

**Local Authority Designated Offer  
(LADO)**

**Annual Report**

**Allegations against professionals,  
volunteers and foster carers**

**April 2015 to March 2016**

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## 1. Executive summary

Referrals to the LADO service have continued their upward trend and in the 2015-2016 reporting year there were a total of 369 referrals in Richmond and Kingston. This is broken down to 178 in the London Borough of Richmond and 191 in London Borough of Kingston.

This is an increase of 25% in Richmond and 58% in Kingston, giving an average increase of 40% across the two local authorities.

Due to the increase in referrals and the need to meet those demands, in September 2015, the LADO establishment increased to 1.5 FTE following a successful growth bid. The 0.5 FTE post was recruited to in November 2015.

Within Kingston's Ofsted inspection, the LADO service was commended:

***“Robust procedures are in place to ensure allegations against people working with children and young people are managed effectively. Extensive awareness raising of the role of the local authority designated officer within the local authority and with partner agencies has resulted in a significant increase in the number of referrals to the local authority designated officer.”***

## **2. Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the management of allegations against the children's workforce and the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, provided by Achieving for Children (AfC), for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

All agencies that provide services for children, provide staff or volunteers to work with, or care for children are required to have a procedure in place for managing and reporting allegations against staff, which is consistent with statutory guidance published by HM Government (*revised guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 and 2015*). This guidance outlines the requirement of the LADO to oversee the effectiveness, transparency and record retention of the process, not only in terms of protecting children, but also ensuring that staff who are the subject of an allegation are treated fairly and that the response and subsequent action is consistent, reasonable and proportionate.

One of the revisions included in the 2015 addition of Working Together to Safeguard Children is that it no longer refers to 'LADOs' but says 'Local authorities should have designated a particular officer, or team of officers (either as part of multi-agency arrangements or otherwise)'. All new appointees to LADO should be qualified social workers, unless an existing LADO moving between authorities.

This report sets out the key findings from LADO activity through data analysis and commentary. Case studies have been used to provide an illustration of the complexity and diverse nature of the role.

### 3. The role of the LADO

The LADO's key role is to:

- provide advice/guidance to employers or voluntary organisations;
- liaise with the police and other agencies, including Ofsted and professional bodies;
- monitor the progress of referrals to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process;
- to provide oversight of the investigative process through to its conclusion;
- chair LADO meetings and establish an agreed outcome of the LADO investigation;
- facilitate resolution to any inter-agency issues;
- liaison with other local authority LADOs where there are cross-boundary issues;
- collect strategic data and maintain a confidential database in relation to allegations;
- disseminate learning from LADO enquiries throughout the children's workforce;
- attend the Richmond and Kingston Performance Board Meetings on a quarterly basis; and
- attend Children's Social Care and Police Strategy Meetings where there are concerns regarding the children's workforce.

Statutory Guidance places a clear responsibility on organisations to report to the LADO where it is alleged that a person working with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, 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 that he or she would pose a risk of harm to children;

Referrals often do not result in a strategy meeting but instead provide advice and support by the LADO in relation to disciplinary matters, health and safety measures or identified training needs.

#### **4. Update regarding service priorities 2014/2015**

***LADO to continue to raise awareness of the LADO role by delivering training/briefing sessions to the wider workforce including health, faith groups and sports clubs.***

The LADO continues to work with a variety of organisations to offer training and awareness raising sessions. In 2015/2016 this has included delivering safeguarding training to school governors, child protection training to learning support assistants, and question and answer sessions with senior staff within the Early Years Service.

***LADO briefings, identifying key and emerging themes from LADO referrals, to be presented to the Richmond and Kingston LSCB Quality Assurance Subgroup.***

LADO has assisted in briefings to LSCB subgroups in relation to technology related referrals and learning. LADO activity is reported in the Richmond and Kingston LSCB dataset.

***Continue to review and update the LADO database, as appropriate to reflect changing reporting needs.***

The LADO database has been kept up to date, with the data recorded being refined as the recording needs of the service develop. Due to the increasing demands placed upon the current recording system, alternative IT systems are being explored.

***Review the materials and guidance on the LSCB website regarding handling allegations, to ensure that information is in line with current national guidance and develop best practice, including the use of a children's leaflet, updated LADO protocol and posters.***

The LADO has worked closely with the LSCB Co-ordinator to update the LADO information leaflet and other documentation on the website.

***To monitor whether the current media coverage of high profile historical abuse cases leads to a further increase in referrals to the LADO and if it does, consider how this is best managed.***

There continues to be a number of high profile cases in the media relating to allegations against professionals. The number of referrals to the LADO service continues to grow; this has been managed by the appointment of an additional 0.5 FTE LADO.

## **5. Service structure and staffing, including administrative support**

The LADO service arrangements were reviewed by AfC and a new joint LADO, with responsibility for both the Royal London Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, was appointed in April 2014. The permanent LADO took responsibility for Richmond's service at the end of April 2014 and Kingston at the end of May 2014.

In September 2015, the LADO establishment increased to 1.5 FTE following a successful growth bid. The 0.5 FTE post was recruited to in November 2015. This provides a robust response to the growing levels of referrals and consultations to the service.

The both FTE and 0.5 FTE LADOs are experienced social workers, registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and fully meet the requirements of the revisions to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015. There are no plans to move the LADO service outside of the Quality Assurance and Reviewing Service or to rename the role.

The Quality Assurance, Reviewing and LADO service is managed by a permanent, senior social worker within the Standards and Improvement Directorate.

Having designated LADOs provides consistency and the opportunity to develop good working relationships with partner agencies. Cover arrangements remain in place to enable Child Protection Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers to undertake the LADO role, on a rostered basis when required. The full time LADO continues to offer support and mentoring to colleagues undertaking the LADO role in her absence.

The LADO service is supported by an experienced Business Support Officer. Their role includes:

- Maintaining an up to date database by recording all LADO contact, including consultations and referrals;
- Arranging LADO meetings and reviews;
- Maintaining contact with partner agencies when necessary;
- Taking accurate minutes of LADO meetings and distributing these securely;

- Performing checks for child chaperone applications; and
- Maintaining, collating and updating the high profile case tracker;
- Providing the LADO dataset for the monthly Joint Performance Board.

## **6. Supervision, training and appraisal**

The LADOs have undertaken a range of training during this recording period, including:

- Serious Case Review learning workshops and briefings;
- Prevent and Extremism Conference;
- Subject Access Request training;
- Regular attendance at the London LADO networking and support sessions;
- Attendance at the National LADO Annual Conference;
- Quality Assurance, Review and LADO Service monthly team meetings; and
- Fortnightly update meetings with the LADO Service Manager and Business Support Officer.

The LADOs receive regular, four weekly supervision from their line manager during which there is an opportunity to reflect on and discuss individual cases, themes, and set short term goals regarding training and development.

In line with AfC policy, the LADOs have a mid-year review and annual appraisal where performance, individual and service goals are agreed.

The Service Manager has regular and consistent oversight of cases. There is management sign off of cases that have concluded and require no further action. Management oversight is recorded on each individual case file.

## **7. Overview of the service function and key areas of work**

All agencies have a duty to contact the LADO where there are safeguarding allegations in respect to employees or volunteers who work with children. Behaviours are considered in the context of the four categories of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect. Behaviours associated with inappropriate relationships or abuse of trust also comes under this remit.

LADO procedures may also apply to an individual who works with children, but the allegations or concerns arise in his/her private life. Allegations can also relate to the partner of the person who works with children, whose response or attitude suggest that his/her ability to fulfil their role might be compromised.

The regulations prohibit anyone who is disqualified themselves under the regulations, or who lives in the same household as a disqualified person, from working in relevant settings. Relevant settings may include some schools.

The LADO has taken responsibility for providing briefings to schools, governors and other settings, including the early years teams, in regards to these regulations.

### **Case example: Referral regarding possible Disqualification by Association (Childcare Act 2006)**

The LADO was contacted by the LADO in another local authority following the arrest of an individual whose partner is a play assistant in a Kingston School.

There are no concerns regarding the actions of the play assistant, she is being advised to make her own disclosure to her employer.

The LADO liaised with the school and Surrey Police to establish employee's role and concerns.

LADO was able to establish partner no longer in family home. Employee had made Head Teacher aware of situation. Disqualification by Association did not apply because no caution or conviction at this point and partner no longer living in family home.

LADO offered advice only.

The LADO has provided guidance and support to settings in relation to specific staffing issues in relation to these regulations and has produced guidance for schools and other settings.

#### **8. Oversight of historical allegations**

There continues to be some high profile police operations and historical enquiries such as The Goddard Enquiry which may have an impact on local services, either from a national or regional perspective. The LADO has maintained oversight and liaised with internal and external agencies as appropriate.

#### **9. Training and Briefing Sessions**

An important part of the LADO role is to help ensure that Local Authority and AfC staff, as well as partner agencies understand the role of the LADO and feel confident in their safeguarding role and responsibilities. To this end, the LADO has attended provided a number of training or briefing sessions for internal staff as well as external agencies.

#### **10. LSCB**

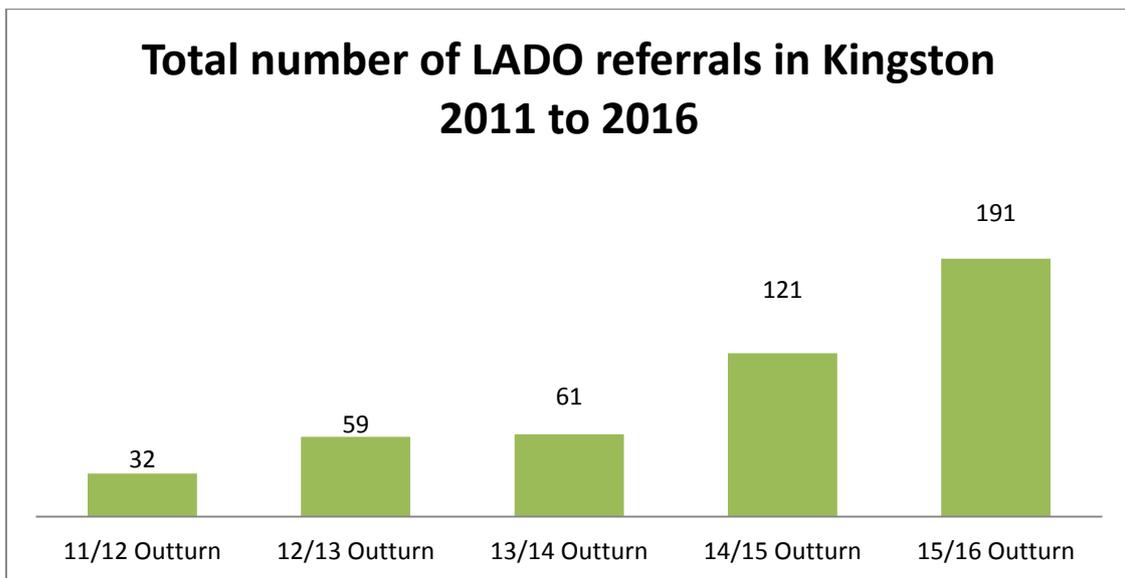
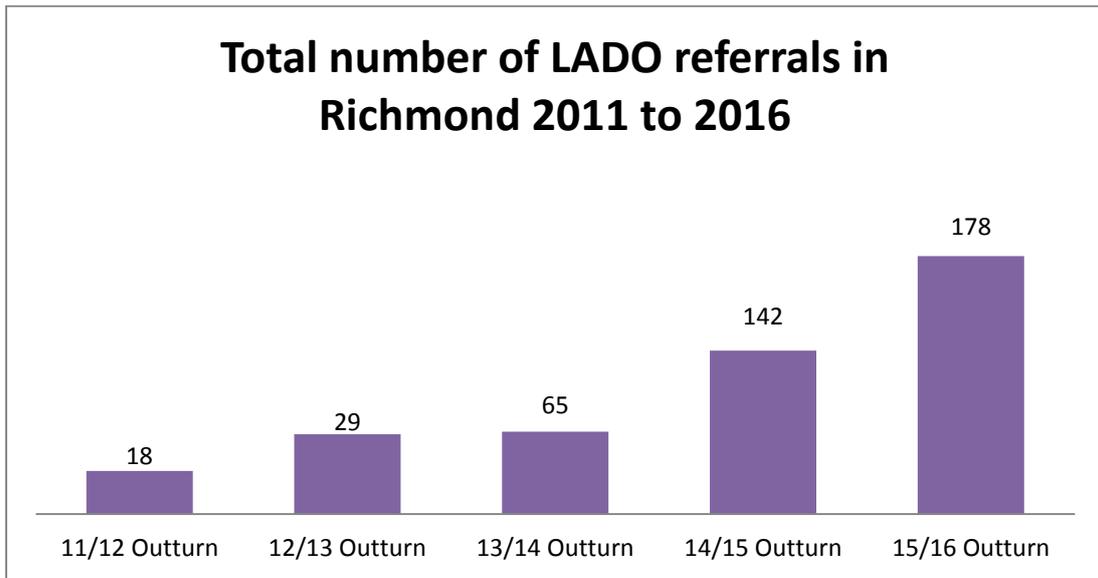
The LADO continues to support the work of the Kingston and Richmond LSCBs, sitting on two integrated subgroups: Learning and Development and Safeguarding Children Online.

The LADO data set, performance and key findings are fed into both the Kingston and Richmond Quality Assurance LSCB Sub-Group.

Ofsted commended the LSCB and LADO interagency working stating ***“The Board also receives a good level of information relating to the work of the Local Authority Designated Officer and this is reflected well in the annual report.”***

#### **11. Contextual Information**

There have been 369 referrals in Richmond and Kingston between 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. This is broken down to 178 in Richmond and 191 in Kingston. This shows a continued trend in a rise in referrals, or contacts with the LADO from the previous recording year where there were 142 referrals in Richmond and 121 in Kingston.



Recording is robust for all cases, whether or not they meet the LADO threshold for involvement and files are kept for reference. It is important that cases where the LADO has only provided advice and information are recorded as such as whilst on their own may not require a LADO response, they may in the future demonstrate concerns with the practice of individuals or settings. Careful attention is paid to the requirements of the Data Protection Act and, if settings call for advice regarding a particular staff member, they are advised to share this with them.

The referral data above includes all contacts with the LADO, regardless of whether they have met the threshold for a formal response.

**Case Example: Concerns raised by parent in relation to school response to bullying issue**

Parent contacted the LADO directly to discuss concerns regarding her child's school. Child was allegedly bullied by another pupil and the parent considered that the school was not addressing the issue appropriately.

Advice and support provided by the LADO who gave the parent information regarding the particular school's bullying policy and complaints procedure.

Information also passed to the School Improvement Team so that support could be offered to the school in relation to this matter if appropriate.

The significant increase in cases referred to the LADO in Kingston (58% increase on the previous recording year) is likely to be attributable to the increased LADO presence and publicity prior to and in the wake of Kingston's Ofsted inspection. Agencies are very aware of the LADO role and Ofsted commented positively on the "***Extensive awareness raising of the Local Authority Designated Officer within the local authority and with partner agencies [which] has resulted in a significant increase in the number of referrals***".

LADO meetings are held where allegations are such that they may require a multi agency response and involve both Children's Services and the Police (generally the Child Abuse Investigation Team) alongside the employer (Named Designated Safeguarding Officer) and often Human Resources Advisor or voluntary organisation.

Managing allegations strategy/evaluation meetings are held under the guidance for managing allegations against adult who work with children as outlined in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2013 and 2015 and Department of Education Statutory Guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2015.

The meetings draws together three possible strands of enquiries; the police in relation to possible criminal matters; Social Care in relation to the needs of any child or young person and the employer in relation to disciplinary and employment matters, including support to the adult about whom the allegations pertain.

**Case Example: Concerns raised by police regarding conduct of agency foster carers**

Referral received from out of borough police regarding the conduct of foster carers. Officer was raising questions regarding their suitability following allegations of harassment by another family member.

LADO made further enquires, a Richmond child was in placement; they were thought to have witnessed or overheard inappropriate behaviour and language.

Two Management of Allegations Meeting held - Children's Social Care and Fostering Agency undertook investigation; further concerns raised by young person in placement.

Allegations were deemed to be substantiated, foster carers resigned and were subsequently deemed unsuitable to foster by the Agency's Panel.

If an allegation does not require Police or Children's Social Care involvement the LADO will support the organisation to investigate, following their own internal procedures and can advise regarding disciplinary, training and policy matters. All referrals and consultations are checked on the LADO database for any previous involvement and if there is a specific child identified the Single Point of Access will check the child's electronic file to ascertain if they are known to Children's Social Care. There are a high number of requests for support and advice which the LADO will scrutinise even if they do not meet the formal thresholds for intervention. In these cases the employer is responsible for acting upon advice, implementing local conduct or performance processes and making recommended changes to their local practice or policy. It is these borderline or complex situations that require careful attention.

**Case Example: Concerns from a church regarding disclosure made by a member of their congregation**

The LADO was contacted by the church community's safeguarding advisor seeking advice regarding a parishioner who had disclosed that they are under police investigation for the serious sexual assault of a child.

The LADO clarified that this person was:

Only attending services, not part of any children's groups and not causing concern regarding interactions with children attending the church.

Checks were made to ensure that this individual was not breaking any Police bail conditions by attending church, where young people would be present.

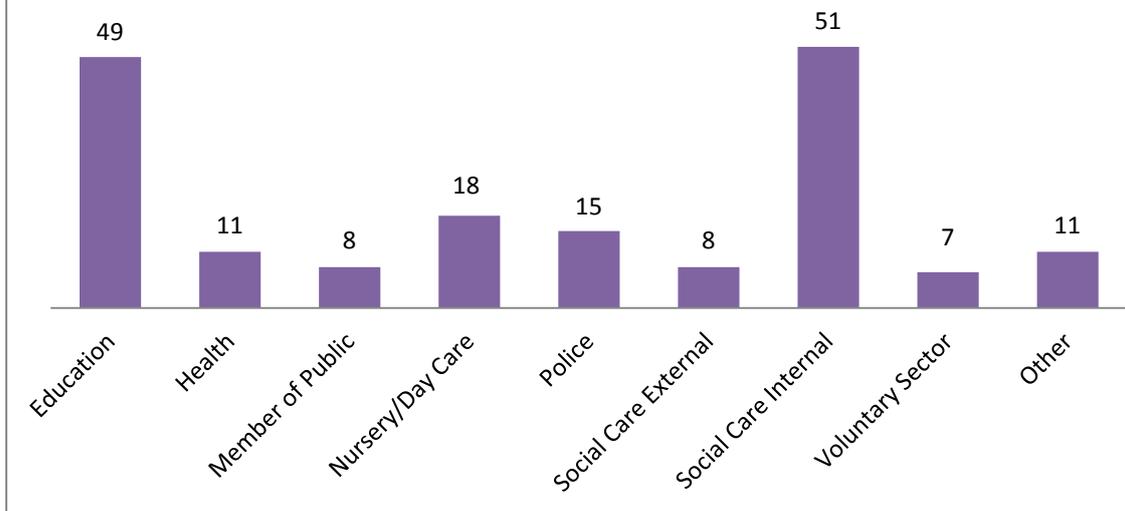
The Church was supported by the LADO to ensure that they continued to adhere to their safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures.

A new database, which is held by the AfC Quality Assurance and Review Service was implemented in April 2014. All historical files for Kingston and Richmond are now contained within this database. Data is colour coded to reflect the status of each case, including hyperlinks to strategy and LADO minutes. This data is provided by the LADO to both Richmond and Kingston Children's Social Care Performance Boards on a monthly basis and forms part of the monthly data set.

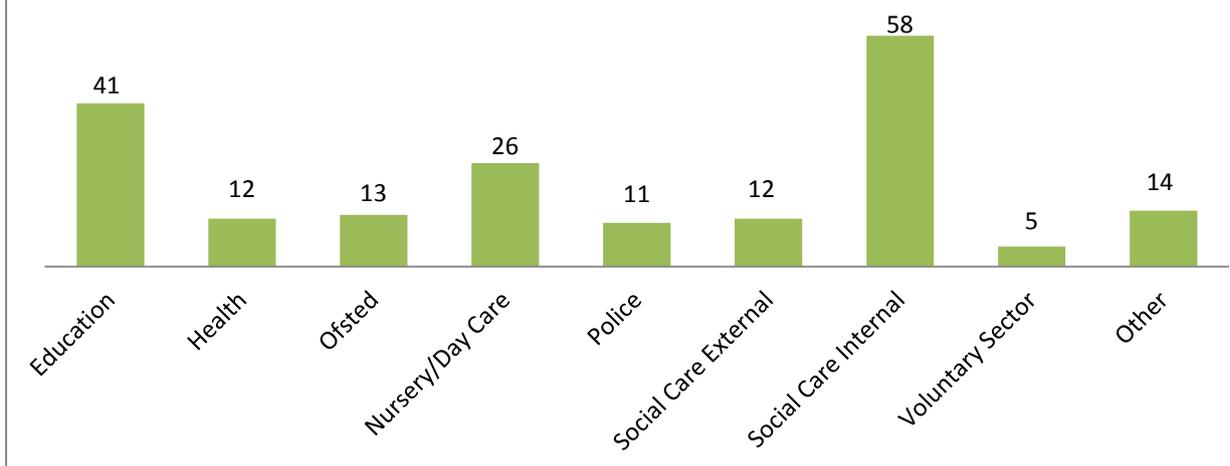
The Integrated Children's System (ICS) has a LADO hazard indicator which clearly shows if there is LADO involvement with a particular child. The hazard tab does not provide specific information regarding investigation, but asks that practitioners contact the LADO for further information.

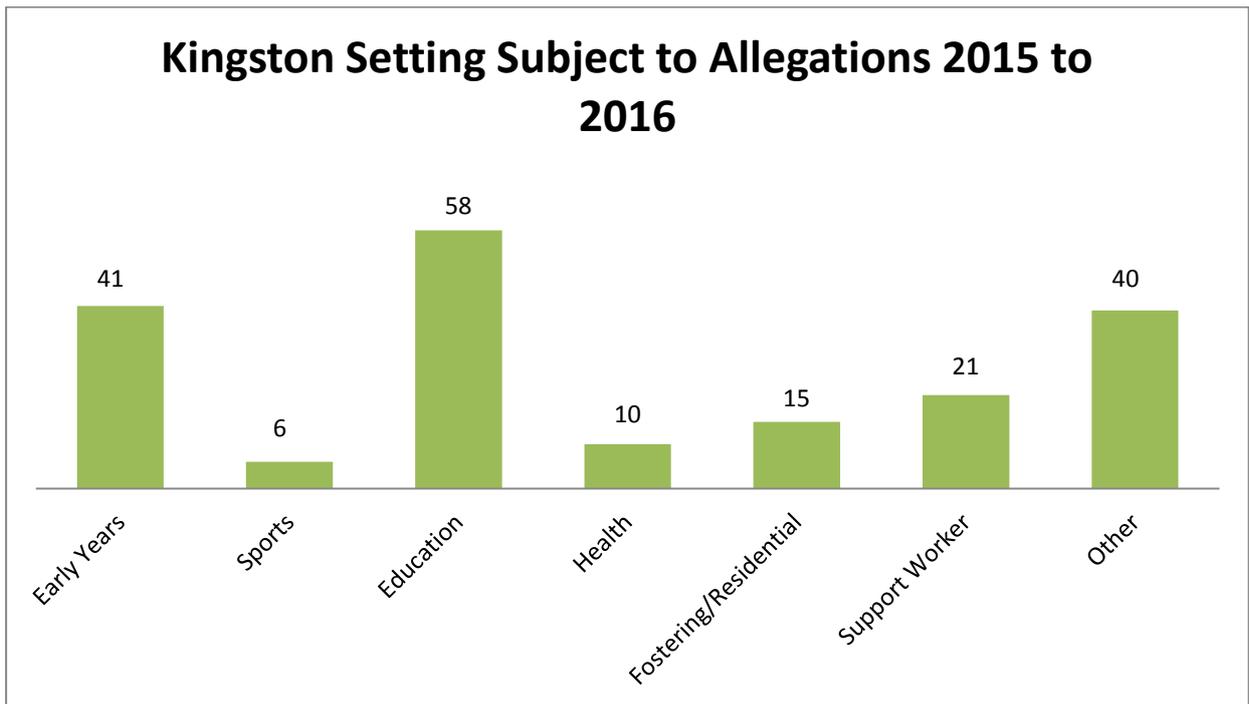
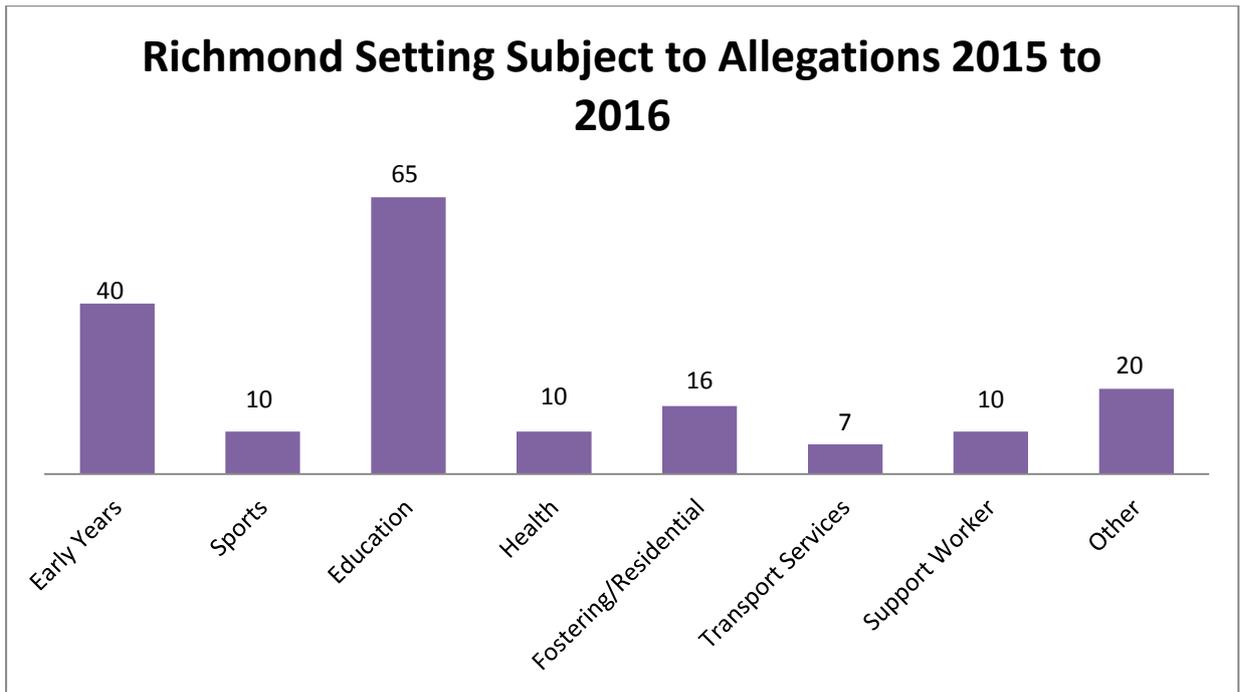
Referrals come from a variety of sources; it is not always the setting that makes the referral themselves, as demonstrated in the following graphs.

### Breakdown of Agencies making LADO referrals in Richmond 2015 to 2016



### Breakdown of Agencies making LADO referrals in Kingston 2015 to 2016





A significant proportion of allegations continue to come from education and early years settings, with 59% of referrals from these settings in Richmond and 52% in Kingston. It is for this reason that the LADO continues to work closely with schools and early years providers to assist in training and policy development. The LADO provides ongoing support to these

settings, in the form of written advice and guidance, regardless of whether a particular allegation requires a multi-agency investigation.

Referrals are made to the LADO where there are concerns raised in relation to someone's private life, rather than allegations as a direct result of their position within the children's workforce. In Richmond there were 65 such referrals and in Kingston there were 78.

Referrals regarding private lives often come from social workers within Children's Social Care who become aware that an adult, within a family that they are working with children. There has been an increase in referrals being made directly by social workers in AfC in both Richmond and Kingston – this demonstrates how the role of the LADO is increasingly understood by the workforce. Reports from social workers demonstrate that they appreciate being able to seek advice early in their case work, even if ultimately the threshold is not met for disclosure to an employer.

The LADO will discuss these cases with social workers to determine if there is a need to inform an employer about safeguarding concerns. Ordinarily, the LADO may suggest that the threshold is met to consider disclosure to employers if children are made the subject of a Child Protection Plan. There are circumstances where this would be considered earlier if there were grave safeguarding concerns in someone's private life that we felt impacted on their ability to keep children safe in their professional role.

The LADO would always wish to give individuals the opportunity to make their own disclosure if possible, with support from the allocated social worker to ensure that information shared is honest and transparent. If a parent refuses to make a disclosure, the LADO and social worker will need to risk assess and evidence why a breach in confidentiality is appropriate.

## **12. Achievements in the year 2015/16**

- The establishment of an additional 0.5FTE post to support the full time LADO;
- Positive feedback regarding the LADO service from Ofsted;
- Increased awareness across the children's workforce of the LADO role which has resulted in a continued increase in referral numbers;
- A consistent system of verbal and written feedback given to referrers, highlighting concerns, thresholds and recommendations; and
- Positive feedback from a range of partner agencies following their contact with the LADO service.

## **13. Service Priorities 2016/17**

- Establishment of new management structure within the Quality Assurance Service. The Standards and Improvement Directorate will undergo a formal consultation process to create a Safeguarding Standards Manager who will be responsible for line management of the LADO, Education Safeguarding Advisor and Social Work Practice Consultant;
- To develop materials and documents that can be provided to those who are the subject of allegations;
- To develop a clear policy detailing the protocol to be followed when allegations are received concerning a member of AfC's staff and
- To recruit a high quality School's Safeguarding Advisor and to develop this part of the service in a way that meets schools needs effectively, working with head teachers, governors and designated safeguarding leads.