenever it is alleged that a person who works with children has, in any connection with her/his employment or voluntary activity has:

- Behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she would 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.

Local Authorities are required to '*have designated a particular officer, or team of officers to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children*'. The 2015 Working Together guidance changed the title from Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to Designated Officer, but there has been no change to the overall function. In line with most Local Authorities in the South East, Wokingham has continued using the title of 'LADO' as it is a well-established and understood term.

The LADO has the responsibility to oversee the allegations management process, to ensure it remains effective and meets the dual demands of both protecting children and ensuring staff subject to allegations are treated fairly. The LADO is also responsible for ensuring that the investigative response is consistent, reasonable and proportionate.

In Wokingham, the LADO function is situated within the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service. The role is carried out by a named designated officer. There is one full time LADO who also chairs child protection conferences two days per week. Over the course of 2021-2022 there have been personnel changes and a period of vacancy from October 2021 – March 2022 due to recruitment issues. Although the core business and day to day management of allegations was maintained, the service was stretched. A permanent LADO was recruited and came into post on 04.04.22.

## Background

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 requires all organisations that provide services for children or employ staff, contractors or volunteers who work with children to have a procedure for handling allegations against staff. More detailed guidance is set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

## Analysis of Issues

There has been an increase in the number of enquiries and allegations in 2021-2022 compared to 2020-2021, which reflects the ending of lockdown restrictions and social distancing measure in schools, nurseries, sports clubs and other settings.

The types of enquires and allegations and the outcomes relating to them, also appear to be in line with pre-pandemic activity and this report has included the statistics for the last three years to show the impact of Covid-19 on the workload.

The enquiries/allegations relating to staff in Education and Early Years sectors have been predominantly related to suitability issues and concerns outside of the workplace, and there being a transferrable risk to children in their work setting. Within this category, there was also a high level of "Code of Conduct issues", where staff did not necessarily cause harm to a child, but they did not adhere to the settings policies or processes.

The second highest category of enquiries/allegations, related to physical abuse/ physical contact between adults and children has remained consistent throughout the last three years and continues to emphasise the need for clear codes of conduct and behaviour management policies all settings.

The main category of concern for allegations which reach the criminal threshold was sexual abuse or online sexual offences relating to the downloading of indecent images of children.

The majority of allegations are concluded in one month, some take up to three months and a small percentage take longer if there are criminal investigations or court proceedings.

Inter-agency working arrangements remain strong with Thames Valley Police and the LADO has regular interactions with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the social care duty team, the early year advisory team, Wokingham Brough Council (WBC) schools HR, and the WBC school improvement team.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	n/a		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	n/a		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	n/a		

**Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision**

Not applicable
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<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>
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Not applicable
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<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
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Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.
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<b>Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i></b>
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Please state clearly what the impact of the decision being made would be on the Council's carbon neutral objective.
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<b>List of Background Papers</b>
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LADO Annual Report 2021-22
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