

Review of LADO process and its impact on Foster Carer Retention

Review of LADO process and its impact on Foster Carer retention at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) conducted by a sub-group of Elected Members from the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)

Introduction

This review was undertaken with the agreement of Cllr Watson (Chair of CPP) as a result of concerns expressed that the LADO process at RMBC may be impacting on the retention of Foster Carers.

Concerns were as follows:

1. Anecdotal evidence from Fostering Panel throughout 2017/18 suggested that Foster Carers subject to LADO investigations were not sufficiently supported throughout the LADO process thereby resulting in the resignations of Foster Carers even when the outcome of the investigation proved unfounded or unsubstantiated.
2. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggested that there were inconsistencies in the outcomes of LADO investigations and following the change from one dedicated LADO officer to several officers was something the subgroup sought assurances on.

The subgroup consisted of Cllrs; Cusworth, Jarvis, Jayne Elliot and Mick Elliott. The subgroup met 4 times in total:

12th February 2019 – Rebecca Wall | Head of Safeguarding, Quality and Learning

4th April 2019 – Jo McCartan | Local Authority Designated Officer

12th June 2019 – Catherine Boaler | Service Manager Fostering, Adoption and Therapeutic Team

Key Lines of Enquiry

- What is a LADO and what do they do?
- What is the LADO process?
- Who is notified of the outcomes of a LADO?
- What does the Rotherham model look like?
- How does the process of a LADO investigation impact on Foster Carers?
- Is the LADO investigation process consistent?
- How is the LADO service working with the Fostering Service to minimise impact on Foster Carers and therefore on retention?

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What is a LADO?

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is the person who should be notified when it has been alleged that someone who works with children has:

- behaved in a way which has harmed or might harm a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children

What Does the LADO do?

The (Local Authority) Designated Officer has responsibility for:

- the management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children;
- providing guidance to employers and voluntary associations about how to deal with allegations against people who work with children;
- liaising effectively with the Police and other organisations to ensure that cases are dealt with as quickly as possible; and
- reporting to the LSCB about all allegations against people who work with children and their outcomes

LADO procedures

LADO procedures should be used by all organisations providing services for children, including those who provide staff or volunteers to work with or care for children. A referral to LADO should be made in situations in which an allegation or concern arises about the conduct of a person who works with children. This applies to all children and includes anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. <http://www.rscb.org.uk/lado>

Full guidance on Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Board LADO procedure can be found at https://rotherhamscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_alleg_staff.html?zoom_highlight=Allegations+Against+Staff+Carers+and+Volunteers&zoom_highlight=Allegations+Against+Staff+Carers+and+Volunteers

In relation to the LADO process and its impact on Foster Carers the subgroup established the following:

- All allegations made against anyone working with children should be taken seriously and this includes Foster Carers

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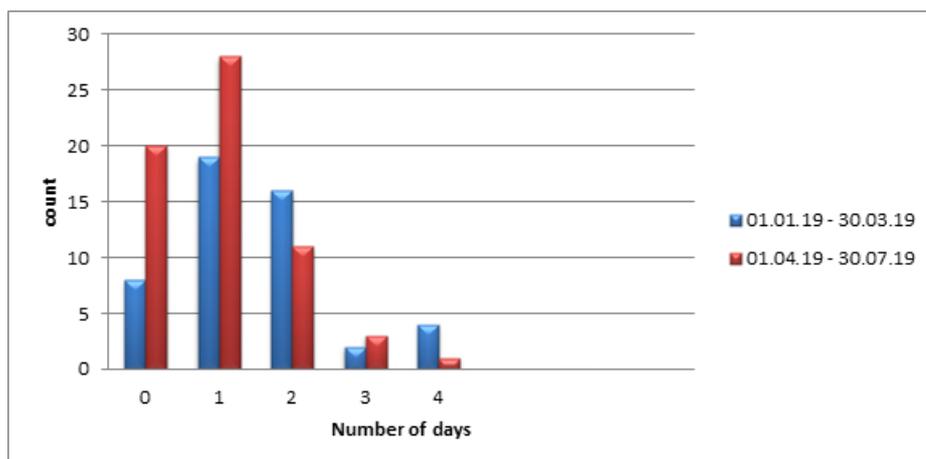
- Foster Carers should accept that if allegations are made they will be thoroughly investigated but they should also have confidence that any investigation will be balanced and they will be appropriately informed of the outcome.
- Joanne McCartan is RMBC's LADO and she manages a team of seven allegation managers/independent conference chairs.
- Despite the shift from a single designated officer to the above model there is continuity because the allegation manager who picks up the case sees it through to the end and the LADO has oversight and provides quality assurance ensuring consistency is maintained.
- Where allegation doesn't meet threshold for LADO it is still recorded on a matrix so patterns can be noticed – this can help to support employers and a LADO can be triggered manually if required.
- LADO investigations are much more timely since running new system (see below)

Timeliness - 01.04.19 – 30.07.19

Timeliness of Contact Decision Making

Timeliness of Contact Decision (Working Days)	Count	%
0	20	29.9%
1	28	41.8%
2	11	16.4%
3	3	4.5%
4	1	1.5%
5	4	6.0%
Total	67	

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• The decision of the initial LADO contact to progress to LADO has significantly increased over this quarter as you can see from the above chart. 71.1% of contact have been screened and progressed within 1 day of receiving the contact.

Timeliness of Investigations Closed in Period (Working Days)	Count	%
0-20	15	45.5%
21-40	4	12.1%
41-60	2	6.1%
61-80	1	3.0%
81-100	1	3.0%
100+	10	30.3%
Total	33	

Over half of the LADO investigations have concluded within 40 working days (8 weeks).

The ones that are over 100+ days are on the whole due to the length of police investigations, this are normally the historically offences or when the employee's children are subject to CP planning and it is appropriate to ascertain the outcome of this planning prior to making a final decision on employment. This is a balanced and proportionate approach to LADO investigations.

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- Rotherham is being recognised for good practice - Currently we are one of very few Local Authorities who are using the allegations database system to its full potential, given this we have been approached by a number of Local Authorities North Yorkshire, Hull, Bradford and Sheffield to share our experiences and benefits of moving towards having the allegations systems with LCS. Regional LADO's were extremely impressed with the demonstration of our recording system and suite of data within the performance dashboard. Regional authorities have reported back that our systems are significantly more developed than their own and other authorities and are in discussions with their leadership teams in terms of developing this further within their own authorities
- The Head of Looked After Children's Services, Ian Walker is made aware of any allegations triggering a LADO process and he sits on the LADO review panel thereby demonstrating a clear links between the LADO service and the Fostering service.

Conclusion

The sub-group is assured that changes have been implemented by the LADO service and the Fostering Service have had a positive impact on the experience of Foster Carers under investigation and that we are assured that the process is no longer impacting on the retention of Foster Carers.

We would like to note our thanks to both the LADO Service and the Fostering Service, particularly Rebecca Wall, Joanne McCartan and Catherine Boaler for assisting us with this review.

End of Report