

7 Minute Practice Briefing: Role of the LADO



Background

The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023).

The LADO is responsible for managing allegations against adults who work with children. This includes people who work with children who are paid, unpaid, volunteer, are casual, agency or self employed.

The LADO works with police, children's social care employers and other involved professionals. The LADO does not conduct investigations directly, but rather oversees and directs them to ensure thoroughness, timeliness, and fairness.

Criteria

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.
- 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 last point above includes behaviour that may have happened outside an organisation that might make an individual unsuitable to work with children, this is known as transferable risk.

Allegations of historical abuse should be responded in the same way as contemporary concerns.

Transferable risk

An allegation can relate to an adult's behaviour outside work, and their relationships with others, if they:

- Have behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns. These concerns do not have to directly relate to a child but could, for example, include an arrest for the possession of a weapon.
- Have, as a parent or carer, become subject to child protection procedures.
- Are closely associated with someone in their personal lives (e.g., partner, member of the family or other household member) who may present a risk of harm to child/ren for whom the adult is responsible in their employment/volunteering.

If concerns arise about the person's behaviour in relation to their own children, the police and/or Children's Social Care must consider informing the employer / organisation in order to assess whether there may be implications for children with whom the person has contact at work / in the organisation.

Allegation or concern

It might not be clear whether an incident constitutes an 'allegation'. It is important to remember that to be an allegation the alleged incident has to meet the LADO criteria. If in doubt consult with the LADO.

If it is difficult to determine the level of risk the following should be considered:

- Was the incident a disproportionate or inappropriate response in the context of a challenging situation?
- Where the incident involved an inappropriate response to challenging behaviour, had the member of staff had training in managing this?
- Does the member of staff understand that their behaviour was inappropriate and express a wish to behave differently in the future? For example, are they willing to undergo training?
- Does the child or family want to report the incident to the police, or would they prefer the matter to be dealt with by the employer?
- Have similar allegations been made against the employee – is there a pattern developing?

Consideration

The LADO will establish the level of concern and harm and whether the threshold for allegation management process is met including whether it is demonstrably false. In some situations, the threshold will not be met, and the LADO will advise the referrer and may offer advice on next steps.

There may be up to three strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence.
- Enquiries and assessment by children's social care about whether a child is in need of protection or in need of services.
- Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in respect of the individual.

Safeguarding children is paramount – the child protection process must be followed first if there is a concern that a child is, or is at risk of, being significantly harmed.

Process

The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case.

The LADO process will oversee/ be alongside the other strands i.e., child protection, criminal investigation, disciplinary process.

The LADO will monitor and record the progress of each case. This could be by way of review meetings / discussions with relevant agencies.

A final allegation management meeting / discussion should be held to reach a conclusion and ensure that all tasks have been completed, including any referrals to the DBS if appropriate, and, where appropriate, agree an action plan for future practice based on lessons learnt.

Conclusion

The LADO

- Provides advice, information and guidance regarding allegations and concerns against paid and unpaid workers.
- Manages and oversees individual cases.
- Ensures the child's voice is heard and that they are safeguarded.
- Ensures there is a consistent, fair, and thorough process.
- Monitors the progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with as quickly as possible and reach an outcome.
- Chairs meetings as appropriate

Referrals and further information

Call **0207 364 0677** or email **LADO@towerhamlets.gov.uk**