

# **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**

## **Annual Report**

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

April 2017 to March 2018

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# 1. Executive summary

## What was done?

Referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Service increased overall in the last year. In the 2017/2018 reporting year, there were a total of 340 notifications of allegations or professional consultations in Kingston and Richmond. This is broken down to 171 in the Royal Borough of Kingston (an increase of 25 from the last reporting year) and 169 in the London Borough of Richmond (a decrease of 10 from the last reporting year).

This is an increase of 17% in Kingston and a decrease of 6% in Richmond, giving an average increase of 5% across the two local authorities.

## How well was it done?

Within Kingston's Ofsted inspection in 2015, 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.”**

Richmond's Ofsted inspection in 2017 also had praise for the LADO service.

**“Allegations against staff or persons of trust are well managed. The Designated Officer is knowledgeable and experienced and understands when and how to commence a child protection inquiry, if one is necessary.**

**Cases are followed up in writing, including those that do not meet the threshold for a Strategy Meeting, and this is good practice.**

**Systems in place to identify any emerging patterns apply equally to individuals and settings and ensure that repeat offending is minimised.”**

## What difference has been made?

The LADO process continues to ensure that allegations against those who work or volunteer with children are not seen in isolation and that the welfare of children is prioritised.

# 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 (LADO) the Kingston and Richmond boroughs, provided by Achieving for Children (AfC), for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

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, 2015 and 2018).

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.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016 (due to be updated September 2018) sets out the legal duties educational establishments must follow to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. It includes guidance around the management of allegations against the children's workforce.

The detail of the procedure followed by AfC's LADO to manage allegations against people who work with children is contained within the Pan London Child Protection Procedures: [www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/alleg\\_staff.html](http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/alleg_staff.html)

One of the revisions included in the 2018 edition 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. Along with most other London boroughs, Achieving for Children has chosen to maintain the title of LADO, as this is the title that partner agencies tell us they most easily understand.

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 and 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 management of allegations 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 Kingston and Richmond performance board meetings on a quarterly basis
- 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
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that they may pose a risk of harm to children

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

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

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

In October 2017, a new LADO was appointed. This individual solely undertakes the LADO function and has no additional responsibilities outside of this role. The LADO service is overseen by the Head of Safeguarding Standards and Principal Social Worker.

The LADO is an experienced social worker, registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and fully meet the requirements of the revisions to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. There are no plans to move the LADO service outside of the Quality Assurance and Reviewing Service or to rename the role.

Having a designated LADO 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. Cover is primarily provided by the Head of Safeguarding Standards.

The LADO receives regular, four weekly supervision from the Head of Safeguarding Standards and Principal Social Worker, 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 LADO has a mid-year review and annual appraisal where performance, individual and service goals are agreed.

The Head of Safeguarding Standards 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.

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
- maintaining, collating and updating the high profile case tracker
- providing the LADO dataset for the monthly Joint Performance Board

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

All agencies that provide services for children or provide staff or volunteers to work with children have a duty to contact the LADO where there are safeguarding allegations in respect to employees or volunteers. 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 their private life. Allegations can also relate to the partner of the person who works with children, whose response or attitude suggest that their ability to fulfil their role might be compromised.

The Childcare Act 2006 prohibits anyone who is disqualified 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.

### **Oversight of historical allegations**

The LADO continues to assist the police and other agencies in relation to non-recent allegations and enquiries. Many of these investigations take place over a number of years and may not involve those who currently work within the London Borough of Richmond or the Royal Borough of Kingston; the LADO or Head of Safeguarding Standards has liaised with internal and external agencies as appropriate.

### **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 and provided a number of training and briefing sessions for internal staff as well as external agencies.

This has included two training sessions for foster carers to understand how allegations are managed and two multi agency training sessions. All four of these sessions have been facilitated through AfC’s Workforce Development Team.

### Local Safeguarding Children's Board

The LADO continues to support the work of the Kingston and Richmond Local Safeguarding Boards, currently sitting on two integrated subgroups: safeguarding children online/child sexual exploitation awareness sub-group and the learning and development sub-group.

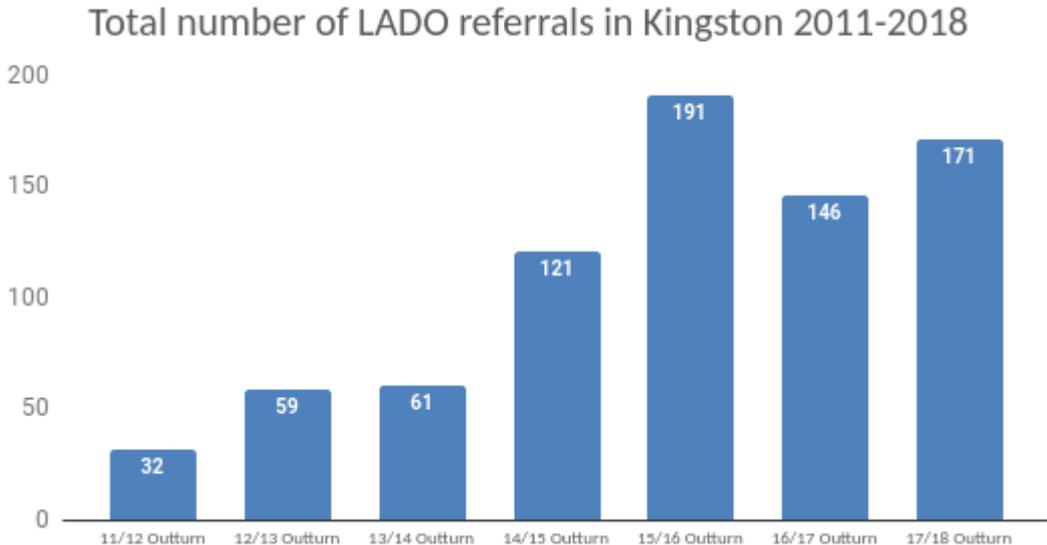
Given the number of current high profile cases that are managed by the LADO, the Head of Safeguarding Standards recommends that the Local Safeguarding Board invites the LADO as a standing member of both the Kingston and Richmond serious case review subgroups. The Associate Director for Quality Assurance and Review currently attends both sub-groups representing the LADO, family group conference, child protection conference and independent reviewing services.

The LADO data set, performance and key findings are fed into both the Kingston and Richmond Quality Assurance Local Safeguarding Children’s Board Sub-Group by the Associate Director for Quality Assurance and Review, but the Head of Safeguarding Standards recommends that going forward that the LADO is invited in attend this subgroup in person when there is a need.

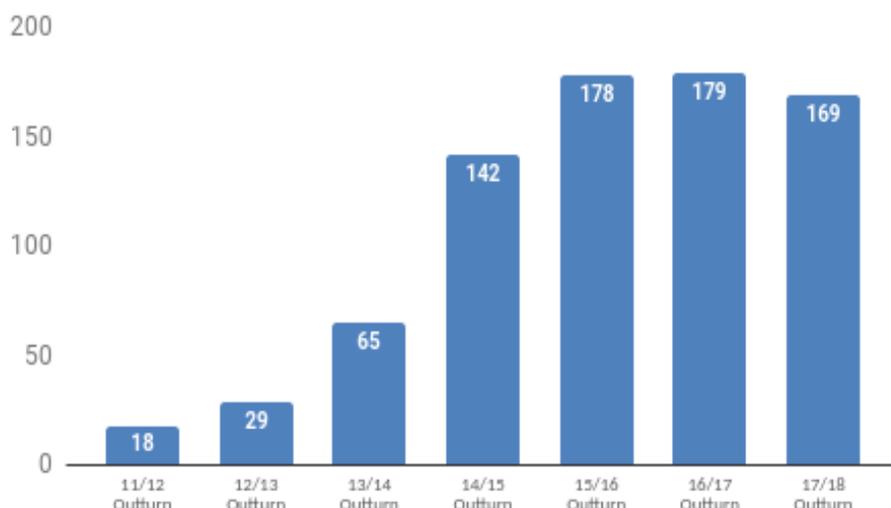
## 6. Activity and analysis

There have been 340 referrals and professional consultations in Kingston and Richmond between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. This is broken down to 171 in Kingston and 169 in Richmond.

The level of referrals and professional consultations has stabilised in recent years, following a dramatic rise in contact with the service in the 2014/2015 reporting year.



## Total number of LADO referrals in Richmond 2011-2018



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 the staff member.

The LADO may receive requests from those who are the subject of allegations for a copy of LADO records through a subject access request and all parties are reminded of this during the management of allegations meeting. Third party or organisation sensitive information may be redacted by the LADO as appropriate.

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

LADO management of allegations 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 and 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, 2015 and 2018 and Department of Education Statutory Guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2016 which is due to be updated in September 2018.

AfC LADO procedures follow section 7 of the Pan London Child Protection Procedures.

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.

It is sometimes necessary to gather together a number of individuals from organisations at very short notice.

### **Case example: LADO strategy meeting held within four hours of referral by the National Crime Agency.**

Referral received by LADO following the arrest of a local nursery employee.

LADO coordinated an urgent strategy meeting involving 17 professionals from eight different settings and departments including Ofsted, Metropolitan Police, National Crime Agency, Senior Nursery Directors and Children's Services.

This meeting shared appropriate information, considered risk to children and agreed next steps.

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.

Advice for employers or those responsible for volunteers is always given in writing and this was acknowledged as good practice by Ofsted during Richmond's inspection last year.

**"Cases are followed up in writing, including those that do not meet the threshold for a strategy meeting, and this is good practice."**

Richmond Ofsted Inspection 2017

### **Anonymised example of LADO advice given to an employer where threshold for a multi-agency meeting was not met:**

Dear

Following our conversation this afternoon, as promised, here is my advice in writing.

In summary, a member of staff has taken two children to use the bathroom. There has been some confusion with pre-school children returning to the room and the staff member has mistakenly left one child on her own in the bathroom area.

A parent has discovered this child and returned her to the room.

There is no suggestion of any mal-intent, but there has clearly been a breakdown in your procedures.

I do not feel that the matter requires a formal referral to the LADO service.

There is no evidence that the staff member has:

- harmed a child
- committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child
- behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they pose a risk of harm to children

You have had no previous concerns regarding the conduct of this member of staff.

This matter does need to be investigated and measures put in place to try and minimise the possibility of something similar happening again.

The questions that I would suggest you ask are:

- how confident staff members are that they 'know' the children in their care, given that the staff member has brought another child back with her
- how staff check in with each other when they are undertaking toilet duties alone - would you have expected another staff member to accompany?
- how a parent found this child and brought her back to the room unchallenged by staff

If you require any further advice or support, do come back to me.

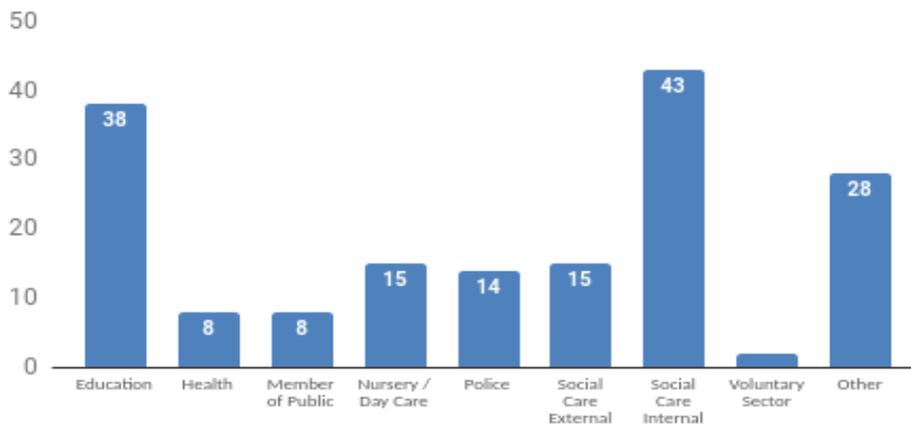
With kind regards

The LADO database, which is held by the AfC Quality Assurance and Review Service was implemented in April 2014 and is kept up-to-date with all relevant information by the LADO business support officer. All historical files for Kingston and Richmond are contained within this database. Data is colour coded to reflect the status of each case, including hyperlinks to strategy discussions and LADO minutes. This data is provided by the LADO to both Kingston and Richmond Children's Social Care Performance Boards on a monthly basis and forms part of the monthly data set.

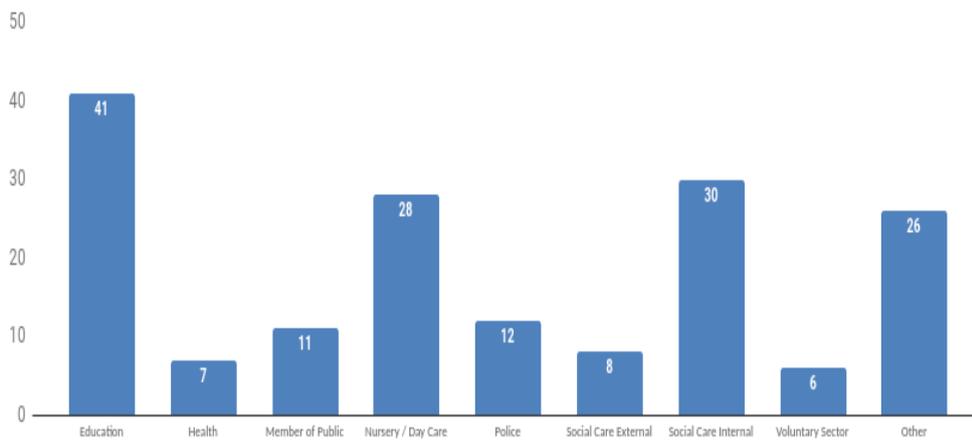
The Integrated Children's System (ICS) has a LADO hazard indicator which clearly shows if there is LADO involvement with a particular child. The hazard tab does not provide specific information regarding investigation, but asks that practitioners contact the LADO for further information.

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 Kingston 2017 - 2018



Breakdown of Agencies making LADO referrals in Richmond 2017 - 2018



It is useful to highlight that although the voluntary sector appear to be under-represented in terms of referrals to the LADO service, the voluntary sector have been involved in a number of cases. Often referrals are reported to and recorded by the LADO in terms of an individual's substantial post. For example, where a teacher also volunteers, this would be recorded as an education, rather than voluntary sector referral, but the voluntary organisation would be involved in the discussions, meetings, etc.

## Case example: Allegation involving education and voluntary settings

Referral by a Richmond school regarding contact between a pupil and a former member of staff that was a cause for concern.

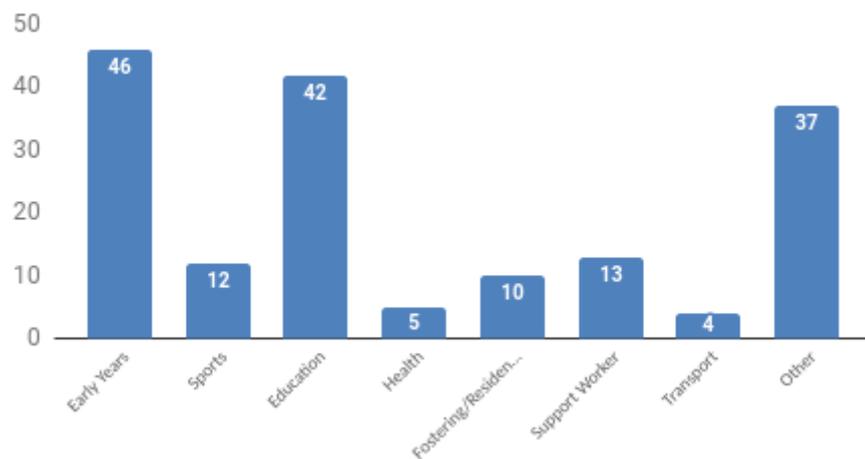
Teacher was working at another school in the borough and for a voluntary organisation out of borough.

LADO led police investigation, working in partnership with all three settings.

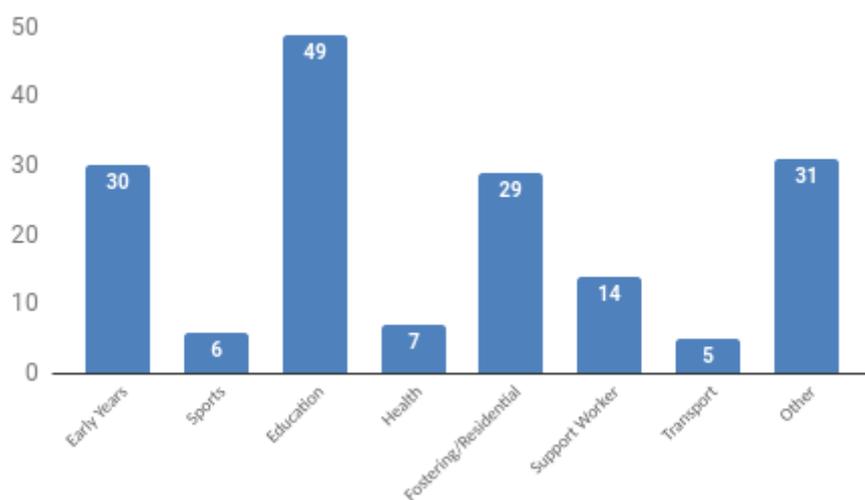
LADO liaison with National College of Teaching and Leadership (Teaching Regulation Agency as of April 2018) and Charity Commission.

Although threshold not met for criminal prosecution, subject was dismissed from his employ, referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service and barred from teaching by the National College of Teaching and Leadership.

Richmond Setting Subject to Allegations 2017 - 2018



Kingston Settings Subject to Allegations 2017 - 2018



A significant proportion of allegations continue to come from education and early years settings, with 49% of referrals from these settings in Kingston and 52% in Richmond. It is for this reason that the LADO continues to work closely with schools, early years providers and AfC's Early Years Team 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.

In Richmond, for the first time since formal statistical records have been kept of the LADO service, referrals in relation to early years providers were greater than those from education. This may be explained in part by some large child care provider organisations, with multiple settings feeling more confident in seeking advice and support from the LADO. The vast majority of these referrals and consultations did not meet the threshold for a multi-agency investigation, but settings reported finding it useful to have the opportunity to talk through issues and agree next steps in terms of training and development of staff.

The LADO and AfC Early Years Team are meeting with one particularly large provider to discuss policies, procedures and consider if any additional support is needed.

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 Kingston there were 47 such referrals and in Richmond there were 40.

Referrals regarding private lives often come from social workers within Children's Social Care (both internally and externally) who become aware that an adult, within a family that they are working with children.

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 risk assess and evidence why a breach in confidentiality is appropriate.

The LADO works closely with Children's Social Care, particularly the Single Point of Access where concerns are highlighted in relation to those that care for children but in an unregulated environment, such as privately employed nannies.

**Case Example: Concerns raised regarding an au pair who presented at hospital following an overdose of over the counter medication. Advice provided by the LADO to the Single Point Of Access by phone and followed up in writing.**

“Thanks for calling me earlier. As promised, a summary of our conversation with my advice is below.

Cases like this are difficult to manage, not least because au pairs are not necessarily seen as employees, they are supposed to be 'extended family' who received pocket money for help with household chores and some childcare.

We don't have an allegation that (named individual) has:

- harmed a child
- committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child
- behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children

However, she is caring for children that are not her own and the parents need to be given an opportunity to decide on suitability.

I think it is proportionate in these circumstances for AfC to clarify that the parents are aware of the situation so that they can take measures to ensure that their children are safe and appropriately cared for.

That is not to say that we feel (named individual) poses a risk of harm to children, but if we think logically, if this was a parent that presented in this way to A&E, it would be reasonable to assume that we would want to ensure that the other parent was aware and taking protective measures as well as supporting their spouse/partner.

I know that you were going to speak with (named individual) again yesterday.

If there are any concerns that you feel I need to be aware of following your conversations, do let me know.”

## **7. Achievements in the year 2017/18**

- Increased number of formal training sessions detailing the role and remit of the LADO to foster carers and multi-agency settings
- Positive feedback regarding the LADO service from Ofsted
- Increased participation in the London LADO network
- Participation in the London Safeguarding Children’s Board working group to update the Pan London LADO procedures
- Positive feedback from a range of partner agencies following their contact with the LADO service

- Head of Service commissioned to provide independent safeguarding advice to a local National Governing Body
- Successful recruitment of a new stand-alone LADO
- Managing, overseeing and contributing to a number of large scale complex abuse investigations
- Contributing to a Richmond Serious Case Review

## **8. Service priorities 2017/18**

- To target training specifically for voluntary and faith groups in relation to allegations management and the role of the LADO
- To meet more frequently with AfC's Early Years Service to discuss referrals and trends to ensure that settings are supported appropriately
- To work with the London LADO managers subgroup to host the National LADO conference in March 2019