What is the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)?

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) service safeguards children by; effectively investigating allegations made against any statutory or voluntary practitioner working with children and young people “without delay and in co-ordinated manner” (Working Together 2018, p58).

According to Working Together 2018 “An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has;

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, 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”. (WT 2018,p58)

In line with WT 2018 guidance, LADO’s give advice and guidance to organisations and agencies on how to deal with allegations.

The Audit

The Safeguarding Children Board undertook an audit of the referrals and cases of the Cambridgeshire LADO service during January 2019. A total of 37 cases were randomly selected from the 340 referrals that the Cambridgeshire LADO service had received between June 2018 to December 2018:

- The audit sample included a variety of open (7 cases 19%) and closed cases (27 cases 73%).
- All of the public / anonymous referrals, taken during this time, were analysed (12 cases 32%).
- 3 cases were deemed as ‘unknown’ within the audit, due missing information and not all details not being fully recorded.

Findings

- **Who made the referrals to the LADO?**

  The referrals came from a variety of statutory and voluntary agencies. In addition, 22% of referrals were; anonymous, from families and the public.

- **What was the timescale between the alleged incident and the organisation (the referring agency) becoming aware?**

  In terms of managing risk and safeguarding children, it is good practice that 41 % of cases (14) the agency was made aware of the alleged incident on the same day that it is alleged to have happened. However, in 29 % of cases (10) referrer/agencies either did not or were not able to give the LADO an indication of when they knew about when the alleged incident took place. This could potentially lead to a delay in investigation and an increased risk to children.
• What was the timescale between the agency becoming aware and the LADO being informed?

In terms of making 'a timely referral' (WT 2018) and managing potential safeguarding risks, it is good practice that in 53% of cases (18) the LADO was informed within a day of the alleged incident. However, in 47% of cases (16) there was a significant delay between the alleged incident taking place and making the referral to the LADO, with no indication given from the referrers as to the reason behind the delay.

• Did LADO provide the agency with advice on what action to take (if this was appropriate)?

76% (26) of the agency referrals had clear, succinct, individually tailored advice given by the LADO that was clearly recorded. Good practice examples of advice included; contact with the parent to advise how to complain, asking about the lived experience of the child, requesting agencies speak to the child, proposing making referrals to children and to adult social care and requesting that the agency consider whether the alleged person was also a risk to adults at risk within their work setting. In 24% (8) of the referrals it was not applicable for the LADO to give guidance, as these were either anonymously made or did not need a LADO response in terms of guidance.

• Was the decision taken by the LADO appropriate?

85% (29 cases) had an appropriate decision given by the LADO and an explanation given as to why the decision had been made and 5 cases were either deemed as complex or still ongoing and a LADO decision was yet to be agreed.

• Was the necessary action taken, either by the LADO or the multi-agency partnership without delay?

In all but three (91%) of the 34 referrals the LADO completed their actions without delay and generally either on the same day or the next.

In 10 cases (29%) there was a significant delay or lack of response from agencies in relation to suggestions from the LADO. Reasons for delay included; referrer being on leave, referral sent to the incorrect LADO area, agencies not undertaking an internal investigation as requested, not speaking to young people as suggested and not sharing important information with the LADO in the referral. The illustrations listed are of a concern in relation to both the time and any action being taken by agencies to safeguard children from alleged perpetrators and abuse.

Practice Implications – What do Professionals need to do when referring to the LADO?

1. How to make a referral: Contact the LADO by telephone call in the first instance to discuss the concerns. If the issues meet the threshold for LADO involvement a referral form will be sent to you and this must be completed as soon as possible and sent to LADO.

Cambridgeshire LADO 01223 727967 or lado@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Peterborough LADO 01733 86403 or lado@peterbrough.gov.uk
2 **Making a Referral**: Referrers and agencies need to make referrals to the LADO as soon as possible after the alleged incident has become known to them and they should be clear when making referrals to the LADO of the exact date when the incident is alleged to have taken place. This helps with analysis and risk assessments by the LADO to give the best prompt advice to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people.

Referrals should contain all important information, be clear and succinct as to what the concern is and what the risks to the child is. If acronyms are to be used, at the very least, agencies should record on referrals / recording systems as to what they stand for and/or what they mean to avoid confusion and miscommunication.

3. **Advice from the LADO**: Where possible agencies should act on the advice given by the LADO as soon as possible to minimise any risks to the child(ren).

The audit showed that in one case the agency did not report an alleged incident to the LADO, investigated the matter internally and dismissed the member of staff. Sadly that ex member of staff was then implicated later in other alleged abusive incidents within other work settings with children.

**Further Information:**

Safeguarding Board Website:
http://www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk/children-board/

Safeguarding Board Procedures – LADO and Managing Allegations:
http://www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk/children-board/professionals/procedures/managingallegations/


Safeguarding Training:
http://www.safeguardingpeterborough.org.uk/availabletraining/