



London Borough Bromley Safeguarding Children Board LADO Annual Report.

Short Summary - Annual LADO Report for BSCB

**April 2016 to March 2017
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Introduction and Legislative Framework

This report describes the performance of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). This report has been prepared to briefly inform the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) of the work carried out in the London Borough of Bromley to manage allegations that have been made against staff who work with children and

young people. The report applies to allegations made against those working in either a paid or unpaid capacity with children in Bromley during the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017.

The role of the LADO in Managing Allegations against Professionals and Volunteers working with children in Bromley

In accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 the London Borough of Bromley like all Local Authorities has a designated officer with overall responsibility for managing and co-ordinating allegations made against those who work with children. All London Safeguarding Children Board (LSCBS) have a responsibility of ensuring that the correct procedures are in place for investigating allegations against adults who work with children. This role is undertaken by a Designated Officer commonly known as LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer).

Although some Local Authorities now refer to this post as Designated Officer (DO), Bromley has retained the name LADO. The LADO should be informed of all allegations and should provide advice and guidance to ensure cases are dealt with and resolved in a timely manner. The LADO post sits within the Quality Improvement team and In April 2017, a Safeguarding Education Senior Practitioner post was formed to seat within the LADO. The Education Safeguarding Senior Practitioner who is managed by the LADO serves as a link between schools and Social Care. This role is put in place to ensure that schools understand the thresholds within Children Social Care and that their safeguarding is robust and challenging.

LSCBs have a further function to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these multi agency policies and procedures when implemented by the local authority and partner agencies.

The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) was established in the 2004 Children Act and provides for the management of allegations against adults who work with children. The role of the LADO is to assess such allegations and, where they meet a threshold of Harm or risk of such harm, to manage the investigation of such allegations in an unbiased, efficient and thorough manner.

The LADO must be contacted within **one working day** in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works 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 they may pose a risk of harm to children.

AND OR

- Behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns. This does not have to directly relate to a child.
- Closely associates/resides with another person who is disqualified because they have committed an offence included in the 2009 Regulations.

In all cases that meet the threshold, the LADO will give consideration to:

- Issues of a child protection.
- Any possible criminal investigation that may need to take place
- Any staff disciplinary process that will be undertaken
- Any complaints process that are being undertaken.

Summary:

There were a total of 223 referrals made to LADO in 2016/17. This is a significant increase compared to the 193 referrals received in 2015/16. The increase in the number of referrals is positive and in line with referrals within the London Reginal Boroughs. One of our neighbouring boroughs, Croydon had 215 referrals whilst Wandsworth and Bexley had 261 and 178 respectively.

The increase is also a reflection of the increased awareness and knowledge of the LADO process within organisations/agencies in Bromley. Organisations within Bromley appear to be having a better understanding of what the role of the LADO is and where unsure, there is evidence that that they are seeking advice and help to this regard. This has been aided by the ongoing quarterly LADO lunch time briefing as well as the LADO presentation at the Bromley Multi Agency Partnership event and many more forums.

Also, as projected and highlighted in the 2015/16 LADO report, the implementation of a new IT application designed to improve the recording of allegations data has also led to an anticipated increase in the number of referrals and more robust recordings. Referrals and allegations are recorded and acknowledged even if they do not meet the threshold for a LADO investigation.

- Of the 223 referrals, 106 cases met the threshold for a LADO Complex Strategy Investigation meeting.
- In regards to the overall outcomes of the cases referred, 2 cases were founded, 3 were substantiated, 60 were unsubstantiated, 25 were unfounded as the referrals were assessed as malicious and 16 are ongoing cases.
- 10 of those cases were sent to DBS and 41 cases involved a criminal investigation with 2 leading to conviction and caution. In the previous year, there were 2 cautions, 1 non-custodial and 2 custodial.
- It is worth noting that although 5 had an outcome of substantiated/founded outcome, the matters alleged which were founded did not necessarily meet the threshold for a DBS referral or professional bodies. In those cases, although what was alleged did occur, discussions between the LADO and relevant organisations and Human resource professionals assessed that the issues were not significant enough to require the member of staff to be barred from working with children.
- It is important to remind Bromley staff that a DBS referral is required if the subject of the allegation is dismissed as a result of the allegation and or if the subject decides to resign whilst the investigation is going on. Sometimes, there appears to be a misconception that the allegation and concern disappear once the person resigns; unfortunately, this is not the case as resignation does not prove that one is innocent if anything, it raises questions to this regard. The LADO has noted this to be more common with voluntary staff as well as support staff and or staff in the lower levels of management etc.
- The unsubstantiated outcome appears to be the highest outcome in regards to the investigations undertaken. This is usually where there is not enough evidence to substantiate the allegation even when it meets the threshold for a LADO complex Strategy Meeting.
- Out of the 223 allegations/referrals made, 106 were of a physical nature, 42 sexual, 26 emotional, 25 inappropriate behaviour and 24 fell under the category of neglect.
- The category/referrals of physical harm continue to remain the highest both in this current year and the previous. Referrals from schools mainly tend to be of physical harm and the highest numbers of referrals continue to relate to Education. 90 of the overall referrals were allegations against education staff,

23 related to secondary school staff, 47 related to primary school staff, 2 related to independent school staff, 15 to special school whilst 3 related to college staff.

- The referrals in respect of Sexual abuse and or misconduct have doubled since the last couple years. In 2015/16, there were 24 referrals and in 2014/15 there were 27 referrals. This is not unusual when compared to other boroughs and I believe this is partly down to the increased awareness in what constitutes sexual abuse/misconduct in working with children and in the personal life of professionals. A number of such referrals have come from the police /CEOP team who have been tracking online sexual exploitation. The increased use of social of social media may also be accountable for the increase in the number of referrals.
- There is a positive drive within the London Borough Bromley to increase awareness around Child Sexual Exploitation through the newly formed ATLAS team and I believe this will greatly support professionals to become more aware.
- 24 allegations were against 17 Foster Carers and there appears to have been an increase in the last two years where there were 10 referrals in 2014/15 and 19 in 2015/16. 16 of the referrals against foster carers were returned for a Standard of Care Investigation and 11 of those returned panel. The LADO has recently started to have quarterly meeting with the Fostering and placement Group Manager to identify common themes, track cases and promote positive working relationship.
- The number of referrals from the police and about police professionals are generally low in Bromley and this appears to be the same view and experience of other regional LADO's across London. In 2014/15, there was no referral from and about the police. In 2015/16, there 4 referrals and in 2016/17, there was 1 referral against the police and 3 in respect of personal life referral. On the 27th of March 2017, the LADO met with the Bromley police Safeguarding Children Manager to discuss the need for better working together and greater awareness. In addition to this, The London Borough of Bromley has been running a three monthly Multi Agency partnership event to increase awareness across all professions within Bromley.
- The health service is another area that appears to make the least referral to the LADO. The LADO continues to note a considerably low number of allegation referrals received from the Health sector overall. In 2016/17, the number of allegations received for Health professionals is 12. This slightly lower percentage than the previous year but still considerably higher than 2

years ago. However given the number of Health professionals working across the borough in hospitals, medical centres, drop in clinics, surgeries and even schools it is felt that the number of referrals remains disproportionately low. The majority of the referrals received this financial year were from health Kent House hospital. Kent House are generally proactive in making referrals and seeking advice from LADO.

- Also, where health referrals have led to a Complex Strategy meeting, it has been noted that health colleagues do not seem to fully understand the process and there appears to be a lot of gaps and uncertainties in the information they provide. Unfortunately, as like in the previous year, it is still noted that only a very small number of professionals from Health attend the Allegations Lunchtime Briefings.
- As a way forward and in acknowledgment of the concerns raised in regards to the low level and poor quality of health referrals, the LADO in conjunction with health colleagues has agreed to attend team meetings to help increase awareness and knowledge to this regard. The LADO has also communicated with the designated health safeguarding lead to agree on joint training and meeting.
- It must be noted that like with concerns raised about health and the police, a number of Bromley Local Authority Social work teams are not very timely in making referrals which can sometimes impact on the quality and level of evidence needed to reach an outcome.
- Also worth noting is referrals in respect of agencies known as “other”. The agencies classified as ‘other’ are made up of those miscellaneous agencies that do not have their own individual category on the database. This relates to agencies such as transport workers. The transport workers include the private taxi/minibus drivers, and the escorts that take children (most of whom have a disability) to and from school. The sporting organisations include tennis, football and rugby coaches.
- Most of these agencies mentioned above have little or no knowledge about the LADO and or LADO process and generally investigate matters internally. Although the LADO has made efforts to reach these agencies through the Safeguarding board and through referrals by other agencies, it is challenging to make any significant impact in attempting to address safeguarding training needs within these companies and organisations as there is no requirement for proprietors or employees of some of such firms to access safeguarding training (For example, taxi firms).

- In like manner, individual private coaches (tennis, music, drama) who run their own business are not always registered under bigger known main stream organisations that can formally regulate and monitor them. Such private companies don't generally undergo safeguarding training and are not aware of the procedure of managing allegation within Bromley and or the Local Authorities were they are based.
- The LADO has continued to ensure that professionals remain aware that a LADO referral is required if they behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns. This does not have to directly relate to a child. If professionals working with children have Social Care and or police involvement in their personal life, they need to ensure they are open and honest with their employers who may need to undertake a risk assessment on the advice of the LADO. Following the ongoing awareness raising through the lunch time briefing as well as meetings and general advice, the LADO has observed an increase in the number of referrals coming through in regards to concerns in the personal life of professionals.

Raising LADO Awareness:

- The LADO continues to run a LADO quarterly lunch time briefing for all professionals in Bromley. The most recent one was on the 6th of July 2017. This increasingly becoming well attended and is a free session. In July this year 32 people attended in comparison to 15 people who were recorded to have attended last year.
- The LADO also presents at the Bromley Multi Agency Partnership event. There have been two of events this year and two more planned to take place before the end of the year.
- The LADO has recently started quarterly meetings with the Fostering and placement team and has booked in to attend team meetings across Children Social Care. The LADO has also attended team meetings outside of Children Social Care to raise awareness and offer training.

- The LADO has also undertaken training with Governors of schools in Bromley as well as other smaller sectors that have approached the LADO to this regard.
- As a result of the ongoing awareness raising, there appears to be better understanding in regards to the need to refer professionals where there has been a concern in their private life which may involve either Social Care and or the police. This is evidenced by the increase in referrals to this regard.

Quality Assurance:

- The LADO role is quality assured through practice observation and case supervision. On the 26th of April 2017, the London Borough Bromley conducted a practice week where the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director| Education, Care & Health Services of Bromley observed a LADO Complex Strategy meeting. Feedback following the practice observation was very positive.

Wider LADO Networks

- The Bromley LADO is a member of the Regional London LADO. The Regional LADO's meet every three months where we share practice, and case work experiences as well as reviewing interfaces and cooperation across boroughs, including identifying themes and emerging patterns. This offers significant opportunities to compare and benchmark thresholds and levels of intervention, draw on the experience of others, and consider alternative approaches. The Group also meets regularly with members from the Disqualification and Barring Service, Police, Anglican and Catholic Dioceses Safeguarding teams, and a variety of other stakeholders.
- As part of our membership of the Group, Bromley have been involved in meetings between NHS England and the LADO group across London in an attempt to increase awareness of the role of the LADO and how it can add value to disciplinary issues with NHS professional staff.

- Currently the London Child Protection Procedures are being reviewed and changes are currently out to consultation across London. The London LADO group has met on a number of occasions with the Author of Chapter 7, and have submitted amendments and changes to the proposed procedures.

National LADO Conference

- The Bromley LADO attended the Annual National LADO conference in March 2017. This was an opportunity to network with LADO's on a national basis and to hear developments at a national level. Speakers representing victim of abuse by persons in a position of trust, National research and Department of Education attended and there were opportunities to network with colleagues from around the country

Plans for the future:

- The LADO has agreed with some of the regional LADO's to form a sub audit committee to undertake peer audit. This is due to start before the end of the year.
- The LADO will also promote in house audit of at least 4 LADO cases per year. Two founded and two unfounded.
- Continue awareness raising through Lunch time briefing and Multi Agency Partnership Events. As stated the lunch time briefing has become more popular and attendance rate has doubled since last year.
- The LADO to attend team meetings within and outside of Children Social Care teams as well as quarterly meetings with heads of relevant departments to raise awareness and discuss best practice.
- The London Borough Bromley is the process of migrating to the Eclipse system and the LADO will work with the Eclipse team to ensure that relevant forms are created and added to the system.

Conclusion:

The LADO is positive about the year so far. The increased/timely level of response to LADO response in regards to allegations and enquiries has been acknowledged by many professionals across board. It has been another successful year for the LADO service and it continues to establish itself within the safeguarding network in Bromley and is seen as a positive and supportive provision. Professionals have feedback the benefits of learning and knowledge acquired as a result of working with LADO.

In addition to increasing awareness within the professionals and organisations in Bromley, the Service has expanded its sphere of influence and works with service providers and partner agencies to address not just issues of potential harm to children and young people but also to improve the standard of care enjoyed by the children of Bromley.

However, despite the progress and achievement made this year, the LADO acknowledges that there is still more work to be done and more sectors to reach within Bromley. More collaborative work needs to be done with health, the police and voluntary organisations. This can be achieved by going out directly to meet with heads of these sectors through the course of the year.