



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT April 202 – March 2023

Purpose of the Report

This is the annual report of the Local Authority Designated Officer for 2022-2022. The report is intended to set out the volume, broad content and outcome of activity referred to the function within the period 2022-2023. The report will also highlight any relevant issues in relation to partnership working in the borough, as well as thematic and practice quality issues.

Working Together 2015 (updated in 2018) requires that each Local Authority has a designated officer or team of officers, to deal with allegations made against professionals who are a part of the children's workforce.
(Working Together was updated in 2018, with no proposed changes made to the Local Authority as a designated officer arrangements)

Every local authority has a statutory responsibility to have a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who is responsible for co-ordinating the response to concerns that an adult who works with children may have caused or could cause harm to children.

The LADO works within Children's Services and gives advice and guidance to employers, organisations and other individuals who have concerns about the behaviour of an adult who works with children and young people. Included in this group are volunteers, agency staff and foster carers as well as people who are in a position of authority and have regular contact with children, such as religious leaders, police,

taxi drivers or school governors. LADO investigations and enquires should be considered for anyone who is working within the children's workforce.

In practical terms, the role of the LADO is to:

- provide advice and guidance to agencies and individuals, in relation to issues surrounding the conduct of their staff (whether paid or unpaid) which concern actions or behaviours giving rise to safeguarding concerns.
- ensure co-ordination and proportionate, fair and safe outcomes in relation to these matters, specifically regarding the safeguarding of any / all children concerned, the investigation of any criminal matters and the associated human resources processes.
- convene, chair and record strategy meetings for this purpose.
- manage and oversee individual cases from the commencement of the process through to conclusion and outcome.

The LADO will become involved, where there is reasonable suspicion that a person who works with children (whether paid or unpaid) has behaved in such a way as to:

- cause or potentially cause harm to a child.
- commit a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Indicate that he or she would pose a risk of harm if they were to work regularly or closely with children.

Both historical and current allegations of this kind should be considered. An incident or behaviour occurring in the context of a person's private life will be considered where this suggests that the person may pose a risk of harm to children.

In Rotherham to make a referral to LADO professionals and public can contact the Duty LADO for advice and guidance and contact MASH to make a referral. MASH will take all the details and screen the adult and any associated children.

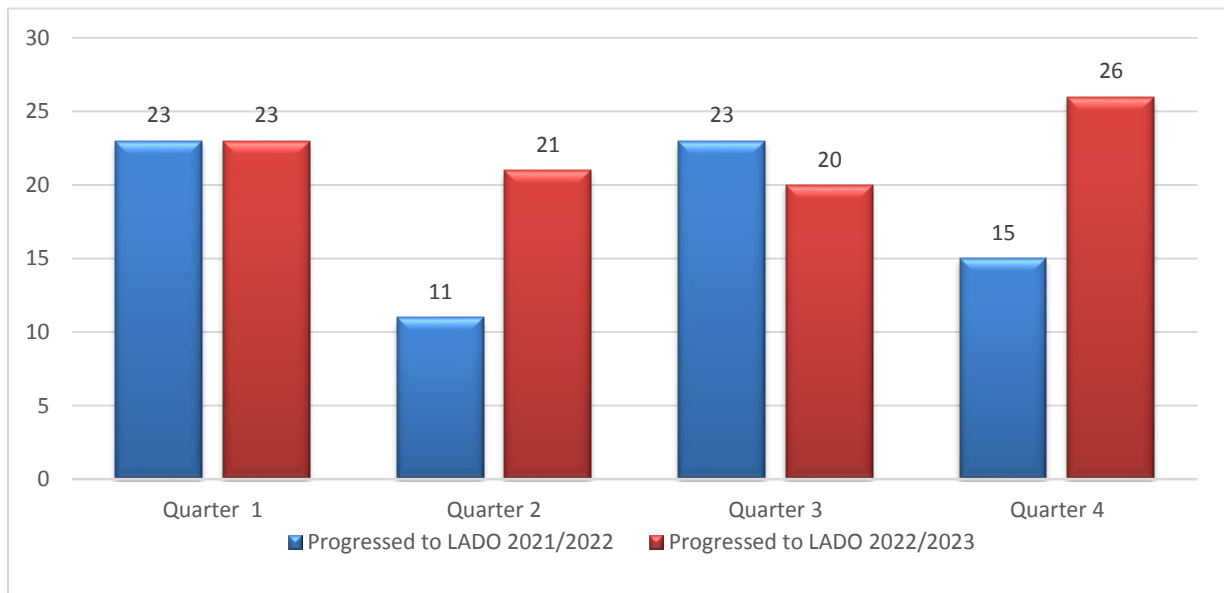
Volume of LADO contacts and enquires

Over the last four years our annual figures for LADO have remained relatively stable. We can see that whilst the number of referrals to LADO remained relatively consistent over the past 2 years, a higher proportion of referrals progressed to a LADO investigation in 2022/2023. This is an increase from 37% in 2021/22 to 47% in 2022/23 and suggests multi-agency training regarding LADO threshold is being effective in ensuring appropriate referrals are being made.

Table 1. Four-year comparison of LADO Contacts



Table 2. Quarterly comparison 2022/23

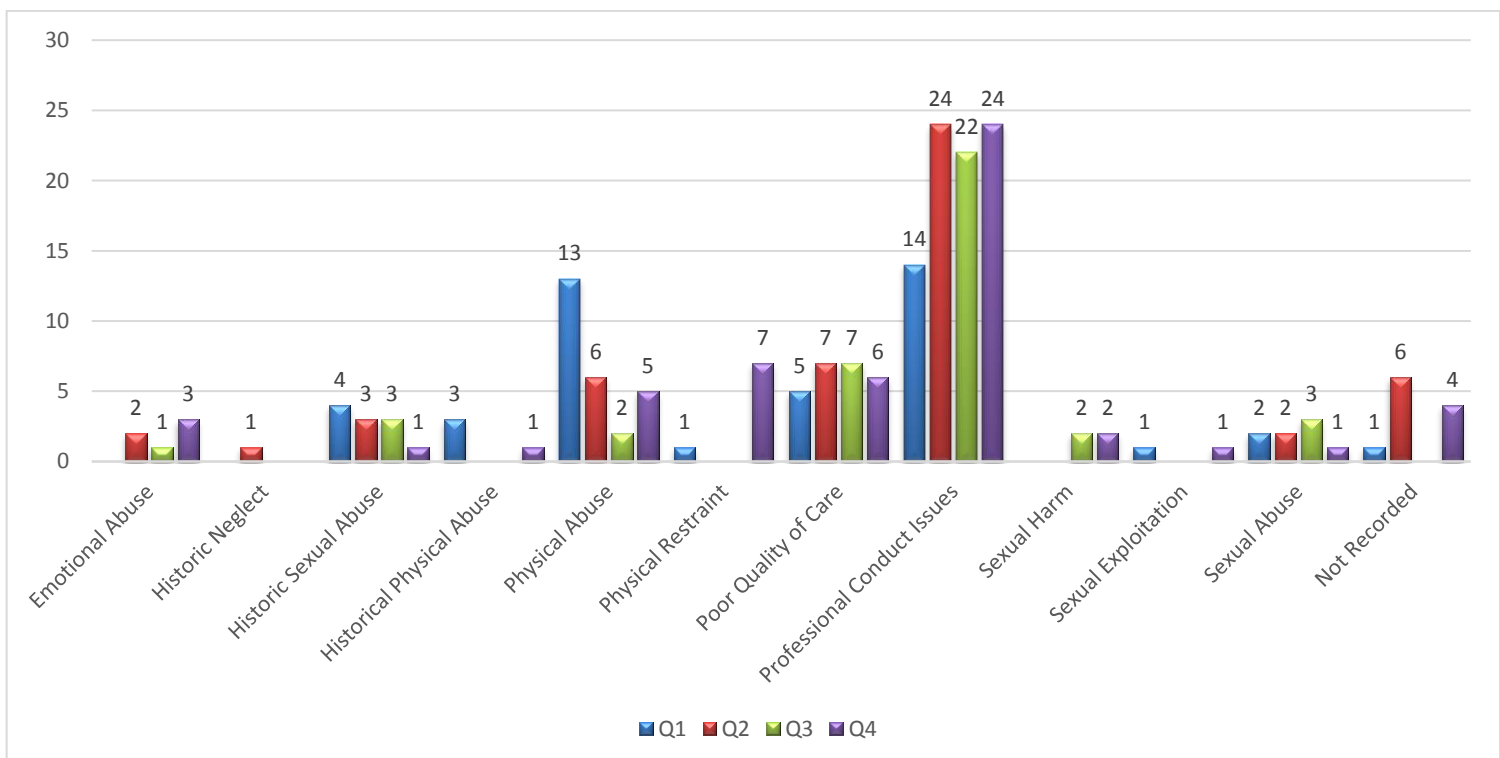


Over 2022/23 we can see a consistent number of referrals progressing to LADO investigations in each quarter.

We have continued to work hard to raise internal awareness within RMBC of LADO supporting a hypothesis that professionals are more aware of LADO and their responsibilities within safeguarding. The Lead LADO continues to meet regularly with MASH, LAC Teams and the Fostering Service to support staff to identify when an allegation meets threshold for LADO, and what steps need to be taken.

Of the 190 contacts received for LADO, the nature of concerns is separated into categories of harm.

Table 3. Allegations Type



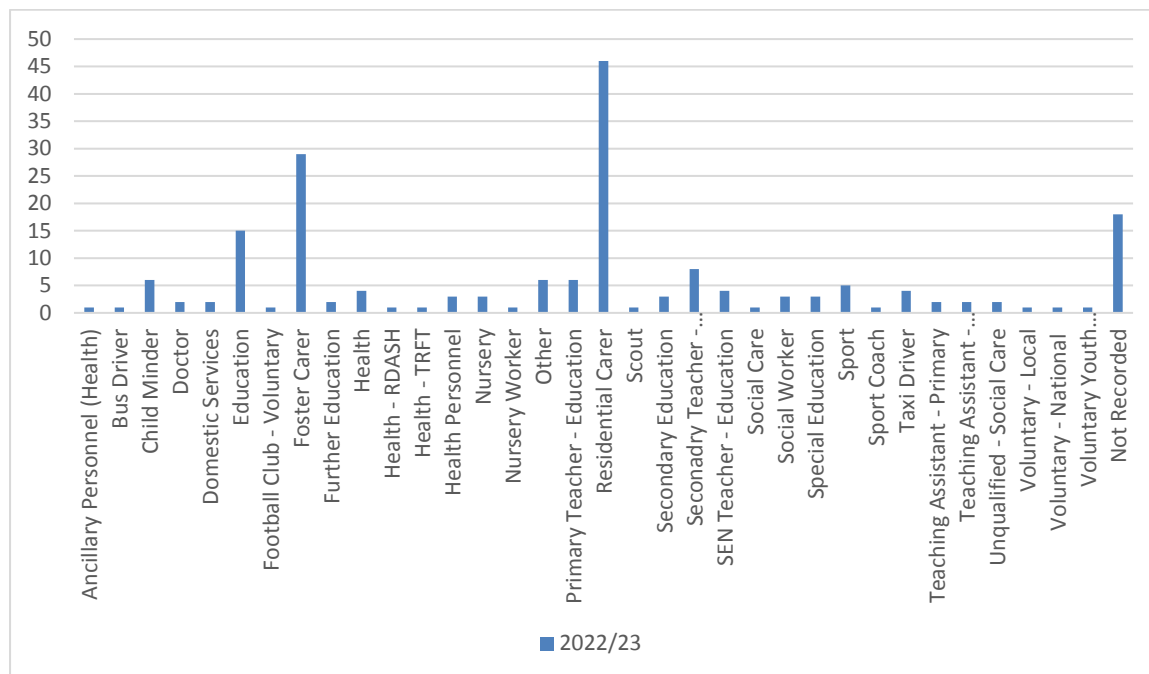
We continue to see a high number of professional conduct issues which result in investigations that are overseen by LADO. This category covers a vast array of concerns including behaviour outside of work which may indicate a transferable risk into the workplace, such as domestic abuse, neglect and alcohol and/or substance misuse. This category also considers issues within employment such as lack of supervision, concerning or inappropriate interactions, and behaviours that may harm a child.

10 LADO investigations do not have an allegation type recorded and this is being addressed with all LADO's to ensure we capture this information accurately.

The concerns around sexual abuse remain low, although we have seen a raise in historical sexual abuse, the majority of these relate to the investigations undertaken by the National Crime Agency (NCA).

Physical abuse through restraints has doubled from 4 in 2021/22 to 8 in 2022/23, however physical abuse has almost halved from 45 in 2021/22 to 25 in 2022/23.

Table 4. Employment of Alleged Perpetrator



Our most considered professionals remain residential carers, foster carers and those in education professions, which is consistent with previous figures. This is unsurprising as we know these professionals will have the most contact with children who have additional needs or have experienced trauma where they struggle to regulate their emotions resulting in incidents where physical restraints and altercations are more likely to occur.

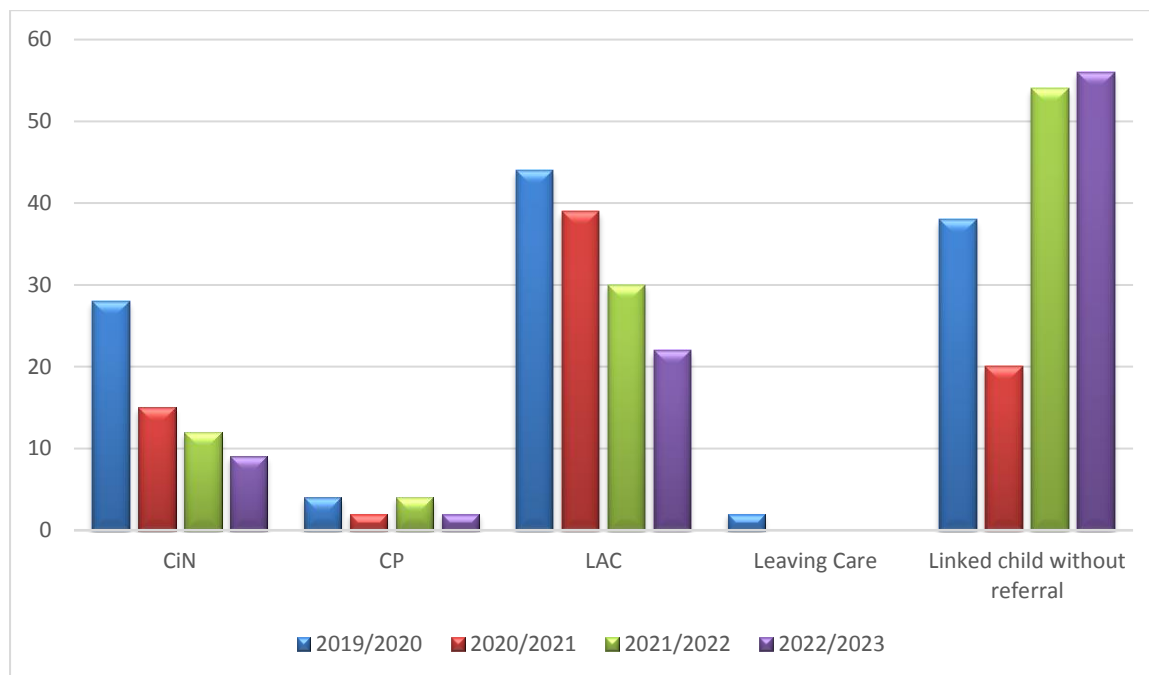
In addition to recording the professions employment detail, we continue recording the child's current support status to ensure we are targeting training to professionals where we have our most vulnerable children.

We can see over the past 3 years a progressive downward trend in LADO investigations for professionals working with children who are Looked After or subject of Child in Need Plans. Children in these categories have the opportunity to share any worries or concerns with their Social Worker or Independent Advocate, which may lead to concerns being addressed at a low level rather than behaviours escalating to threshold for LADO oversight. Additionally, as a trauma informed workforce, staff are better able to understand children/young people's behaviours and intervene appropriately by using de-escalating strategies.

This downward trend also suggests we are targeting our LADO training to staff who have contact with our most vulnerable young people, and they are better informed of what does and does not need to be referred through to LADO. The provision of LADO

duty advice and discussion prior to a referral also prevents inappropriate referrals being made

Table 5. Children linked to the Allegation



Concluded LADO

The figures for 2022-2023 demonstrate that the LADO has concluded 82 LADO investigations. 13.6% concluded with the member of staff continuing in employment with a risk assessment in place. A further 12.3% required further safeguarding training or additional monitoring and supervision. 24.7% of LADO investigations concluded with the member of staff being dismissed, resigning, or being suspended.

We have seen an increase from 5% to 13.6% of referrals that have progressed from MASH to a LADO investigation, but on further screening by the dedicated LADO worker it is concluded that no further investigation is required. It is important to note that on some occasions, further discussions and clarity is needed with the employer and employee to agree progression. It is right to initially progress these cases through to LADO to enable further exploration through for an information sharing meeting to take place in a managed way without rushing into a process that could be both emotionally damaging and or impact on their long-term employment.

The chart below demonstrates the varied outcomes for LADO and how we ensure the responses and outcomes are proportionate and appropriate for the employer.

Table 5. LADO Outcome

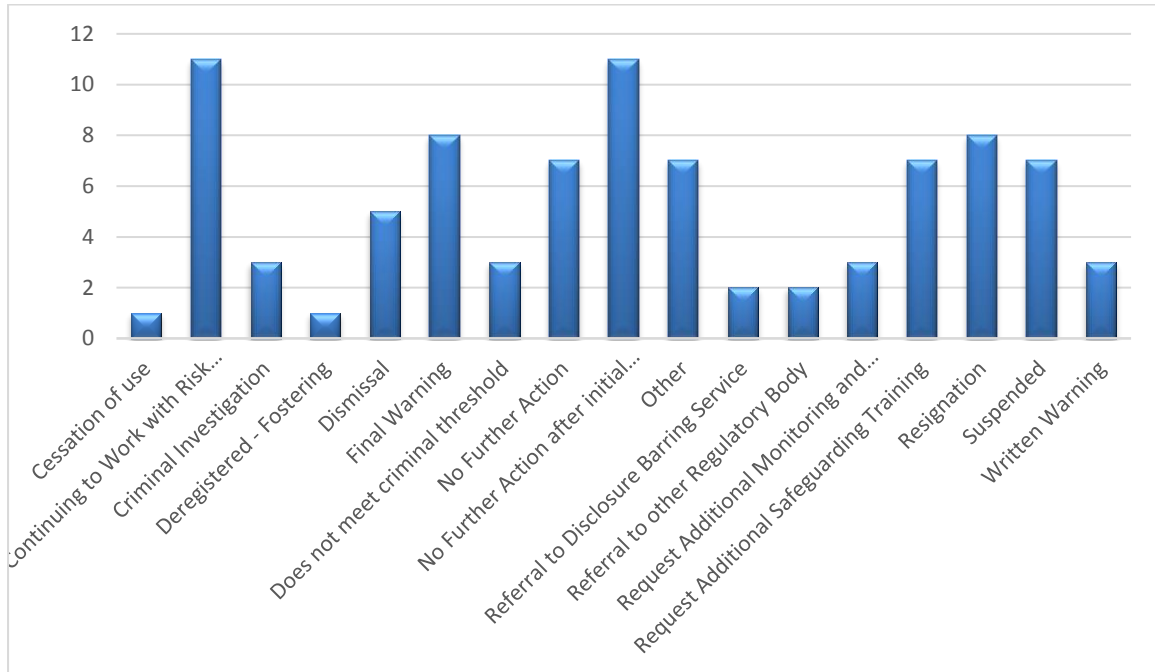
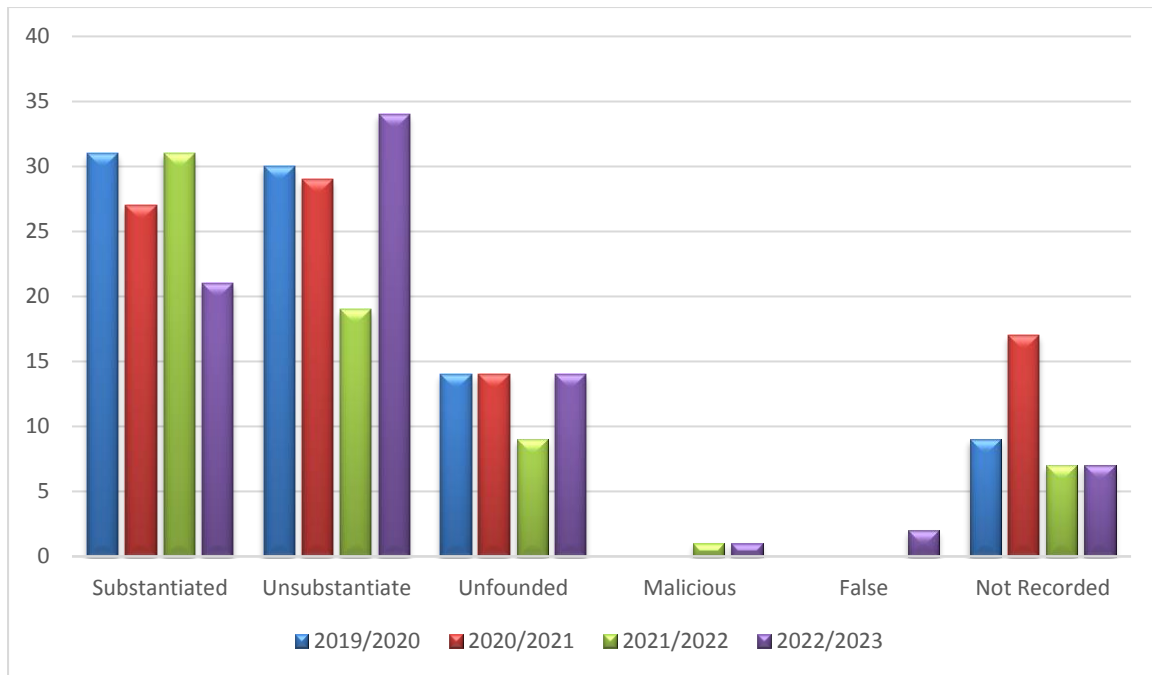


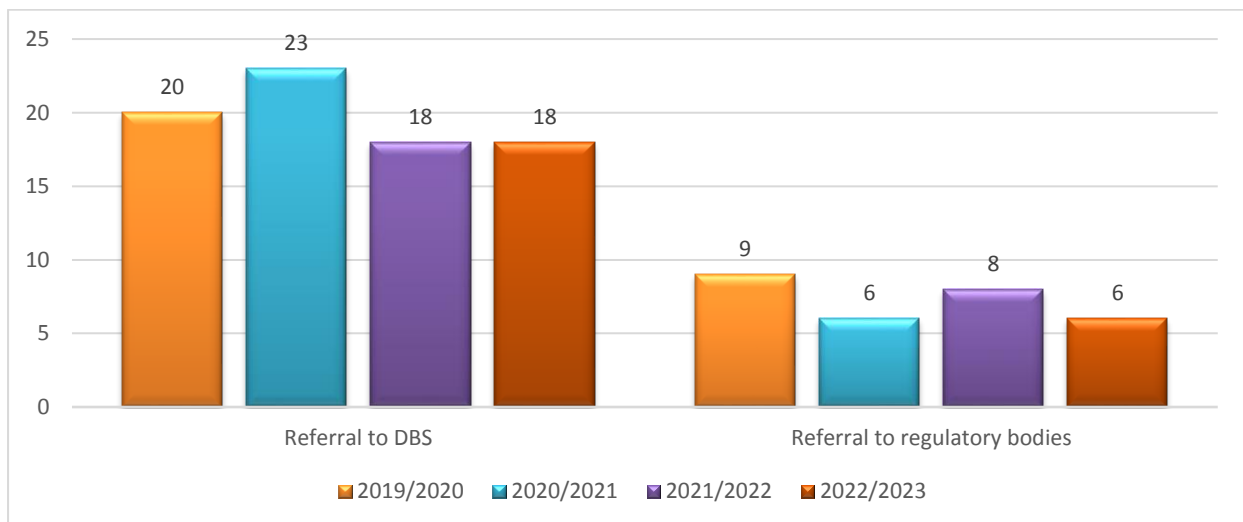
Table 7. LADO Final Outcome



It is positive to see only a small number of LADO investigations concluding with a malicious or false outcome, which again indicates concerns are being considered at the right level of intervention. The false category was only added as an outcome in 2022/23 so this information is not available for previous years.

Please see definitions of outcomes in Appendix 1

Table 8. LADO Referrals to DBS and Regulatory Bodies



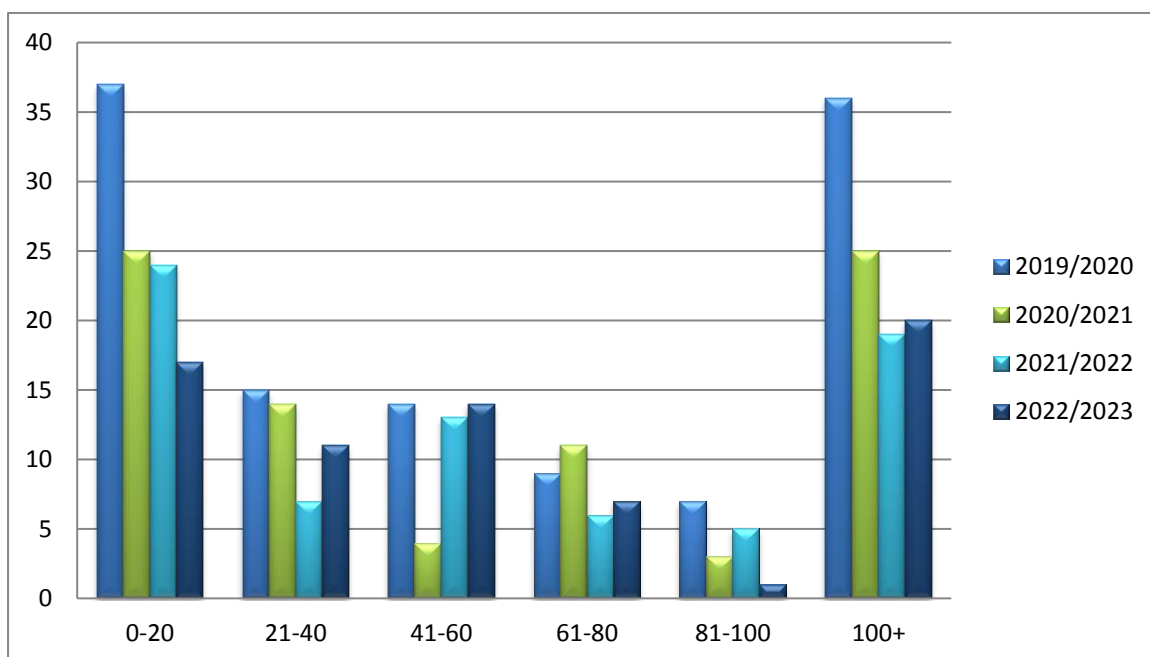
Referrals to DBS and regulatory bodies have remained consistent. This figure appears proportionate and reflects the 25.9% of workers who remain in post with a risk assessment in place, or further supervision, monitoring or training provided

Timeliness of LADO and Multi-Agency Involvement

We continue to work hard to address the timeliness of LADO investigations as we know that this impacts on professional’s long-term employment and mental health. We continue to streamline the process, however police investigations, robust employer investigations and disciplinary processes take time impacting on the length of the LADO process.

The decision of the initial LADO contact to progress to LADO is a positive picture, with over half of the decisions, 66% made within 3 working days. The timeliness of the progression of contacts is impacted on when further screening is required to ascertain the details of the concerns and whether a LADO is required, whilst this is often appropriate in considering all the information and ensuring our response is proportionate it can cause delay. This coincides with the high figure of 13.6% of LADO contacts that are felt not to meet threshold after further LADO screening indicating that decisions at MASH whilst timely require a more robust screening. However, what we do know is that on a number of occasions further discussions and reflections over a 72-hour period may reduce the risk and indicate that harm has not in fact occurred. 12% of decisions have been made after 7 working days which is due to a delay in MASH screening and when they have been signed off in MASH to progress to the LADO tray; whilst this remains a concern there has been a reduction from 18% in 2021/2022.

Table 9. Timeliness of Investigations Completed – Workings Days



The majority of LADO investigations are concluded within 0-20 days and over half for the last 4 years concluded under 40 days.

The LADO investigations that are over 100+ days are overall due to the length of police investigations, these are normally historical offences or when the employee’s

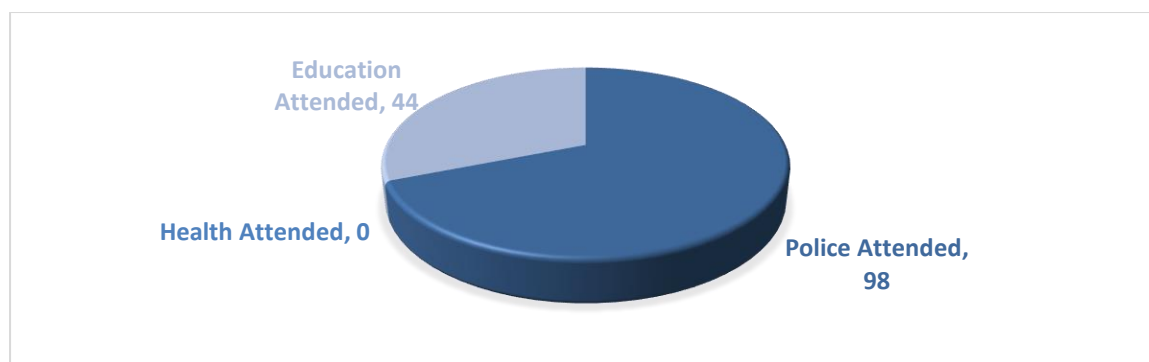
children are subject to CP planning, and it is appropriate to ascertain the outcome of this planning prior to making a final decision on employment. This is a balanced and proportionate approach to LADO investigations.

Multi-Agency decision making is crucial in terms of LADO decisions. When an employer has not concluded their investigation or undertaken appropriate HR procedures this can impact on the outcome and conclusion of the LADO.

We continue to work with key partners to ensure they are attending or contributing to the LADO process. Whilst the below figures for professional attendance appears low, we have agreed that Health is not routinely invited to LADO's unless the child is LAC, or the concern is regarding health professionals and if this is the case HR will attend. The figures below relate to 128 allegations meetings.

Police attendance has increased from 64.6% in 2021/22 to 76.6% in 2022/23. This demonstrates a closer working relationship with South Yorkshire Police and a drive to ensure that LADO's where there is a Police Investigation are concluded in a timely fashion.

Table 10. Professional Attendance at Allegations Meetings



Development and Awareness

The Lead LADO continues to provide training to RMBC Foster Carers to support them to understand the role of LADO and the process when a referral is made. Foster Carers have responded well to this training, and whilst they may still feel anxious about the prospect of having an allegation made against them, they have a better understanding of what happens 'behind the scenes' were they to become subject of a LADO.

The Lead LADO continues to provide LADO Training through Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership, and this has been attended by professionals including child minders, football clubs, residential carers, and nursery workers.

Training sessions were not as well attended in 2022/2023, however this may be due to staff absences with RSCP Training/Administration Team. This will be monitored over the coming year, and the number of training sessions offered will be increased if the demand is there.

The Lead LADO also links in with RMBC inhouse residential Children's Homes to offer support and guidance. A bespoke support package was in place during a very vulnerable young person's transition, and this assisted staff to consider what was a complaint vs what was an allegation. This regular 'check in' support also helped staff to feel valued and safe during this difficult transition.

In November 2022 the Lead LADO in Rotherham and Sheffield provided joint training with Assemblies of God Churches across South Yorkshire. This training was attended by over 30 participants and received very positive feedback.

The Lead LADO and Service Manager attend regular networking meetings with LADO staff from South Yorkshire, as well as regional meetings with LADO staff from Yorkshire and Humberside. These forums allow for sharing of best practice, minimising differences in practice across the region, and developing working relationships with organisations including DBS and the FA.

The LADO continues to have links with Yorkshire Sort Foundation and Diocesan Safeguarding to support safe practice.

In Summary

- The referrals that are progressed to LADO are appropriate and in the main meet threshold. There has been a higher proportion of referrals which on further screening by LADO do not meet threshold for a LADO investigation.
- LADO investigations are completed as soon as possible but can take a lengthy time to conclude due to HR/Police investigations. The allocated LADO worker tracks that these are completed as soon as possible to avoid drift and delay
- The performance scoresheet provides a detailed overview of LADO contacts, progressions to LADO, categories of abuse and the outcomes; this provides a wealth of information and detailed analysis.
- The Lead LADO continues to provide regular training to Social Care Staff including MASH, LAC Teams and Fostering Teams to raise awareness and understanding of the LADO role and when referrals need to be made
- The Lead LADO is working with RMBC Foster Carers to demystify the process and support understanding of when referrals need to be made to LADO

- LADO Training continues to be promoted in the RSCP prospectus and sessions are attended by a variety of professionals within the children's workforce
- LADO workers remain consistent in their approach and the timeliness of LADO contacts have improved.
- Managing allegations of alleged perpetrator / owner and proprietor of organisations that are not regulated. These 'one person band' setups have no regulation or governance around them and rely on parents to be vigilant and safeguard their children. Further work with DBS is required to support this process.

What needs to happen

What Needs to Happen	Learning or Development Need	Expected Impact	Date Evaluated
Lead LADO is to undertake training with MASH to improve understanding of threshold and ensure adequate screening is completed	MASH Workers will have a better understanding of threshold and ensure all necessary information has been obtained and considered as part of the screening process	We will see a reduction in the number of LADO referrals that are not progressed following further screening by the LADO Worker	30.09.2023
The timeliness of LADO needs to be continually reviewed to ensure allegations are addressed immediately without	MASH need to ensure that LADO referrals are progressed within 24 hours. This will be measured in the LADO Dashboard and performance figures shared with MASH to improve performance	Initial Allegations meetings will be held within 5 working days and LADO's will be concluded in a timely manner	31.03.2024

unnecessary delay.			
The LADO Dashboard needs to be reviewed on a quarterly basis and any fields not recorded need to be rectified immediately	LADO allegations that have not meet threshold for LADO allegations meeting will be reviewed. A selection of these will be scrutinised to ensure that threshold is consistent	The threshold will be tested, and we will be confident that all allegations are managed effectively	31.03.2024
LADO records are to be audited on a 6 monthly basis to ensure quality and consistency across workers	Any discrepancies in practice or recordings will be identified and streamlined	We will be confident that all LADO investigations managed in a consistent manner	31.03.24

Appendix 1 - The Outcomes for Allegations Meetings: DfE; Reference Final Outcome of Allegations and Concerns Management;

Substantiated	There is sufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation.
Unsubstantiated	There is insufficient identifiable evidence to prove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
Unfounded	There is no proper evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made, or there is evidence to prove that the allegation is untrue or that the complainant misinterpreted the information or was mistaken
Malicious	There is clear evidence to prove that there has been a deliberate act to deceive, and the allegation is entirely false.
False	There is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and suggest that it was falsely made
The summary of the allegation management process should clearly record what the outcome was and why. There needs to be clear information provided to the LADO from involved parties, e.g., Police, Social Care or Human Resources.	

The Outcome should also make clear if the person of concern was;

Dismissed
Convicted of any offence
Struck off any professional register or body i.e., Teaching, medical, or fostering approval.

The person of concern should be made aware of the outcome of the Strategy discussion.