
Annual LADO Report

2020

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Aitken – LADO &
Safeguarding In Education
Service



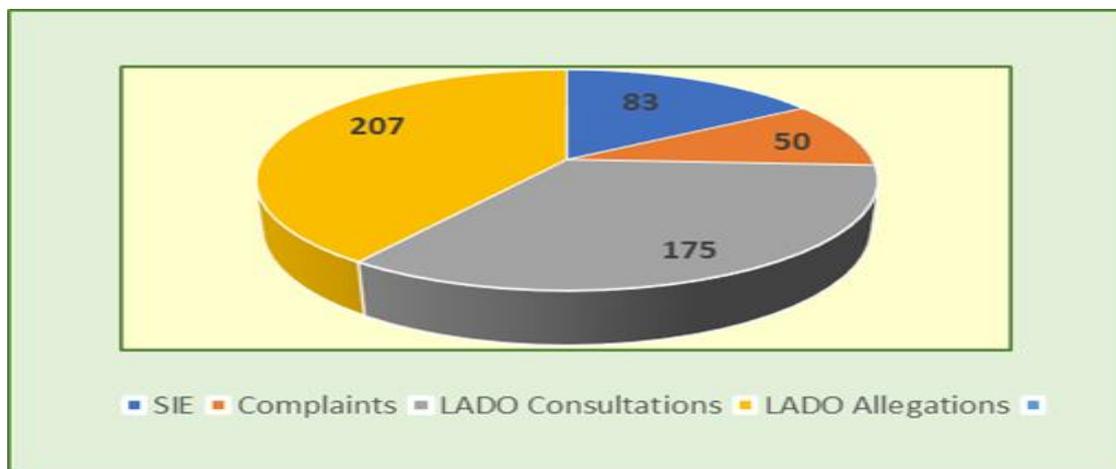
RELATIONSHIPS
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Purpose

This report analyses allegations reported to the Designated Officer for the Local Authority (LADO) between 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. It also provides an overview and analysis of the services provided by the Safeguarding in Education Service.

Overview

There were 515 contacts into the LADO and Safeguarding in Education Service compared to 519 in the previous year. The analysis of the contacts has shown a marked increase in requests for consultations. There is a stabilisation in LADO referrals which could be attributed to the additional work undertaken with schools and early years settings using the consultation service. This year has also seen a rise in ad hoc communication from settings seeking advice and support. An analysis of themes has strengthened the training offer particularly for DSL's. For example a theme in Early Years settings was in safeguarding supervision, safeguarding supervision training is now offered.



Statutory Functions and Guidance

The role of the LADO or 'Local Authority Designated Officer' is set out in Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2018) and is governed by the Local Authorities duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

Chapter 7 of the London Child Protection Procedures outlines the process for managing allegations against all paid or unpaid staff and volunteers, including foster carers and approved adopters.

The role of the LADO is to co-ordinate information sharing with the right people and monitor and track investigations with the aim of resolving them as quickly as possible in an independent, fair, proportionate and reasonable manner for all parties with a focus on ensuring the protection of children. The role gives all agencies, whether from the statutory, private or voluntary sector, a point of contact to discuss and refer concerns falling within the below criteria:

- 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.

The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case, whether or not a police investigation continues. The LADO also provides advice and guidance to employers and other individuals or organisations that have concerns relating to an adult who works with children and young people.

Staffing Update

This year the LADO and Safeguarding in Education Service saw a number of staffing changes including a reorganisation. The LADO and Safeguarding in Education Service now has an increased management capacity to enable further development of the traded safeguarding in education service. A permanent team manager was recruited in November 2019 and a permanent assistant team manager in April 2020. The service is fully staffed with permanent members of staff.

The Covid 19 pandemic has demonstrated the skills of the service to be adaptable and responsive to change, as we changed the way we worked and delivered services, maintaining our high commitment to safeguarding. As a team we continue to keep pace with the new challenges in the Council and have worked with the opportunities that these challenges bring. The service remains committed to develop and continue to embed the safeguarding confidence and practice of all those who work or volunteer with children.

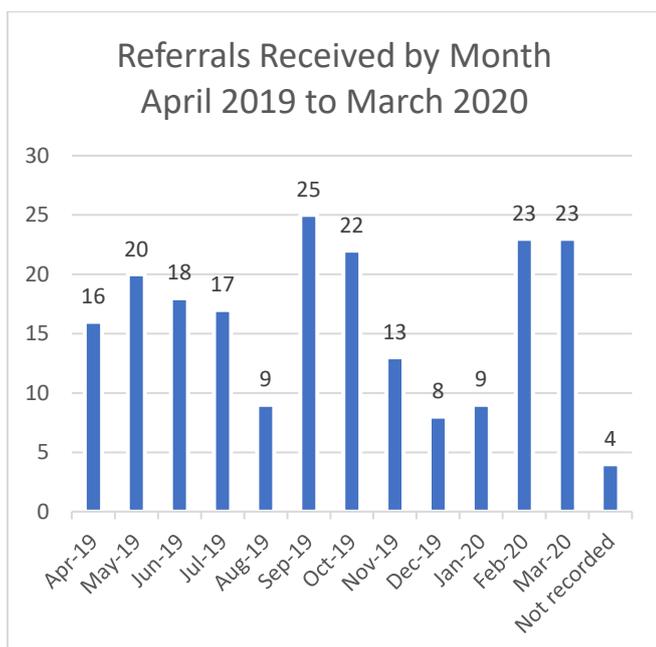
Systems and Recording

All referrals are sent to the LADO inbox lado@walthamforest.gov.uk and/or the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). This ensures that there is always oversight of those referrals. All matters requiring LADO involvement are required to complete a referral form. This form also includes the running record to ensure completeness.

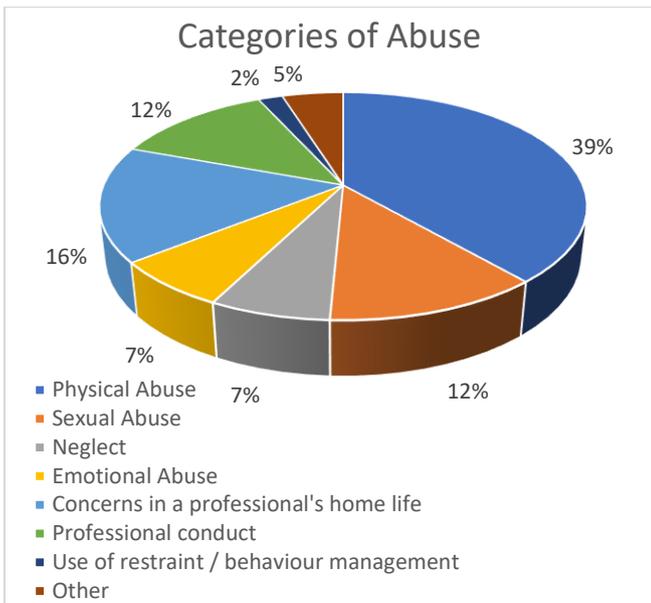
The LADO inbox is monitored by the LADO and Safeguarding in Education manager who is responsible for the oversight of all LADO cases. In the event that there is not a LADO available, any urgent matters will be addressed by the duty child protection chair person or the head of service for settings and workforce. In the unlikely event that no one is available the matter will be referred to the MASH team. Systems in Mosaic are now fully developed to record all LADO and Safeguarding in Education contacts, referrals, consultation and decisions. The LADO and Safeguarding in Education Service continue to work with ICT colleagues to improve the LADO and Safeguarding in Education workspace on Mosaic and data reporting to ensure that it meets the needs of the Service.

These records will remain restricted to ensure confidentiality but will enable other parts of the council to make contact with the LADO team for information sharing where there are concerns.

Referrals to LADO



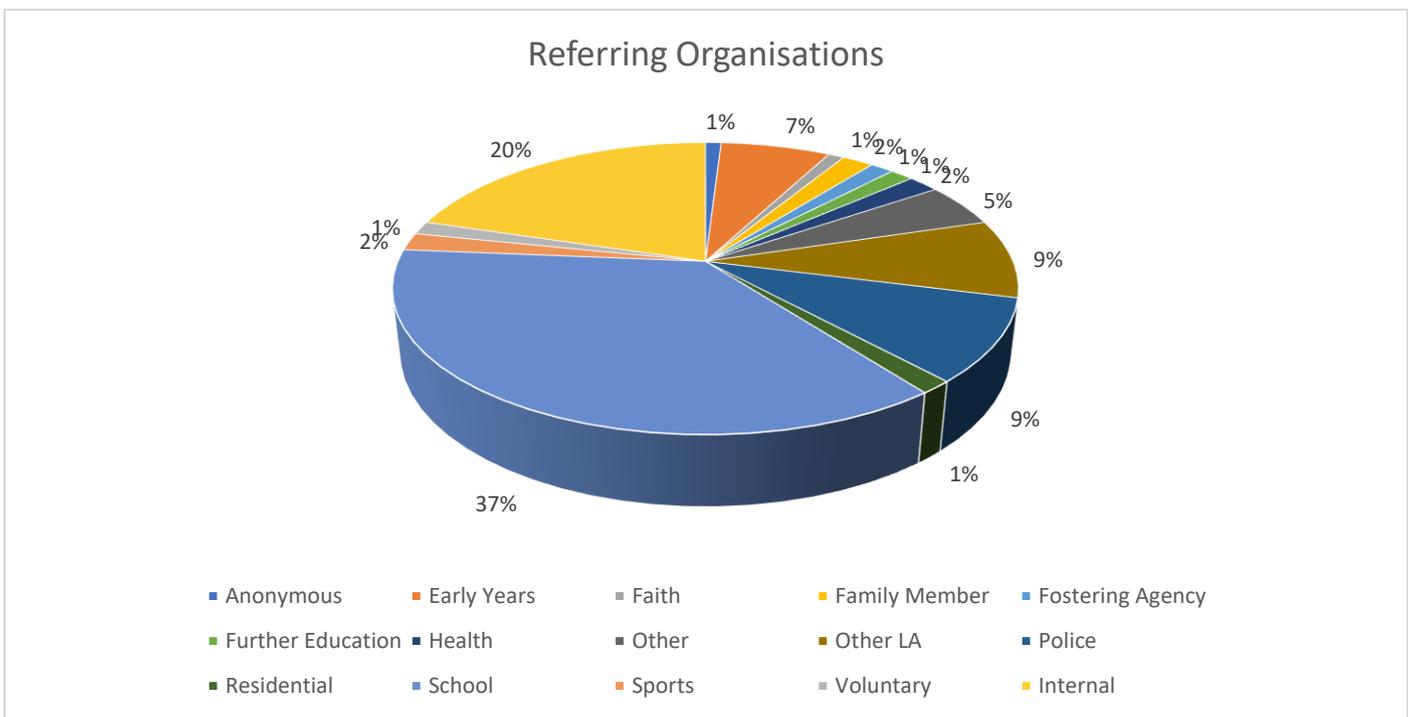
Referrals to the LADO have stabilised, a trend we saw emerging last year after significant year on year increases in the previous years. Discussions with our neighbouring and comparative boroughs LADO colleagues have reported similar themes. In Waltham Forest we have worked hard to support our early and mainstream education providers to develop confidence and practice and we have seen an increase in the consultations, taking a preventative approach which is the changes we wished to see. The Covid 19 pandemic has reduced the “eyes on” in our settings and there is a higher reliance on solo home working and online practice. This brings with it a different nature of risk than settings are used to working with, and as a service we are working with relevant departments to create systems, practice and policy to assist with safeguarding in the remote working world.



As reported in previous years, physical abuse remains one of the highest referral categories to the LADO service. This reporting year we have seen an increase in allegations of sexual harm. Analysis of the referrals received in this category shows that there has been increasing reports of professionals and volunteers who work with children accessing indecent images of children (IIOC). Our Borough Police have a team in place to manage criminal offences related to IIOC and we have a good relationship with this team. We are starting discussions about how we can jointly approach and tackle this issue in Waltham Forest and expect to see a further increase in the next reporting year as people are accessing digital technology on an increasing basis.

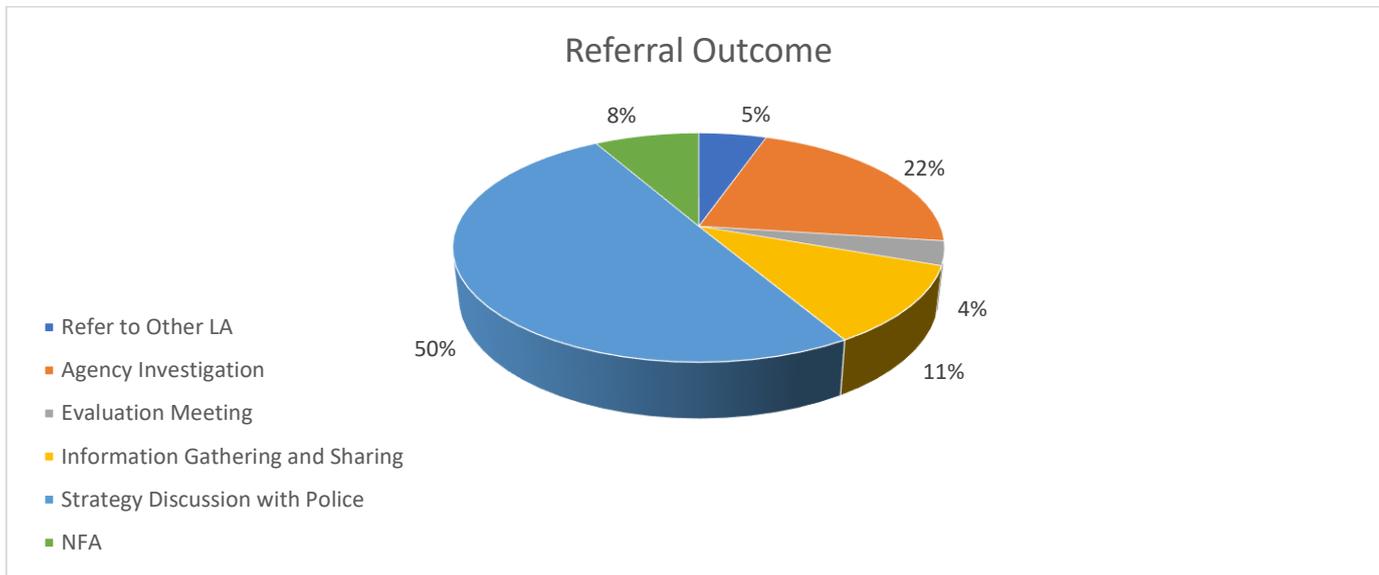
Case Example

Referral received from the Police reporting that a member of staff from the charity sector was arrested for the possession and distribution of indecent images of children. This information was shared with the employing organisation. A discussion was made on this case not to convene an ASV meeting within 5 working days as there was no further information to share at the time until the Police had forensically examined the member of staff's electronic devices. Consideration was made on other options to suspension which was informed by a risk assessment. Further risk assessments were conducted to consider the organisational risk should formation become public knowledge.



The service receives the highest volume of referrals from education professionals. As the group most in contact with children and young people this would be expected. We have seen increases in referrals from

the police which has almost doubled this year. We are also seeing referrals increase from health, faith and charitable service providers. This demonstrates that the communication work across the council and partnership is increasing awareness of providers responsibilities for safeguarding.



Refer to other LA

A referral is made to another local authority LADO when it is deemed that that the adult subject to the allegation works in their local authority area. Cases where the adult subject to the allegation is a Foster Carer, caring for a child placed by Waltham Forest are tracked by LADO.

Agency Investigation

Where the LADO threshold is met the LADO advises the employer of the need to formally investigate the allegation. It is normally expected that this would be under the employer’s disciplinary procedure.

Evaluation Meeting

Evaluation meetings are held to enable a wider discussion to make a decision on threshold. Evaluation meetings are also held to share information specifically around concerns in a professional’s personal life.

Information Gathering and Sharing

This relates to any initial enquiries or the sharing of information to determine whether threshold is met. There are occasions when a referral is received by the non-employing organisation, in such cases information is shared by LADO with the employing organisation.

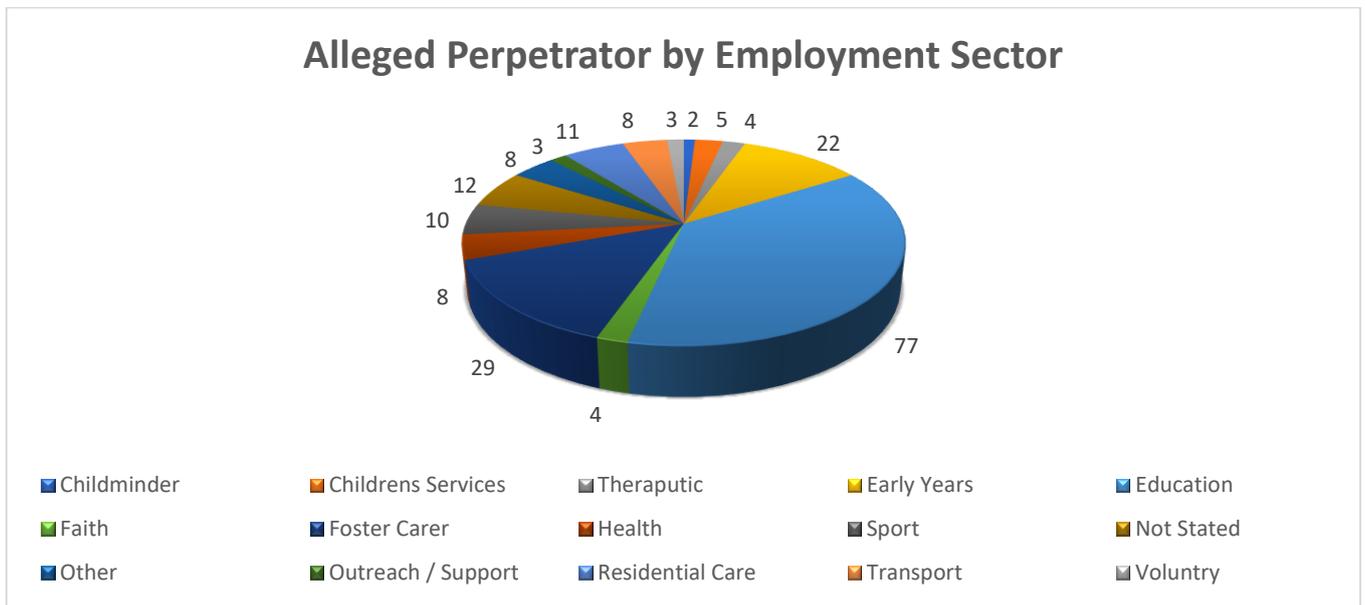
Police Referral

A referral or consultation with the Police will always take place when referrals indicate that a criminal offence has potentially been committed against or related to the child. This liaison with the Child Abuse Investigation Team ensures that appropriate decisions are taken to determine if the criminal threshold is likely to be met.

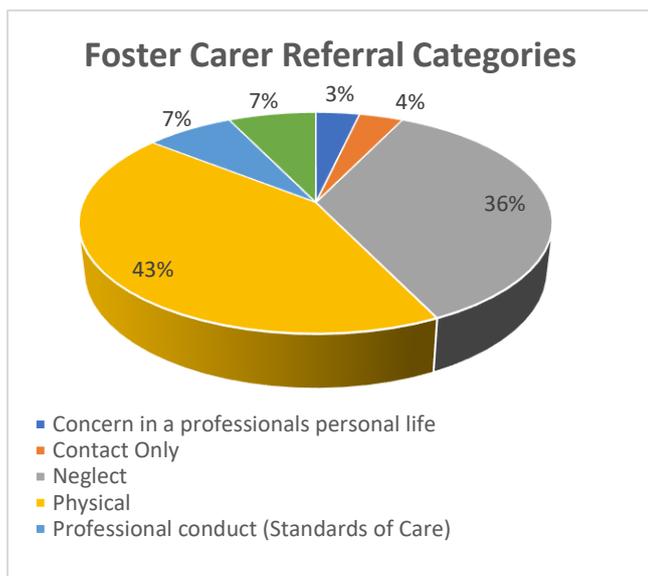
Investigations where a police investigation was undertaken, as highlighted in previous reports, timescales remain an issue. This year we have had cases where personal electronic devices required examination. The process of downloading images and reviewing content can be a lengthy process as this can involve the examination through thousands of images, videos and messages. However, there have been a number of investigations which do not require this level of investigation which were not resolved in accordance with target timescales outlined in London Child Protection Procedures due to the delay in the conclusion of the police investigation.

This year there have been 104 strategy discussions with the police resulting in 26 police investigations.

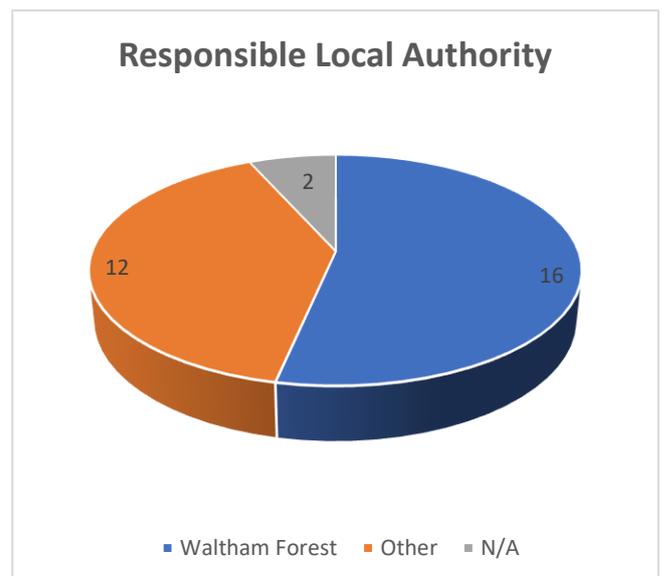
To address the delay the Head of Service for Workforce Safeguarding meets regularly with the Detective Inspector for the police safeguarding team to discuss and review all open LADO investigations and issues.



As expected and seen from previous years and would be expected statistically, those who work within the education sector remain the most referred to the service. It is important that all professionals working with children especially those from the Education Sector have the training, knowledge and professional ability to be sensitive and have insight to the needs of the child or young person. When managing behaviour and responding to a child who may be exhibiting challenging behaviour, professionals require the skills and understanding to where the behaviour may be originating from to support positive engagement and react in the most effective way. This year has seen a significant increase in the number of referrals for Foster Carers, of the 29 referrals, 4 were Waltham Forest Foster carers.



The majority of referrals were in relation to allegations of physical abuse following by neglect. We have found that a number of allegations have been made after the child has left placement or when there are times of instability, for example when there are ongoing court proceedings

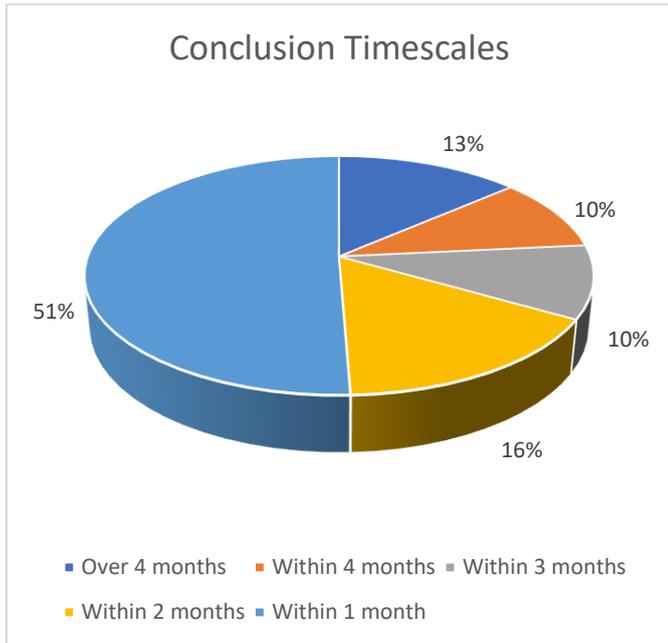


16 of the children were looked after by Waltham Forest, 12 were looked after by other Local Authorities, 1 was a contacts and 1 concerns in a professional's personal life.

Case Example

A placing authority referred to the LADO upon receiving information from their legal department of an allegation of physical abuse. Following the strategy discussion with the Police it was agreed that an ASV meeting was held. The ASV meeting agreed a single agency investigation by Police. The Police investigation found that the allegation was led by the children’s mother which resulted to a malicious outcome.

Timescales



The statutory guidance requires that all notifications are resolved as quickly as possible consistent with a fair and thorough investigation. A key aspect of the role of LADO is to be involved in the management and oversight of all notifications ensuring that agencies and organisations involved avoid unnecessary delays.

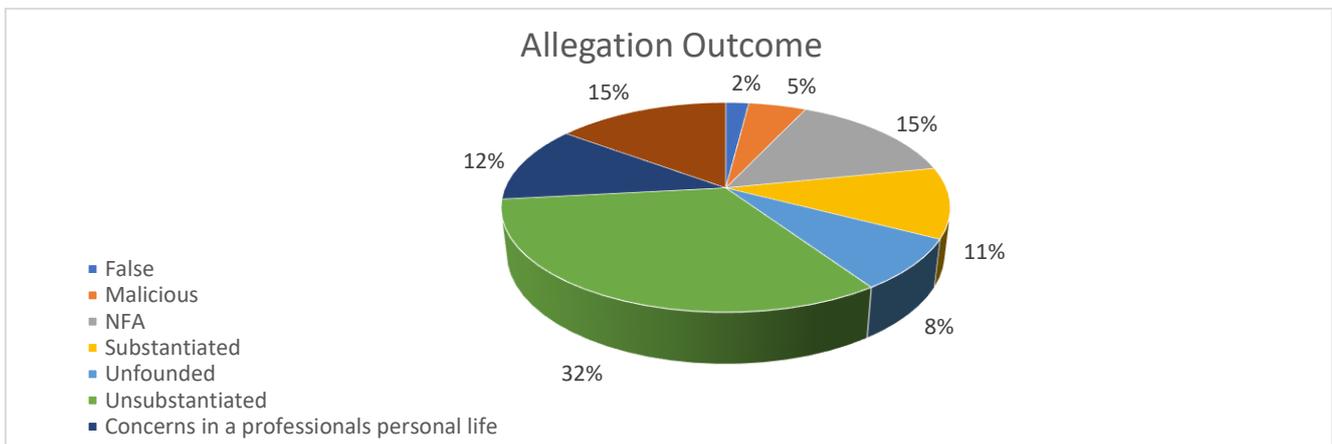
The following target timescales outlined in London Child Protection Procedures useful in measuring the effectiveness of notifications being closed expeditiously:

- 80% of cases to be resolved within one month
- 90% to be resolved within three months
- All but the most exceptional cases to be closed within twelve months

There are a number of factors that make these timescale targets challenging to achieve including:

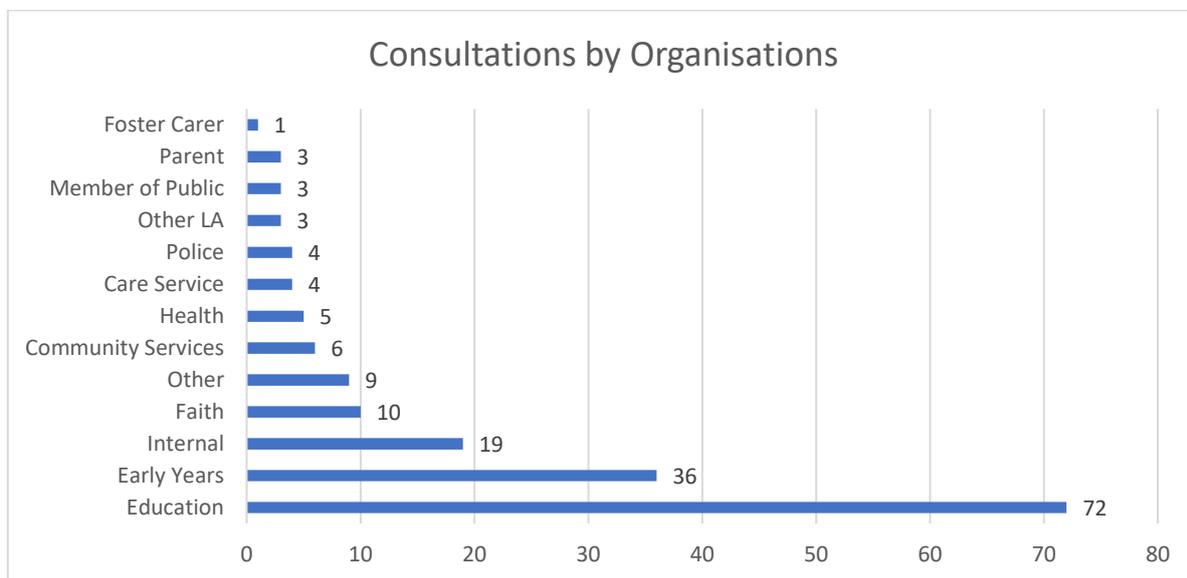
- The length of time a case may take to work through the criminal justice process to conclusion.
- Employers awaiting the outcome of a criminal investigation before formally investigating the concerns under its disciplinary procedures.
- Disciplinary procedures which often parallel to the safeguarding investigations.

A contributing factor to the delay for this year has been the capacity and staff changes within the LADO and Safeguarding in Education Service. In addition, the current Covid-19 situation has added further delay as investigations have been put on hold where settings were closed.



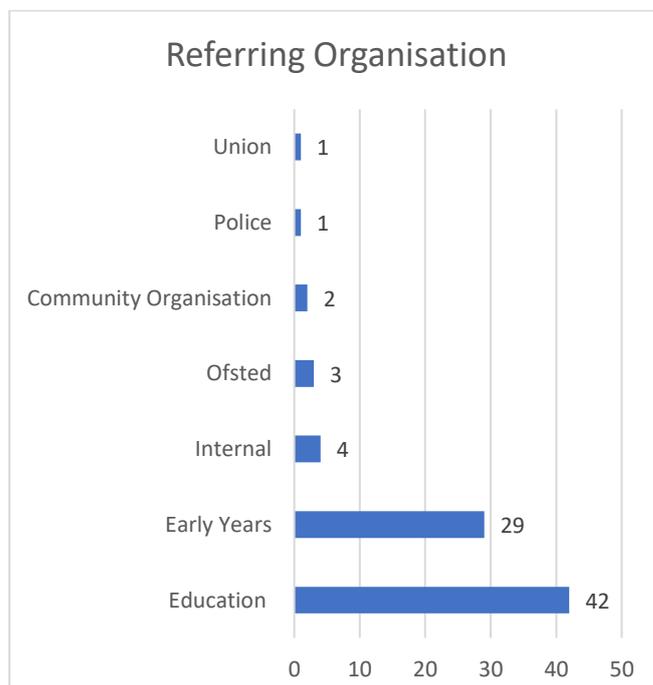
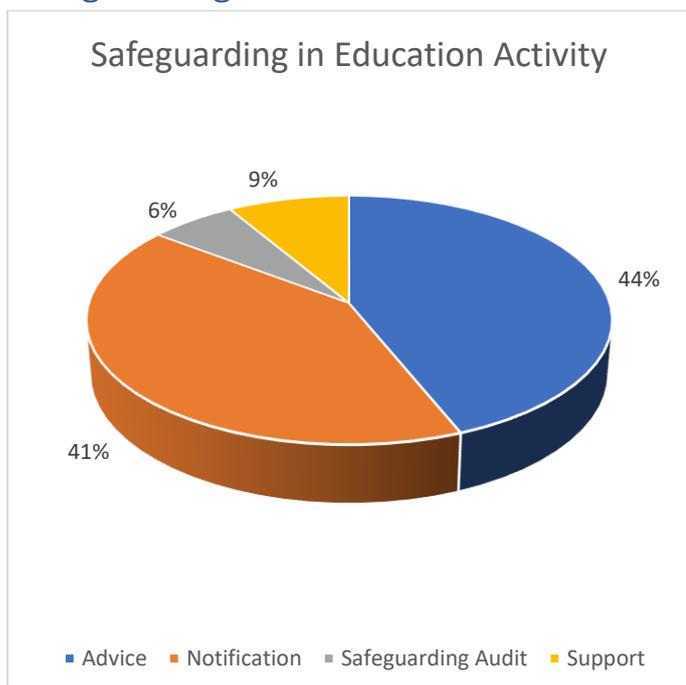
Of the cases that have been concluded this year, unsubstantiated outcomes remain our highest conclusion following the conclusion of the allegation process. The rates of outcomes are consistent with last year's data and when compared to other London Boroughs.

Consultations



This year 175 consultations were conducted. Organisations request a consultation when they are unclear whether a safeguarding concern meets LADO threshold. Following the discussion should the incident require a LADO referral a request is made that a formal referral is forwarded to LADO within 1 working day and a risk assessment conducted on that member of staff. A record of the consultation forwarded if LADO threshold is not met along with advice and recommendations to support in the delivery of effective safeguarding within the organisation. The majority of consultations take place with schools as part of the Safeguarding in Education traded offer and Early Years. We continue to see an increase in consultations from faith and community providers.

Safeguarding in Education



The majority of activity within Safeguarding in Education is for advice which is mainly from schools. The advice requested are from different areas. The requests for advice are for a range of issues some examples are recruitment, staff conduct outside of the organisation, school exclusions and policies.

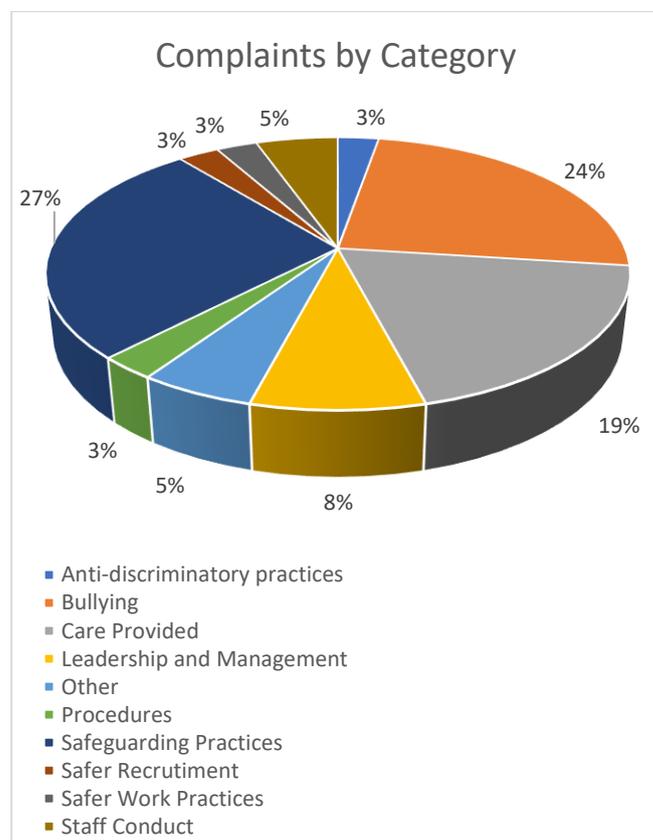
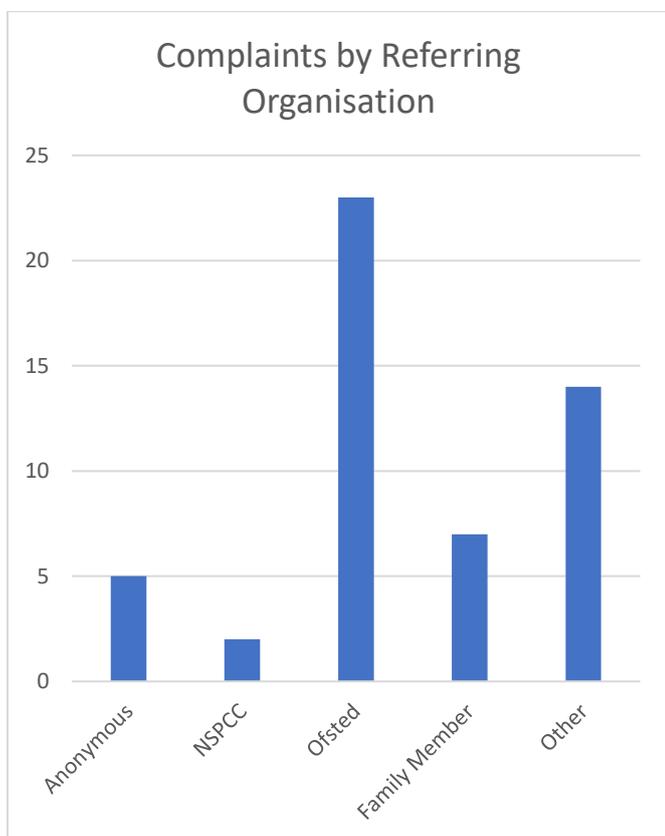
Notifications mainly come from Early Years settings and Ofsted. It is a required within the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2017 for Early Years providers to notify the Local Authority of ‘any serious accident or injury to, or the death of, any child while in their care, and must act on any advice from those agencies’. Upon receipt of a notification, research is conducted on what we know about the setting and an investigation is initiated either by the setting or a member of the Safeguarding in Education Team. Investigations conducted by the setting are forwarded to a member of the Safeguarding in Education Team to review and view is formed on whether there are safeguarding concerns which require further investigation or escalation.

Due to the changes in staffing, only 5 safeguarding audits were achieved this year, we plan to increase the number of audits conducted.

The support provided under Safeguarding in Education is delivered in various forms which include on-site visits, safeguarding supervision, liaising with other professionals and file reviews.

Complaints

The team also receive complaints from various sources about the safeguarding within education settings. The majority of complaints are made via Ofsted and relate to schools and secondly to early years providers. All complaints are sent to the organisation to investigate and findings are returned to the Safeguarding in Education Team. The investigation is scrutinised, and a view is formed on whether there are safeguarding concerns which require further investigation or escalation.



Feedback

Working with Safeguarding in Education team has been extremely beneficial. The team have been very supportive offering constructive advice and support whenever it has been needed. The manner in which they have responded to any concerns has been timely and constructive.

We look forward to continuing to work with them.

Primary School Deputy head teacher

Over the past year the Safeguarding in Education team have worked to support us with several consultations around staffing issues; there has been an improvement in communication and record keeping in terms of consultation follow up, with clear written records provided following each consultation, ranging from a single phone call or more detailed LADO investigation. The updated paperwork for LADO investigations is extremely thorough and enables the referrer to add the required detail in a structured way.

The team have also carried out an external Safeguarding Audit of our provision which offered a 'critical friend' stance to support and guided where any adaptations to process or training were needed.

The shift from face-to-face to digitalising training during the pandemic has been smooth, although some courses were unable to go ahead due to lack of take-up from schools which can be disappointing and complicate our internal training schedule, however communication around this remained strong and it is understandable given the circumstances when some schools/individuals cannot attend training.

Head of Safeguarding in Education

A childminder advised that she found the involvement by Safeguarding in Education Team challenging and hard work, however, this has paid off as she has recently been inspected with an 'outstanding' judgement.

2020-2021 Focus

The LADO and Safeguarding in Education Service will continue to support organisations to deliver safer places for those in Waltham Forest through continued awareness raising, the delivery of a safeguarding training programme, targeted support and advice to those organisations that do not have strong safeguarding structures. There will be a particular focus will be on Independent Fostering Agencies.

The LADO and Safeguarding in Education Service will work with settings on supporting them developing professional knowledge and understanding impact of childhood adversity and responding to behaviours that can be exhibited as a result of these experiences.

This year a new safeguarding audit will be rolled out which will support settings to identifying areas requiring improvement, building and strengthening safeguarding practices.