

From: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Children's and Young People's Cabinet Committee – 6 March 2024

Subject: LADO Annual Report 2022

Classification: Unrestricted

Future Pathway of report: To inform the LADO Evaluation.

Summary: This annual report provides quantitative and qualitative data, details the number, nature, and describes the investigation processes and outcomes of allegations regarding the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) activity during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. The report is relevant to all KSCMP and partner agencies who work with children.

Recommendation(s):

The committee is asked to note the report.

1. Introduction

The annual report for the County LADO Service (CLS) provides the statistical data regarding Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) activity during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 for the KSCMP and partner agencies on the number, nature, investigation processes and outcomes of allegations. Following the analysis of the data there is a narrative and further analysis regarding Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) activity during the same period, challenges, and recommendations for future development of the service.

2. Body of the report

The report offers a general overview of the County LADO service, the activity throughout the year and challenges within the team that has impacted the quality of services. There is a summary of how these matters were addressed including contingency planning. There is a detailed description of numbers and nature of referrals with details of the types of allegations, by sector and outcomes considered. This is followed by a performance report which details KPIs and a subsequent analysis of that data. The report then considers and evaluates the previous year's recommendations and reports on achievements. What follows is a description of LADO activity which includes guidance and advice to partners on safer recruitment

and selection practices, safer working practices and management of allegations or concerns.

The LADOs continue to play a vital and expanding role in ensuring safeguarding standards across the county in several areas of work. The service continued to provide training/presentations to the Kent Social Work teams, Kent stakeholders and via the KSCMP regarding allegation management although there is a continuing need to raise awareness about allegation management internally as well as with partners.

The LADO was subject to an evaluation completed in March 2022 and several recommendations were made. The most notable were to increase LADO capacity and modernised the service in relation to case management and reporting systems. This report provides an analysis as to the progress made. You will read progress in improving and modernising the Kent LADO service was stymied by sickness and delay.

Feedback from professionals and partners is analysed.

The CLS were included in the ILACS inspection in May 2022. Inspectors feedback included thorough management oversight through to outcome and next steps for employees, alongside robust critical challenge. It did recognise the rise and fall of caseloads within the service and the challenges that led to the inconsistency in maintaining reasonable caseloads. 2022-2023 was a challenging year for the service purely due to capacity and systems. These challenges relate to two specific themes. The first relates to staffing. The KCC LADO service is a small team, and as such, with limited capacity to offset or cope when there is long term sickness. To further complicate matters it proved challenging to recruit to the CRO posts.

This report demonstrates that against these difficulties the CLS was active and continued to play a key part in ensuring the children's workforce is safe for children and young people across Kent.

The second theme relates to business systems and processes which continue to experience delays in transferring manual activities to the LADO Module in Liberi and the LADO continues to be without a service performance reporting system and dedicated KPIs despite several escalations. If the issues surrounding long term sickness, long term vacancies were addressed and the business systems, case management system and reporting functionality were implemented, as recommended by the March 2022 evaluation, the LADO would have achieved a great deal more.

The LADO service is currently subject to a review and re-evaluation which will be completed on the 16th of January 2024.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 The LADO budget for 2023/24 is £573,900.

4. Legal implications

4.1 It is a requirement nationally for all employers within the children's workforce to have clear and robust safeguarding procedures in place when responding to allegations against staff, whether they are paid or voluntary. Working Together, 2018 provides the Harm Threshold applied when an allegation is made against a member of the children's workforce, and it is believed the individual 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.
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

5. Equalities implications

5.1 The LADO provides guidance and advice to organisations providing services to all children as well as the most vulnerable, (those children with profound disabilities and those in foster and residential care). The LADO is implementing KCC CYPE's strategy in relation to diversity and inclusion which includes the implementation of the Leading in Colour guidance for managers.

6. Other corporate implications

6.1 The LADO's work cuts across many organisational boundaries and systems. The LADO often will operate in highly charged political circumstances especially when there is media interest.

7. Governance

7.1 The LADO is managed within the Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Professional Standard Service which reports to Mr Kevin Kasaven, Director of Children's Countywide Services. The LADO also reports to the Kent Safeguarding Children Multiagency Partnership (KSCMP).

8. Alternatives considered.

None.

9. Conclusions

8.1 The data and the analysis evidence the LADO remains a busy service that, despite the challenges remains able to provide a quality service. The challenges relate to two specific themes. The first relates to staffing. The KCC LADO service is a small team, and as such, has limited capacity to offset or cope when there is long term sickness. To further complicate matters it proved challenging to recruit to the CRO (administrative) posts. The second theme relates to business systems and processes which continue to experience delays in transferring manual activities to the LADO Module in Liberi. Critically, the performance system, designed to assist in case management, management of key performance indicators as well as assist in the identification of patterns and intelligence, remains delayed despite several escalations.

These issues, along with a review following the March 2022 evaluation and action plan will be tested in a re-evaluation of the LADO service due to be completed in January 2024.

10. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

The committee is asked to note the report.

10. Background Documents

10.1 None

11. Contact details

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