



**LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICER
(LADO)
ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025**

CONTENTS

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the management of allegations against staff and volunteers who work with children and young people in a position of trust within the Borough of Halton over the reporting period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

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Forward

The role of the LADO (or Designated Officer) is set out in Working Together 2023 and is governed by the Local Authorities duties under section 11 of the Children Act 2004. It specifies that procedures must be in place to deal with an allegation that may relate to a person who works with children who 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.
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that they 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.

In Halton there is a dedicated LADO who sits within the Children's Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Unit (CSQA) and reports directly to the Head of Service.

Summary of this report

- Notifications to the LADO service in Halton have decreased in the past year. In the 2024/2025 reporting year, there were a total of 145 notifications of allegations and/or concerns about adults employed or volunteering in a position of trust with children in the Halton area. This is a 24% decrease on the previous reporting year.

Reporting Years	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Lado Notifications	135	173	191	145

- During the periods 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 there was increased, targeted awareness raising sessions delivered across the partnership to ensure that the role of the LADO and the allegations management process was well understood. The decrease in notifications over 2024/2025 may represent an adjustment or levelling-off to a more representative number of notifications to reflect the demography and service provision across the borough of Halton.

Of the 145 contacts with the LADO this year:

- 29 required an initial Allegation Management Meeting (AMM) to be convened to consider the issues.
- Of these 29 cases, 4 required no further involvement of the LADO process beyond the initial meeting as it was determined that the threshold was not met.
- 25 cases continued into the LADO process, with 6 continuing into 2025-26.
- Accordingly, 19 cases of the 25 that were started in 2024-25, have been concluded with a finding agreed in the AMM.
- All the remaining 116 cases were closed to LADO following the initial consultation.

Of the 29 cases that were subject to further consideration in a meeting following the initial consultation:

- 6 [19] were substantiated	(20.7%)	[48%]
- 6 [6] were unfounded	(20.7%)	[15%]
- 6 [12] were unsubstantiated	(20.7%)	[30%]
- 1 [0] was false	(3.4%)	[0%]
- 4 [0] no threshold for LADO	(13.8%)	[0%]
- 6 [2] have not yet concluded	(20.7%)	[5%]

The previous year percentage is given in square parenthesis.

External Scrutiny

External scrutiny of the management of allegations process and threshold application has been provided through the Ofsted inspection process. Since the last LADO report for the reporting year 2023-24, the LADO has met with Ofsted on two occasions – during the 2024 ILACs inspection, and more recently with the Lead Inspector at a subsequent monitoring visit in January 2025.

The feedback from Ofsted at the May 2024 inspection evidences continued positive progress in this area of service provision and that we are now in a position of strength.

[The] Service responds promptly to referrals and [there is] a thorough response.

[There is] evidence of LADO supporting organisations.

Allegations made against professionals [are] managed swiftly and robustly.

Recording is prompt. Allegation management meetings used effectively.

Focus on safety and wellbeing of children. Keeping children safer.

Worked closely with Social Worker providing a cross over of information and supporting children to remain safe.

In January 2025, the feedback about the LADO service was in a similar vein.

The Role of the Designated Officer (LADO) in Halton

The role of the LADO is set out in Working Together 2023. [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115271/working-together-to-safeguard-children-2023-statutory-guidance.pdf)

The relevant paragraphs start at 223 at page 108.

The key roles of the LADO are to:

- provide advice/guidance to employers or voluntary organisations within the local authority area;
- liaise with the local Police and other agencies, including Ofsted and professional bodies;
- monitor the progress of referrals to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly and consistently as possible ensuring a thorough and fair process;
- provide the oversight of the investigative process through to its conclusion;
- to chair LADO allegation management meetings and establish an agreed outcome of the LADO process;
- facilitate resolutions to any inter-agency issues;
- liaise with other local authority LADO's where there are cross-boundary issues;
- collect data and maintain a confidential database in relation to allegations;
- disseminate learning from LADO enquiries throughout the children's workforce;

Information regarding Halton's LADO process is available on the partnership website at: [Dealing with Allegations against People Working with Children - Halton Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) . This information is routinely sent to all those enquiring about the role, function, procedures, and process associated with the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Data Analysis

Performance data for Allegations Management Procedure has been extracted from Eclipse by the Performance Team. This data refers to notifications made to the LADO in the reporting year 2024/2025.

Additionally, this year the LADO has continued to have oversight of nine cases that commenced in 2023-2024 and continued into 2024-25. All but one of these cases are now concluded.

There are two cases that remain open from 2022-23 and are still ongoing, although a conclusion is almost reached in both cases. The lengthy duration of these cases is due to their complexity and the timescales within the criminal justice system.

Contacts

The vast proportion of contacts with the LADO do not result in an allegation meeting of any kind, but for every contact we provide a virtual (Teams or telephone) consultation with the LADO for analysis, consideration, advice, and support. The total number of contacts was 145 for the year 2024 - 2025 which, as already mentioned, represents a decrease on the previous year. See table below:

Table 1

Reporting Period	Total number of LADO contacts/consultations	Increase / decrease on previous year
2024/25	145	-24%
2023/24	191	+10%
2022/23	173	+28%
2021/22	135	N/A

Of the 145 contacts:

- 29 (20%) required LADO oversight and an Initial Allegation Management Meeting (AMM) was held. This is precisely the same percentage as the previous reporting year.
- The remaining 116 (80%) concluded and were closed following the consultation.

Of the 80% of contacts that did not progress to an AMM there were themes identified:

- Employers were seeking confirmation from the LADO that their proposed course of action was correct.
- Lack of employer confidence in identifying a course of action – so advice was sought.
- Regulatory bodies driving employers to contact the LADO service, even after the employer had made their own informed decision that this was not required.
- The latter happened most frequently with private organisations who provide residential care to children. This was noted in this reporting year and continues to be the case in 2024/2025.

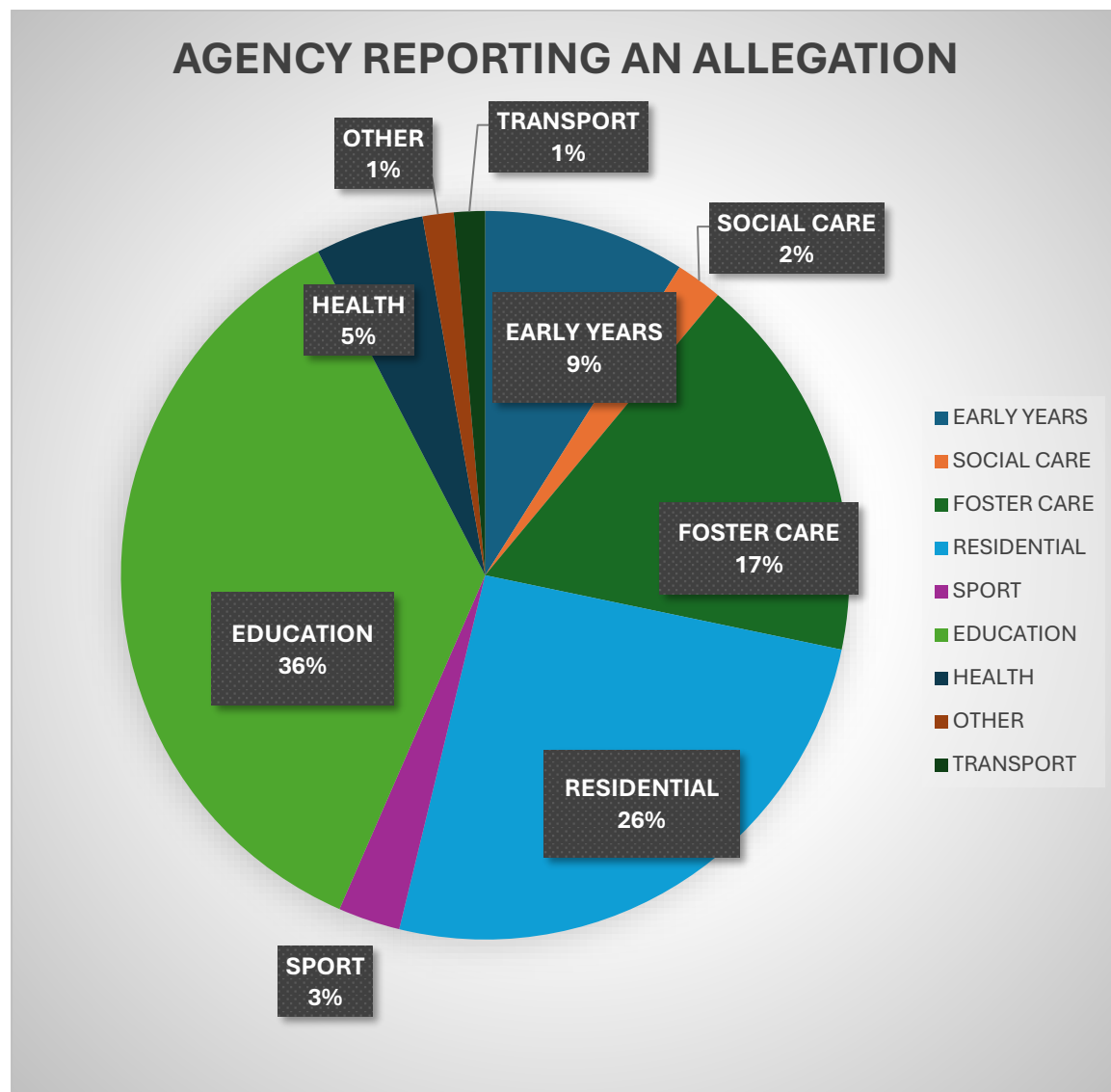
To ensure consistent application of threshold, the LADO uses the Northwest Local Authority Designated Officers matrix to support in the consideration of contacts. This has been formally adopted by the HCSP and has been distributed to partner organisations for use within the Borough to aid decision making and to ensure

consistent thinking and consideration by professionals in this field of work. This guide is available in the LADO page on the Partnership website.

In Table 2 below, all the 145 LADO contacts are broken-down by the referring agency or sector.

As with the previous reporting year education and residential care settings for children make-up a significant majority of total contacts. These two sectors combined represent 62% of the contacts. In the previous reporting year this was 71% of all contacts.

Table 2



There are a lower number of contacts from health, Children's Social Care, transport, and the voluntary settings, including sport. Taken together these sectors represent 12% of contacts. The other significant referring sectors are foster care (collectively – independent foster carers and Halton Council registered carers) and the early years sector.

Comparing these percentage values between the reporting year analysis and the previous year we can see that – in percentage terms:

Contact from the education sector remains the same (+/- 1%)

Contact from the early years sector is the same (+/- 1%)

Contact from Children's Social Care is the same (+/- 1%)

Contact from the health sector has marginally increased (+ 3%)

Contact from the voluntary sector (sport) is the same (+/- 1%)

Contact from transport has decreased (- 2%)

Contact from the residential sector has decreased (- 9%)

Contact from the fostering sector has increased (+ 8%)

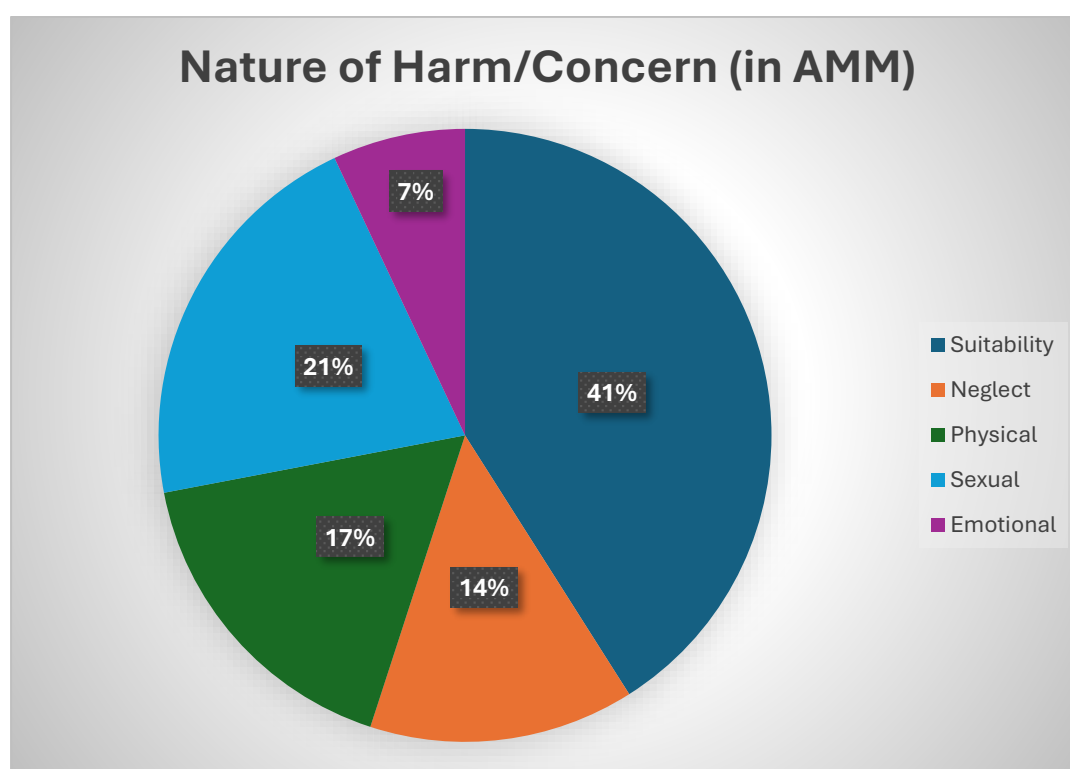
In absolute terms - whilst the overall contacts are reduced by one quarter - the statistics for the reporting year 2024-2025 illustrate that the number of contacts from the fostering sector have increased, whilst the contacts from the residential sector have decreased. By-and-large, all other sectors have had the same level of contact with the LADO in Halton.

The reason behind these changes is not fully understood. One of the reason behind the increase in the fostering referrals for a consultation might be the fact that senior staff managing and overseeing the fostering service in Halton Council have had significant experience of managing the LADO service in another local authority and accordingly the awareness of the importance of referring concerns to LADO may well be being given more publicity. Similarly, with respect to the residential sector and the decline in the number of referrals for a consultation, is this due to an absolute decline in the number of staff working in that sector in the borough, or, better training. It is not, in the opinion of the author, due to a reluctance on the part of

residential managers wishing to discuss situations since there are some consultation which fall significantly below a LADO threshold. Meeting with Residential Managers and Responsible Individuals is planned for 2025-2026 with the Council's own Head of Service for Commissioning and Placements. This will ensure that we are assured that RMs and RIs are familiar and fully conversant with their responsibilities in respect of making a referral for a consultation as in required if they consider the threshold to have been reached, or exceeded.

Of the 29 cases that were brought into a LADO Allegation Management Meeting, the nature of the concern is illustrated below:

Table 3



We can compare this information with the same from the previous reporting year. It remains the case that most (41%) of adults in a position of trust are involved in a LADO process due to an issue or concern about their suitability to work with children, although this is a lower value when compared with the last reporting year. For these individuals, some aspect of their behaviour indicates that they may not be suited to

working with children. This category includes adults who have been arrested and/or charged with arrestable offences (e.g. rape; public order, serious assault), are involved in drug and/or alcohol misuse at home where a child lives, or in work where a child resides. This is the area of work where identifying a clear and transferable risk is important since this is where the potential for future harm to a child or children is evidenced.

In respect of the other four areas of concern, these are all broadly the same between the two reporting years, except for sexual abuse concerns which, as a percentage of total reasons for an AMM, has doubled from 10% to 20% of cases. These cases involve direct allegation of abuse against the person in a position of trust by a family member, an allegation of an incident in the workplace, a non-recent allegation which has been investigated by the Police, or, an online sexual abuse/image enquiry by one or other of the regional Constabularies.

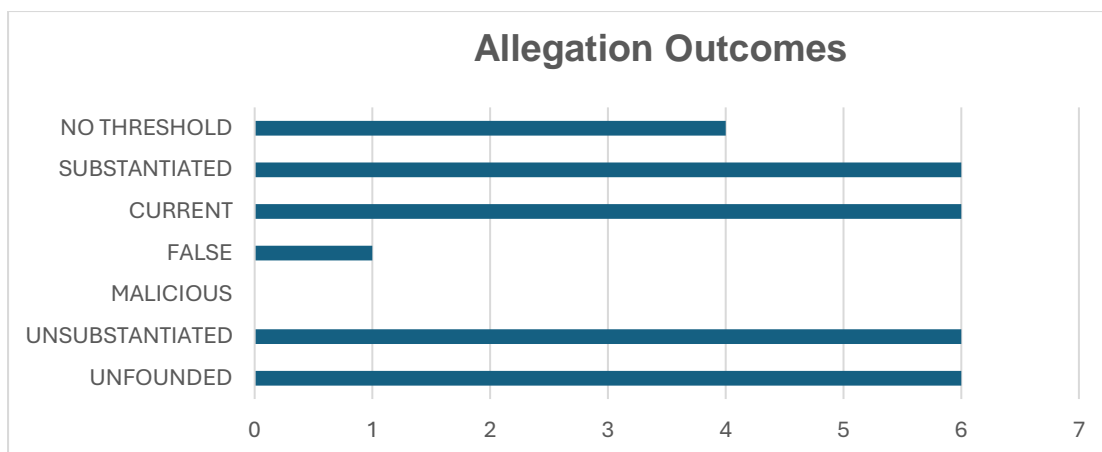
Allegation outcomes

The allegation outcome were listed on page 5 in the Summary of the major findings.

Outcome	%age	2023/24
- 6 [19] were substantiated	(20.7%)	[48%]
- 6 [6] were unfounded	(20.7%)	[15%]
- 6 [12] were unsubstantiated	(20.7%)	[30%]
- 1 [0] was false	(3.4%)	[0%]
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- 6 [2] have not yet concluded	(20.7%)	[5%]

These are illustrated graphically below.

Table 4



As stated earlier there are a significant number of contacts (116 or 80% of the total of 145 contacts with LADO) that require no further LADO oversight and ended at the point of a consultation. Advice and support are always provided during consultation.

For those allegations that progress through the procedure and do require LADO oversight, the outcome will often be the employer reviewing the conduct of the employee, providing additional and/or more focussed supervision and oversight, mentoring, enhancing the employee or volunteer's safeguarding awareness, and further training – and in some instances it would be suitable to extend this to the staff group and wider workforce.

Disciplinary investigations and any subsequent proceedings in respect of the staff members where allegations are unsubstantiated may still result in an outcome as a management instruction as the employer investigation, whilst not finding evidence to support the allegation, may identify behaviour that is not compliant with organisational expectations.

Substantiated allegations this year have resulted in direct actions including dismissal; resignation before dismissal; final written warning; deregistration; and referrals to the Disclosure & Barring Service by the employer where dismissal has or would have occurred.

A note of explanation in respect of the four cases that were discussed at an Allegation Management Meeting, which were found not to meet threshold. These

were cases where it was considered prudent to undertake a broader, multi-agency meeting in order to ensure that the employer/agency, employer HR, Police, IDVA, and CSC (and in one case, the venue of employment since the person was *employed* by an agency) are able to come together and share all relevant information simply to determine whether there is a threshold for a further intervention. In these cases, there was found to be no case to answer as a LADO threshold was not met, but the employer could and did subsequently pursue the matter on issues of conduct.

Time spent dealing with allegations.

The length of time that cases take to dealt with through the LADO process varies considerably within the data set (29 cases in a process over the reporting year) it is a challenge to obtain statistically relevant and descriptive conclusions. More so with six cases which remain not concluded.

The situation is compounded by the fact that the six cases that commenced in 2024-25 and remain open are proving to be quite intractable. This has the obvious consequence of skewing any mean values. In respect of the cases in the reporting year:

The mean time open to LADO *with the six cases that remain open* is 51 days.

The mean time open to LADO *of the concluded 23 cases* is 41 days.

What are the reasons behind this the fact that some cases remain open longer than others? An analysis of this has been undertaken by the LADO and drew out the following conclusions:

Of seven *concluded* cases that have remained open longer than the arithmetical mean (of 41 days) four are hallmarked by significant Police investigation. In another two cases the disciplinary process of the organisations concerned were thorough, but protracted (RFU; an IFA). In the other case, the staff member was off sick, so the case was significantly delayed on account of the subject being hospitalised during

the disciplinary investigation. The subject was medically unfit to face the disciplinary hearing. This was the longest running case of this sample.

In the cases that *are still open*, these are proving to be long running. One case involves the ongoing forensic examination of >10 electronic devices by the Police. In the three cases, the Police investigations are complex and taking time and in the other two, the fostering service involved (HBC) is undertaking a detailed analysis, which is not concluded.

So, the delays are not with the LADO's organisation or delivery of the service. Investigations and subsequent due process sometimes takes time, as these examples illustrate.

Updates on Priorities

The previous incumbent outlined several priorities for the reporting year 2024-25 and these were as follows:

- Complete further review and update of the LADO recording forms which will link to performance reporting; this will ensure we are confident that the work that we have completed will yield accurate data. We will also be less reliant on manual data collection.

This has been done and the LADO form within Eclipse has been altered and amended. The whole LADO process is now on one form – from notification through to conclusion and outcome. Regardless of the number of meetings held, the *episode* can be captured in one place thus making the administration and oversight of various episodes far easier and simpler.

There remain some tweaks, but in all respects this form works well, and can be used by the Performance Team to produce useful and meaningful reports in the future. With the roll-out of Power Business Information a full suite of data will doubtless be of use to better understand who is, and more importantly, who is not referring to LADO.

- Develop our training offer so that we can increase the number of agencies and employers that we reach for awareness, whilst delivering more targeted training for safeguarding leads to support confident consideration and application of the Management of Allegations Procedures.

The training offer has not altered in terms of the frequency (four HSCP sessions per annum) or content. What needs to develop is a better understanding of which sectors attend and the relationship between that and the consultation rate with the LADO for different sectors.

Of the four HSCP training sessions that were completed in the reporting year 2024-25, 47 professionals attended. These people represented a variety of agencies and organisations. The table below provides a breakdown.

Table 5

Type of setting	Candidates
Primary schools	11
Secondary school/College	6
Early Years Safeguarding & Welfare (HBC)	2
Pre-school/Nursery setting	10
Positive Behaviour Support Service	2
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	2
HBC Virtual School	3
Community Health Trust	3
Team Around the Family	1
Children's Social Care	6
Arts promotion organisation	1
Total	47

The LADO Partnership training session have been supplemented by presentations to a range of different groups of staff. This includes all the team meetings of the mainstream Social Work teams in the Council, as well as the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate Team, and the Widnes Early Help Team. Additionally, the post-

holder delivered a session to the Fostering and Adoption Panels as part of a Development Day. Two sessions have been delivered to the Foster Carers which is their mandatory Allegations & Complaints Training. The Runcorn Early Help Team meeting is outstanding and will be prioritised.

The post holder has also delivered a presentation to a group of primary school Headteachers. This was a component of a longer day for this staff group.

These bespoke sessions are an invaluable part of the element of the LADO's role in awareness raising with staff from different agencies and developing networks across the Borough.

With respect to the members of the Senior Leadership Teams of all the high schools in the Borough, there is no Headteacher/Principal with whom the LADO has not had a consultation. It is reassuring to know that all Headteacher/Principals are aware and can consult with the LADO, and they are willing to do so.

Now that the LADO role and the management of allegations procedure is well known within most of the Children's Social Care workforce in Halton future training sessions and awareness raising will continue and will focus on continuing to raise awareness of the need to focus and consider the threshold for LADO oversight. This is particularly pertinent given to reduction in agency staff (who may be moving on) and the appointment of more permanent staff. Therefore, we recognise that staff turnover necessitates an ongoing need to awareness raising.

In respect of the faith sector, the LADO and the Chairperson of Halton Safe Forum are endeavouring to link with the safeguarding leads from various parts of the faith sector in the Halton area. This is with a view to providing awareness raising about the role of the LADO and allegations management training to representatives of the various faith communities in the Borough. Some interest has been generated - not a lot - but we will endeavour to galvanise more support to make a training event viable in terms of numbers.

Delivering training and awareness raising is only useful as far as it relates to actual consultation and referrals. We have been tracking those that refer for a consultation and those from whom no referral has been received since January 2023. There are 23 primary and special schools from whom no referral has been received – not even for a consultation - in the past eighteen months. Of these 23 schools, 6 have attended LADO Training in the past reporting year. The remaining 17 will be contacted by the LADO and invited to consider attending LADO training if the Headteacher has not undertaken training in the past three years.

In addition to the education sector, the other major referring sector are the residential care homes for children and young people. There are no major themes to the referrals but invariably issues that are raised include the behaviour of staff outside the workplace (thus raising issues of suitability) and allegations of assault against staff on account of either a restraint or physical contact. In order to ensure that all Registered Managers and Responsible Individuals of the registered children's residential aware of their duties and responsibilities, the Head of Service for Commissioning and Placements from the Department of Education Inclusion & Provision in Halton Council has agreed to co-host an training session for all of the RMs and Ris working in the Borough so that the LADO can deliver a training session to this group of personnel.

- Develop a process of feedback for those against whom an allegation was made. Develop a process of feedback for parents, carers, and children.

The LADO has developed a range of information sheets which may be used to inform and advise the subject of the allegation of the LADO process and what to expect from their employer. These will be used in this reporting year.

Voice of the child

The written records of meetings evidence that the LADO process and the information gathered in the Allegation Management Meetings captures the voice of involved children. We achieve this through emphasising the importance of attending to the child's voice in our contact/consultation forms and as a standard agenda item in

meetings. Where involved – any Social Worker allocated to a child (and they can be from a wide variety of different local authorities) are invited to attend and contribute to the AMM. Thankfully, they do frequently attend. We also identify not only what the child has said but also who is going to feedback to them during the process and following the determination of the outcome.

Complaints

The LADO has received no complaints in respect of the service provided in the reporting year. There is no appeal process with respect to LADO decision making since any person who is the subject of LADO consideration will appeal the disciplinary process of their own employer/organisation.

The priorities for the reporting year 2025-26 are:

- (a) Continue with an initiative to provide the faith community with LADO awareness and allegations management training, and to link up with the Lead Safeguarding representatives in the Archdiocese of Liverpool and the Diocese of Liverpool to establish clear contacts with this sector of the community.
- (b) To this end, we have concluded that the most effect way to ensure that we offer suitable and accessible training to this sector is to embed a training video presentation within the LADO page of the HSCB website and ensure that agencies are signposted to this on a routine basis.
- (c) Deliver a LADO awareness presentation to the Runcorn Early Help Team and start to revisit those CSC Teams for further awareness raising if these teams are considered to have significantly changed in their personnel.
- (d) Adopt and issue information and guidance leaflets for the *Subject of an Allegation or Concern* on the one hand, and for *Child(ren) and Family*, on the other.
- (e) Use the analysis undertaken to speak with the Heads of schools who have not referred/consulted with LADO in the past 18 months to refresh, remind and revisit the issue of allegations management if their training is not up to date.

- (f) Meet with the residential sector (Registered Managers and Responsible Individuals) and provide the same with a bespoke training opportunity with the Head of Service for Commissioning and Placements.
 - (g) The Halton LADO will continue to participate in the Northwest Region LADO meetings.
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Author – Andrew Chisnall - Local Authority Designated Officer

Children's Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Team, Halton Council.

30th June 2025