



# MANAGEMENT OF ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

## LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2024 – MARCH 2025



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# INTRODUCTION

This is the annual report for Knowsley Council's Allegation Management Service. It provides an overview and analysis of the management of allegations against staff and volunteers who work with children and young people. It covers the reporting period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

The role is mandated by the Local Authorities duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. It is a requirement, nationally, for all employers within the children's workforce to have clear and robust procedures in place when responding to allegations against staff, whether they are paid or voluntary. Working Together provides the harm threshold to apply when an allegation is made against a member of staff, and it is believed that the individual 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 they may 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.

The Allegation Management Service accepts referrals that meet the harm threshold and progresses these as allegations or suitability to practice concerns. The LADO's key role is to provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations when there

has been an allegation against a member of staff. The LADO liaises with partner agencies, including the police, employers, OFSTED, health care providers and other professional bodies to monitor the progress of referrals and ensure they are dealt with consistently and as quickly as possible. The LADO oversees the investigations into these allegations to ensure organisations operate a thorough and fair process, providing additional oversight and scrutiny until the investigations are concluded.

The legislation and guidance are underpinned by the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount. Allegation Management should be applied with the child's safety and welfare as the overriding consideration. In order to safeguard children, all organisations that provide services for children, or provide staff or volunteers to work with or care for children, should operate a procedure for handling allegations that is consistent with Working Together and local Safeguarding Partnership procedures.

# SERVICE STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

The LADO is a permanent member of staff and has been in post since September 2022. The LADO is a qualified and experienced social worker, registered with Social Work England, which complies with the requirements of Working Together.

The LADO role sits within the Safeguarding Quality Assurance Service and is line managed by the Service Manager of the team. Child Protection and Reviewing Officers or the Service Manager cover for LADO absence.

The Allegation Management Service is supported by the Child Protection Minute Takers within the Service.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **163** Referrals to the LADO Service (increase of 3% from last year).
- **63.2%** of referrals were deemed to have met threshold.
- **85%** of referrals were responded to within the same day.
- **8%** of referrals that met threshold were Substantiated. A further 7 cases were substantiated from referrals prior to April 2024 which concluded during this period.
- **23.9%** of Referrals remain active.
- **14%** of Referrals concluded within 1 month.



# ANALYSIS OF DATA AND OUTCOMES

## Number of Allegations

| Referral Year | Total (including contacts and advice given) | NFA after initial consideration | % which to proceeded to Initial AMM |
|---------------|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2022-2023     | 123   | 50                              | 59.3%                               |
| 2023-2024     | 158   | 76                              | 51.9%                               |
| 2024-2025     | 163   | 60                              | 63.2%                               |

There have been 163 referrals to LADO in the last twelve months, this is an increase from the last year. The number of referrals during this period resulting in an Allegations Against Staff & Volunteers Management Meetings being held has increased this year to 62.6%. The meetings promote information sharing in particular between Police and Employers.

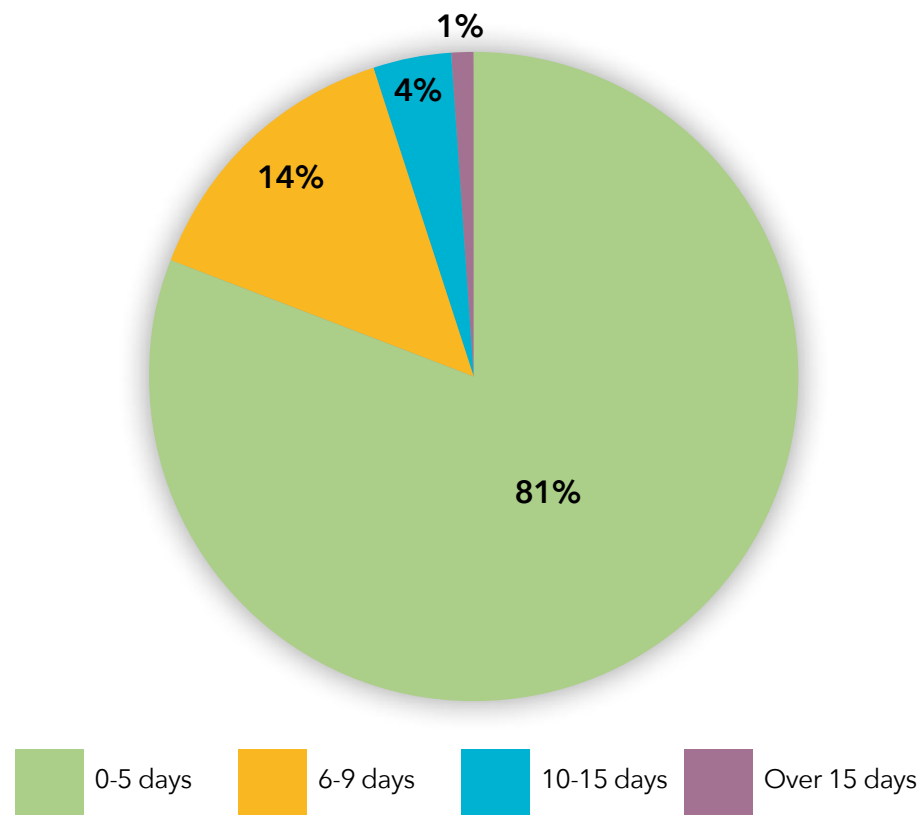
- In 2024-2025 the highest number of referrals were from Education, Residential Care Homes, and Health. Education made 56 LADO referrals (school age children) of which 34 (61%) met the LADO threshold, in the previous year there were 34 referrals of which 19 (56%) met threshold.

- In Fostering there has also been an increase from 11 to 16 referrals of which 10 met threshold, 7 where from Independent Foster Carers and 3 in-house Foster Carers.
- There has been a decrease this year in the referrals from Health from 33 in 2023-2024 to 22 LADO referrals this year. 17 of the 20 referrals met threshold. For 2 employees they both had 2 separate referrals that met threshold during this reporting period.
- Referrals from Residential Care Homes slightly decreased from 38 to 34 referrals, however 20 met threshold which is a significant increase from last year whereby only 7 met the threshold. Of the referrals, 33 came from private Residential Children's Homes with 1 referral received from the Local Authority's Residential Children's home. Ofsted recommend that providers consult with LADO even on cases that do not necessarily meet threshold and so are assured LADO is being suitably accessed.
- In Early Years, the referrals decreased from 12 to 8 referrals.

## Allegations Management Meetings

Throughout 2024/2025 there has been 103 Initial Allegation Management Meeting (AMM) held. Of those, 81% were held within 5 working days (2023-24: 66%). There were 19% of Initial AMMs that were not held within 5 working days, in these cases there were in the main only slight delays, this did not affect the investigations and there was no evidence of drift or delay.

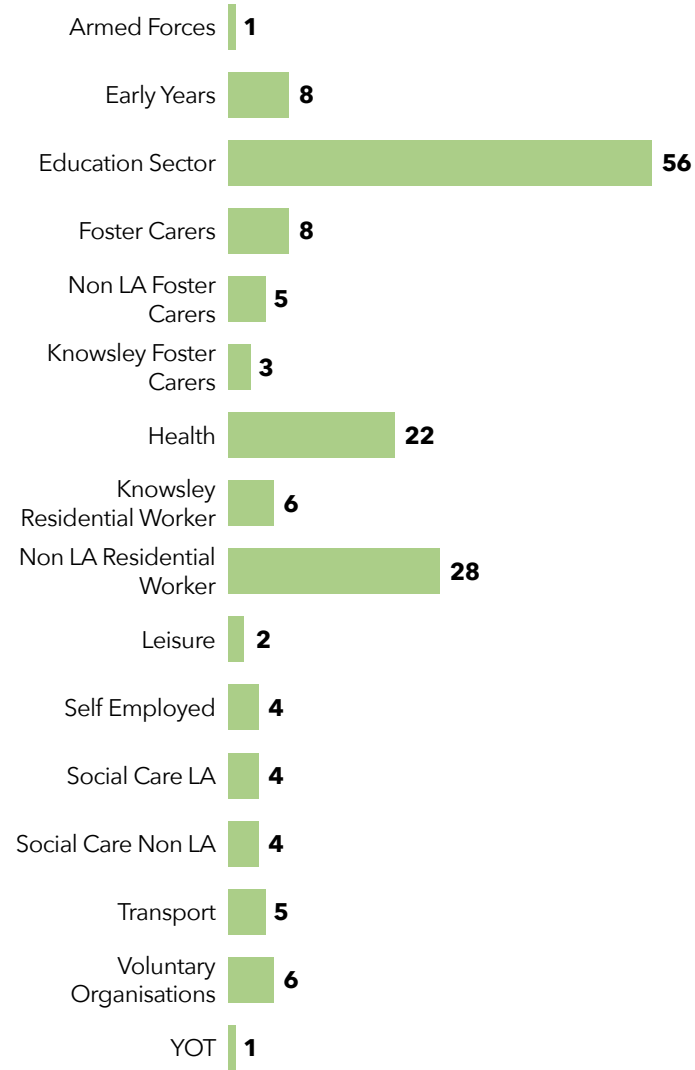
### Initial AMM Meetings held in Timescales



Of the 103 Initial AMM meetings held, 63 AMM Initial meetings were resolved during this reporting period. Of the 63 completed AMMs, 14% were resolved within one month, which is a significant decrease from last year which was 68%. Allegations being under police investigation – have taken considerably longer to resolve. The employer is unable to commence their investigation until the outcome from Police enquiries is known. Employment investigations have also taken considerably longer due to some cases where the person subject to the allegation has been on sick leave for lengthy periods. In these cases, the employer has had to take their own legal advice. There were 47% completed within 3 months, 39% completed 4-12 months. There is no current legislation that determines the timescales within which a LADO referral must reach its resolution. In Knowsley we strive to complete AMMs within 3 months and only in exceptional circumstances do AMMs exceed more than 12 months. These are mainly in respect of allegations where there are investigations by Police including the outcome of court, CPS decision and seizure of electronic devices – can impact upon timeliness.

There were also 138 Review AMM meetings were held in this reporting period, which is a significant increase from last year where 93 Review AMM meetings were held. In Knowsley, the LADO strives for multi-agency oversight in the majority of Allegations.

Breakdown of Allegations by Sector

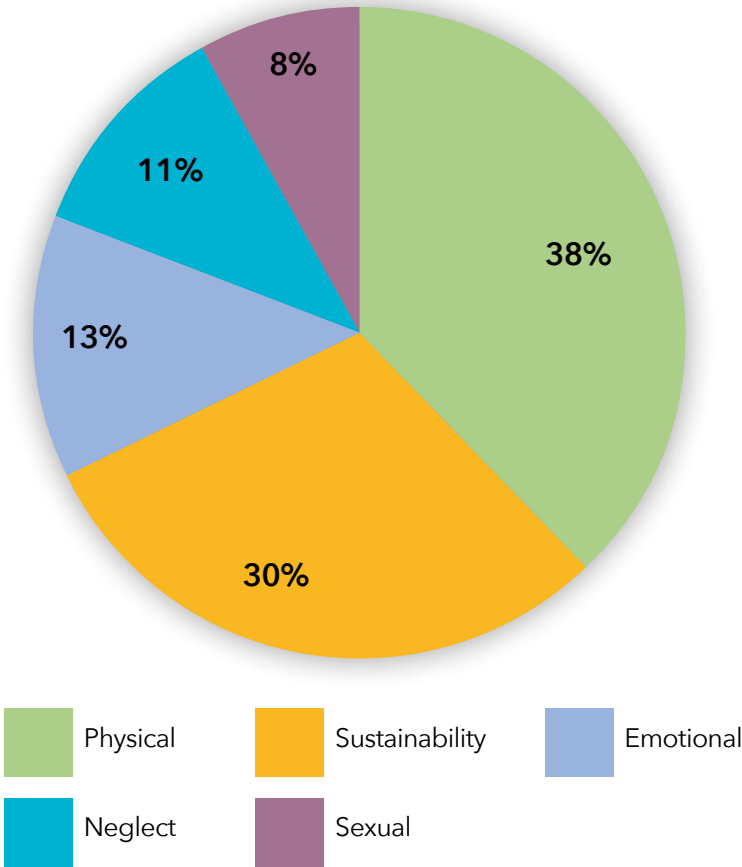


Cases referred according to abuse or harm types as follows:

During this reporting period, LADO was moved over to a new LADO ICS data system. However, there have been some issues in the reporting of categories and as such only a total of 79 have been pulled through from the 163 referrals.

Based on the categories that have been able to be reported on:

Categories of AMM Referrals





The number of allegations mainly relate to physical harm and suitability. The number of sexual abuse allegations has decreased during this reporting period. The suitability relates primarily to allegations under the fourth threshold, and this is monitored on a local and national level. We will continue to examine themes and patterns of harm referred to LADO. The number of physical harm allegations has remained high; it is noted that this is primarily in relation to Education and Residential Settings.

## Case Progression and Outcome Conclusion of Allegation Cases

|                       | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024 | 2024-2025                                   |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|---|
| Unfounded             | 11        | 4         | 16  |
| Unsubstantiated       | 26        | 17        | 21  |
| Malicious             | 0         | 1         | 0   |
| Substantiated         | 16        | 35        | 20  |
| False                 | 2         | 7         | 5   |
| Not met threshold     | 0         | 0         | 11  |
| Investigation ongoing | 18        | 18        | 40 + 4<br>from previous<br>years - Total 44 |

Note: The 117 cases outcome during the year included 14 from the previous year.

63.2% of referrals were deemed to have met threshold. The remaining 36.8% were dealt with by way of further evaluation, advice and guidance. LADO Evaluation is an area that is difficult to capture through data alone but in the majority of cases requires a significant level of advice and consultation provided by LADO to employers and other organisations

When an allegation is concluded the outcome is recorded. The definitions for outcomes are set out below.

- **Substantiated:** There is sufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation.
- **False:** There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.
- **Malicious:** There is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false.
- **Unfounded:** There is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw. Alternatively, they may not have been aware of all the circumstances.
- **Unsubstantiated:** This is not the same as a false allegation. It means that there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove.

In 2024/2025, 73 Allegations Against Staff & Volunteers Meetings were concluded during this period, this includes cases which carried over from previous years. There are 40 referrals carried over into the new reporting year from this reporting year and a further 4 historical cases which are still ongoing whereby there are lengthy Police investigations.



## Outcomes of Substantiated Allegations

Of the 20 substantiated allegations. These were as follows:

| Agency                             | Number of Substantiated Outcomes |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Early Years                        | 1                                |
| Education                          | 6                                |
| Health                             | 6                                |
| Knowsley Residential               | 1                                |
| Independent Residential Care Homes | 3                                |
| Leisure                            | 1                                |
| Transport                          | 2                                |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>20</b>                        |

Of the 20 substantiated allegations, concluding actions taken were as follows:

- Deregistration
- Referrals to DBS/Referral to Regulatory Body
- Further Training
- Disciplinary
- Dismissal
- Custodial sentence
- Ongoing Police investigation and to update LADO when concluded
- Employee resigned or no longer working for the organisation

This year 13 of the above cases, whose allegations were substantiated were referred to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or relevant Regulatory Bodies of the above 20 cases.

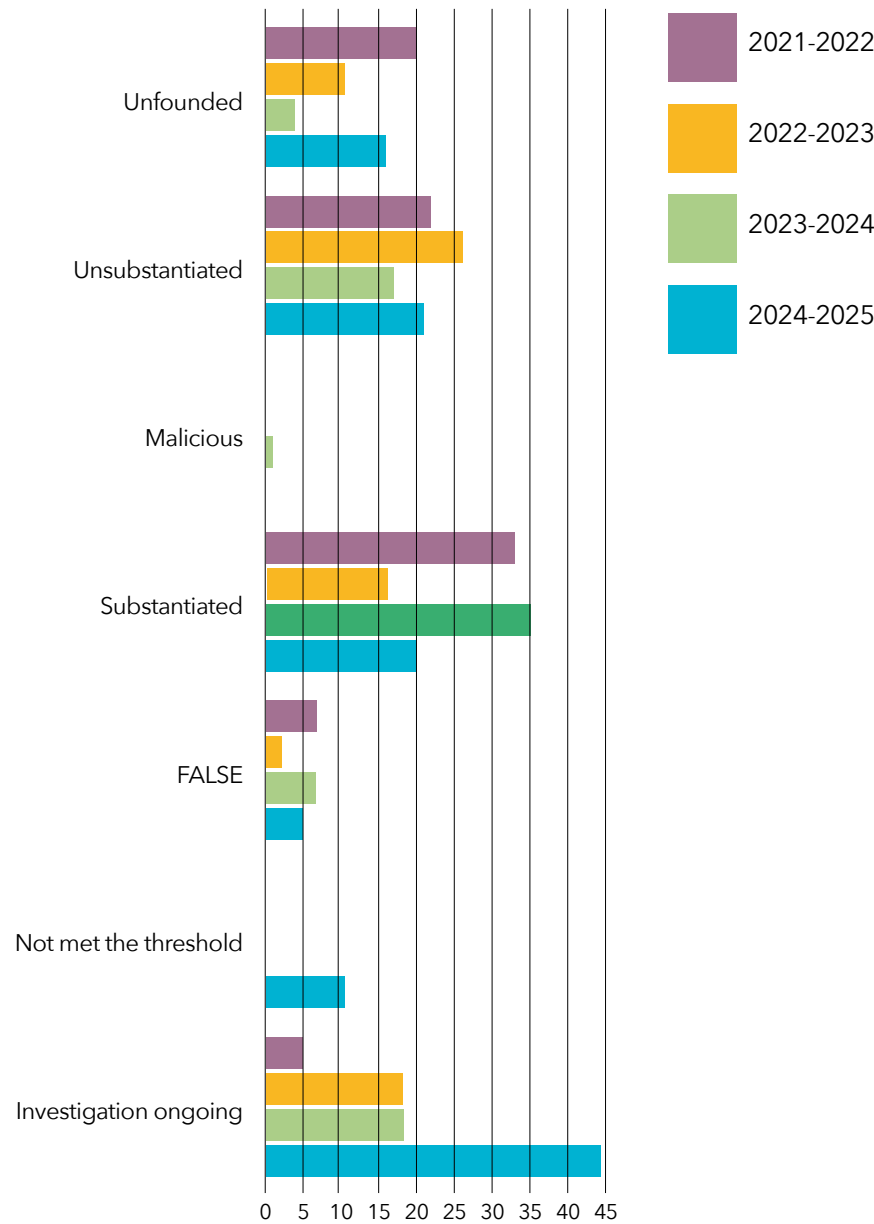


# Key issues and challenges

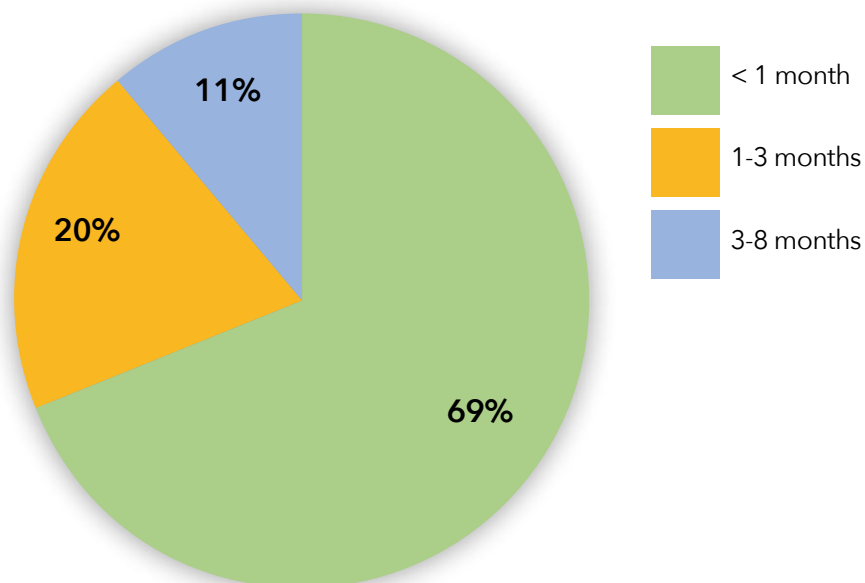
Due to significant increase in Child Protection Case Conferences within the Safeguarding Quality Assurance Service, this has had an impact on the reduction of business support and Minute Takers who provide support for LADO. This has had a detrimental impact on the effective and timely response to multi-agency meeting minutes and tracking of Outcomes.



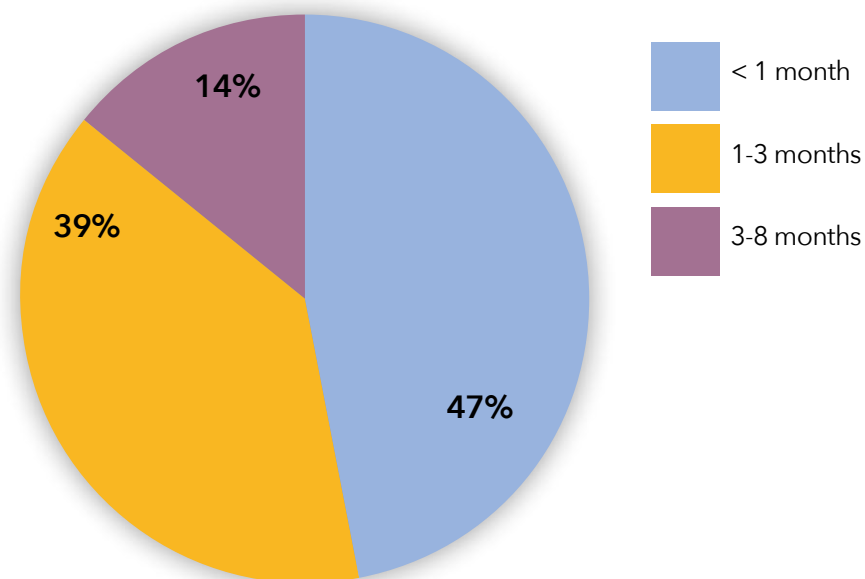
## Outcome of Allegations



### AMM Resolution Timescales 2023/24



### AMM Resolution Timescales 2024/25



Compared to the previous year, the time taken to resolve cases has significantly increased. 69% of cases were resolved in less than one month in 2023-24, this reduced to 14% in 2024-25.

Although the service now has a new New LADO Data system which has improved the functionality for extracting data and data collection, this is a new system and there has been a need for a number of IT changes to the system, which has resulted in some data not being captured, such as categories of AMM referrals. In addition, the system will only capture any referrals from 01.04.2024 and therefore there has been a requirement to work on two systems to also capture those AMMs that had been opened prior to April 2024 and that have closed during this reporting period.

There are continuing low referrals from some sectors. Ongoing training and targeted briefings are planned into 2025 to reach out to some of our sectors across Knowsley in understanding the role of the LADO.

### Briefing Sessions

In 2024/2025 the LADO delivered training and briefing sessions across Children's Services, Health and Residential Providers. The LADO also works in partnership with Education Safeguarding Officer in rolling out Allegations Management training across schools; and Early Years Team in delivering training across Early Years settings.

# CONCLUSION

## What is working well

- Within the Recent Inspection Report Ofsted reported that “Allegations against Professionals who work with children are well managed.”
- LADO Final Outcome letter sent to the adult subject to the process has been positively received and welcomed.
- The Allegations Management process embeds the voice of the child and the Child’s lived experience at the heart of all referrals and contacts assessing the impact of Allegations on children and focuses on the harm threshold to assist in determining next steps.
- To promote consistency, the North West Regional threshold matrix is consistently applied to inform thresholds and to assist with Outcomes and decision making.
- Positive working relationships with many partner agencies is valued.
- Closure summaries providing strong case overviews and analysis is clearly recorded.
- Case closures are undertaken by SQA Service Manager to ensure quality assurance and management oversight.
- The LADO attends network opportunities such as the regional network and national conference. This enables new developments to be embraced within the process.

- The LADO attends regular PAN Merseyside meetings jointly with Merseyside Police, and our colleagues across Merseyside including Liverpool, St Helens, Wirral and Sefton.
- Targeted briefings and training delivered which have received positive feedback.
- Regular quarterly meetings with LADO and Commissioning to share updated information and themes to promote improved working together. Also, with Early Years, Education Inclusion and Health.
- Resource increase of two additional minute takers within the Safeguarding Unit to assist and support LADO.

## What we are worried about

- Timeliness of Police investigations, which can be quite lengthy.
- Police have advised that due to lack of resources unless there is an on going police investigation and they will be unable to attend Review Allegations Management Meetings.
- Unregulated Children’s Residential Placements that tend to have a high number of Out of Borough children within placement, many of whom are subject to DOLs.
- Increase in SARS requests from Adults who have been referred to LADO. This can impact upon resources.

- DBS disclosure decisions – Concerns nationally from LADOs about information not being included on enhanced DBS certificates in particular around suitability.
- Lack of referrals from Faith Organisations, this is being addressed nationally and a working group has been formed to look further into this.
- Allegations Management Training to reach out further to our voluntary organisations.





# COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

## Feedback from Early Years Services

*"Our experience of the LADO process has always been positive and to an excellent standard. This includes all aspects such as communication, management of the meetings, professionalism, sharing of information and administrative content. The LADO is supportive and understanding throughout which is necessary and appreciated in often complex and difficult situations. The nursery sector representatives who have been involved recently with the LADO have all spoke positively about their experience and have appreciated the support the guidance".*

## Feedback from Merseyside Police

*"I think the LADO process in Knowsley works well. There is good communication between LADO chair and police and other agencies. Meetings are chaired well, and everyone has chance to contribute. Actions set at the end of the meeting are clear in terms of what actions need to be completed and a copy of these is sent out promptly. Minutes are received after the meeting in a timely manner.*

*There is also the quarterly Pan LADO meeting between all the MASH and LADO staff for Merseyside to discuss any issues and share ideas."*

## Feedback from Education Service

*"I would like to comment on how supportive the service is, especially LADO. Whenever I have any issues or concerns or something that I am just not sure of and just need to talk through LADO is always contactable and offers advice and support. Nothing is too much trouble. Her calmness and understanding of processes and current legislation also make sometimes quite difficult meetings a little more comfortable for the schools that may be involved."*

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2025-2026

| Action  | Lead Officer                                     | Timescale |
|---|--|-----------|
| LADO and SQA Business Officer to meet with I.T. to improve quality of data reporting, timeliness and tracking   | LADO / SQA Business Officer                      | Ongoing   |
| LADO to review Allegations Management Training and to meet with the Business Manager of Partnership in rolling this out across Teams, Services, Partner Agencies and Voluntary Sector | LADO and Multi-agency Partnership                | Ongoing   |
| LADO to embrace CSC - "Brilliant at the Basics" alongside the New Practice Standards  | LADO and Service Manager                         | Ongoing   |
| To improve timeliness around the Allegations Management process - IT Reporting/ Performance/Power BI.   | LADO/Service Manager/Partner Agencies/HR Support | Ongoing   |

### Contributing Officers:

Local Authority Designated Officer  
Safeguarding Quality Assurance Officer





Knowsley Council