

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Annual Report 2023-24

**Allegations against professionals and
volunteers working with children**

'Thank you all, it is great that this has been managed so proficiently and swiftly'

Programme Manager – Professional Standards

Medical Directorate

NHS England - South West

'Thank you for all of your support through this process! It's surely not an easy thing to deal with on a daily basis and you and your coworkers are making a massive difference. A sends her deepest thanks as well as her work with empowering women is dependent on organisations such as yours'

Lead Instructor and Safeguarding Lead

'Thank you for offering your thoughts and advice on this. And as I answered question after question, I was able to pull on your comments in completing the task. It made the experience less difficult than it would otherwise have been. So thanks again, you made it that little bit easier. And made the process a less daunting prospect. And I am very grateful to you'

Learning Support Tutor and Exams Access Arrangements Assessor

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1. Introduction

1.1 This report is submitted to the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership together with residents of Gloucestershire as an annual record of allegations management within the county. The annual report provides the statistical data regarding Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) activity during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 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. Building a Safer Children's Workforce in Gloucestershire

2.1 The allegations management service ensures children are kept safe in organisations and that the adults working with and supporting children are safe enough to do so. The welfare of children remains paramount when investigating allegations against a person in a position of trust and part of the LADO role is to ensure that appropriate action has been taken to safeguard and support children where allegations arise.

2.2 The key roles and responsibilities for the LADOs in Gloucestershire are to:

- Collaborate with the police, children's social care, regulatory bodies, other local authorities, and relevant agencies as part of enquiries into allegations.
- Manage the allegation process, including chairing the allegation management meetings, monitoring the progress of the allegation to ensure that it is resolved as quickly as possible, and that the process is thorough and fair.
- Escalate any safeguarding concerns for a child or children to children's social care.
- Provide analysis, highlight patterns and escalate concerns to the GSCP, working together with all our partners to ensure a safe children's workforce in Gloucestershire.
- Provide bespoke training and development to the partners and other agencies on the role and responsibility of employees in managing allegations against people and the role of the LADO.
- Provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations.
- Actively participate in quality assurance of service effectiveness through weekly and monthly service meetings.
- Respond to Subject Access Requests (SARs) and requests from the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) for information about allegations and outcomes. Consider Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and provide information to inform foster carer checks.

3. Overview of the Allegations Management Team 23/24

3.1 The LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) role and Allegations Management Service remain physically located within Gloucestershire County Council Offices. The team is comprised of 2.5 FTE LADOs. 1.5 LADOs are social work qualified, with 1 LADO from a Police/Safeguarding background. The team is assisted by the equivalent of 2 FTE business support staff. The Allegations Management Service sits within the Quality Assurance and Reviewing Service, within the Directorate of Safeguarding and Care. Line management is provided by a Service Manager with oversight from the Head of Quality and ultimately the Director of Safeguarding and Care.

3.2 The LADOs mainly focus on handling allegations and delivering training to various settings. There is a duty LADO on call every day to respond to incoming contacts and make

threshold decisions. The business support team handle all incoming calls, arrange all Allegations Management Meetings (AMMs), produce summaries of AMMs and provide any additional administrative support required including collating the data.

3.3 The LADOs are regularly supported through monthly supervision with the Service Manager, monthly in person team meetings and weekly LADO catch ups which are used for peer support and reflection. A new duty rota has recently been implemented to support the LADOs to have protected time to manage large caseloads and catching up on recording.

3.4 The LADOs are members of and meet monthly with the South West LADO group and the National LADO network. The service ensures in person representation at the National LADO Network annual conference.

3.5 The Service Manager represents the service at the quarterly GSCP Quality and Improvement in Practice (QiiP) and Education subgroups.

4. Information Systems

4.1 This year has seen the launch of a Liquid Logic pathway for allegations management processes. The pathway should assist improved analysis of data regarding contacts and referrals, as well as monitor timeliness of allegations management processes and create an improved allocations system. The pathway is currently being used by the LADOs for all new referrals, it is a work in progress and under regular review. Once the pathway is functioning as required, we will be in a position to develop a performance dashboard that is in line with other services within the Directorate. In the meantime the business support team continue to maintain a manual data management system which is used to inform this annual report.

4.2 The service webpage has moved from the GSCP website to GCC Children's Services. The webpage has been redesigned with new helpful links for professionals and members of the public to easily access. The webpage will include a link to a new contact form when requesting advice and guidance or making a referral. Contact forms will be assessed by a Duty LADO within 48 hours.

[The Role of the LADO & The Allegations Management process | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

5. Statutory Guidance

5.1 The Allegations Management Service is underpinned by statutory guidance – Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018. This guidance sets out that Local Authorities should have a Designated Officer (LADO) to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against staff working within the Children's Workforce. Following the publication of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (2023) (Hesley Report) the National LADO Network (NLN) has worked alongside the Department For Education (DFE) revising the current Working Together guidance. The National Review recommended an updated LADO Handbook providing further LADO guidance. The handbook is now with the DFE awaiting consultation due in the new year. After consultation the intention is for the handbook to be implemented as guidance in the form of an appendix to any Working Together to Safeguard Children as well as Keeping Children Safe in Education. The handbook will contain national standards for LADOs across the country

5.2 The definition of 'working with' children is an adult who is working or volunteering with children (anyone under the age of 18 years old) or in contact with children through work on a regular basis and would be seen as being in a position of trust over them.

5.3 Sections 10 and 11 of the Children's Act, Working Together 2018, and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2022 direct partners in their safeguarding duties to

children. This includes maintaining effective inter agency procedures for dealing with allegations against people who work with children, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of those procedures. The team employ the Southwest Policy and Procedures for Allegations Management in line with Allegations Management teams across the Southwest which also reflects the National LADO Network principles

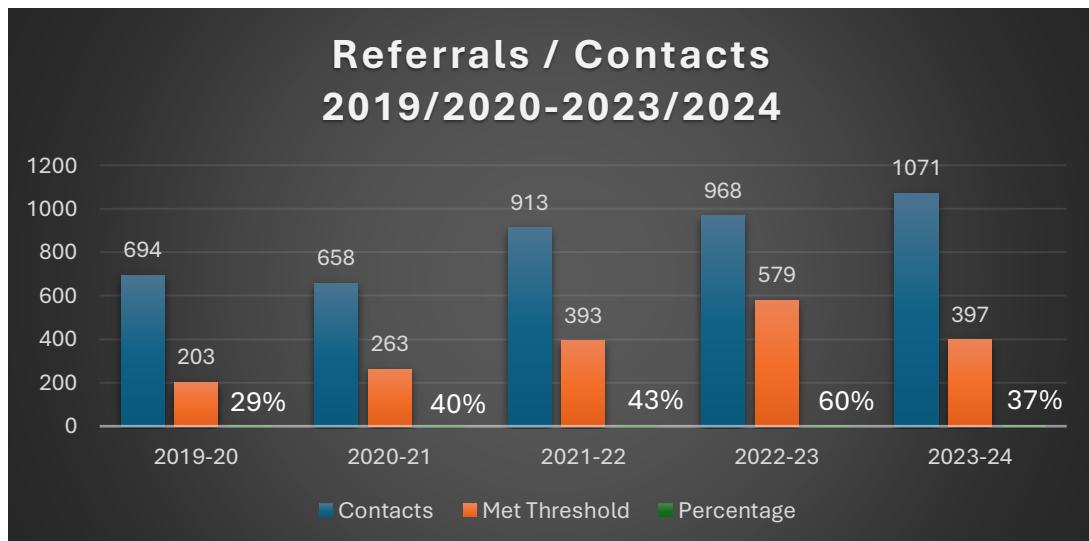
5.4 It is a requirement nationally for all employers within the children's workforce to have clear and robust safeguarding procedures in place when responding to allegations against staff, whether they are paid or voluntary. Working Together, 2018 provides the Harm Threshold applied when an allegation 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.

6. Allegations management performance data from 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

6.1 Contacts - In the last four years, volumes of activity in the team have risen significantly each year. As per Table 1 below, for 2023/24, the total number of contacts to the service was 1071, an increase of 11% from the previous year (in comparison to 2022/23 where an increase of 6% was recorded). The increase in contacts will be linked to the service focus on promoting awareness, in addition to delivering bespoke training. The service also receives more contacts seeking advice and guidance regarding low level concerns. In 2022/23 the conversion rate from contacts to AM process was high at 60% in comparison to conversion rate data in LADO annual reports from other local authorities. A 37% conversion rate for 2023/24 is now more in line with other local authorities.

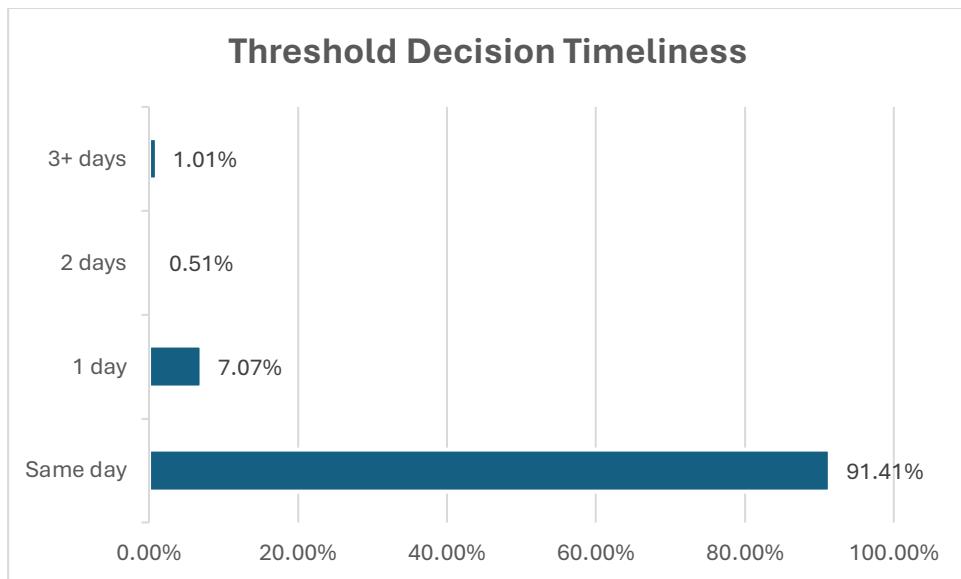
Table 1 – Contacts



6.2 **Table 2** - Timeliness of decision making for contacts. The expected standard of practice is that for every contact received, a threshold decision must be made by a LADO within 48 hours. The majority of contacts (91%) are responded to on the

day, with 7% responded to 1 day later. Under 2% of contacts are responded to by a LADO outside of the expected timescale.

Table 2



6.3 Of 1071 contacts received, 397 (37%) reviewed by LADOs were found to meet the threshold to progress to an allegations management process. A contact includes any setting raising a concern about a member of staff or volunteer. A referral would be concerns that require LADO to assess against the criteria for the Allegation Management process.

6.4 Information from a contact (complexity varies with each case) requires initial screening and if the contact amounts to a referral, then very likely includes arranging and chairing Allegation Management Meetings, regular reviews, advice/guidance by a LADO and progression until a suitable outcome can be decided. Ongoing advice and contacts that do not meet threshold also need to be recorded as appropriate by the team.

6.5 Agencies who submit contacts

As per **Table 3** the highest number of contacts received in 2023/24 were from Educational establishments (total of 334, 31%). Of these 334 contacts, 41% were from primary schools.

182 contacts (17%) are from Social Care.

175 contacts (16%) are from Independent providers (includes for example community based services such as Young Gloucestershire, Children's supported accommodation and independent fostering agencies).

106 contacts (10%) are from Police.

42 (4%) contacts from Health.

Table 3 – Referrals by agency as percentages

Referring Type	Total	Percentage
Early Years	59	6%

Education - Alternative Provision	8	1%
Education - Higher	11	1%
Education - Other	6	1%
Education - Primary	137	13%
Education - Secondary	65	6%
Education - Special	31	3%
Education- independent	17	2%
Health	42	4%
Ofsted - Early Years	18	2%
Ofsted - Education	4	0%
Ofsted - Social Care	8	1%
Other	63	6%
Other - Charities	5	0%
Other - Faith Groups	9	1%
Other - Family Member	6	1%
Other - Gloucestershire Council	16	1%
Other - Independent Provider	175	16%
Other - Member Of Public	13	1%
Other - School transport	2	0%
Other - Voluntary Organisations	6	1%
Other - Whistleblower	17	2%
Police	106	10%
Social Care - Charities	3	0%
Social Care - Charities (NSPCC)	2	0%
Social Care - Children's Services	182	17%
Social Care - Fostering	16	1%
Social Care - MASH	25	2%
Social Care - Other	8	1%
Social Care - Youth Support Team	1	0%
Sports Association	10	1%
Grand Total	1071	100%

6.6 Positions of Trust by Agency Type

As per **Table 4**, the highest number of contacts relate to people in positions of trust in Education 450 contacts (42%). The majority of these contacts relate to staff in primary school, 164 contacts (15%)

336 contacts (31%) relate to people in positions of trust with Independent Providers. 49 contacts (5%) relate to people in positions of trust in Health.

33 contacts (3%) relate to people in positions of trust in Social Care, Children's Services. 28 contacts (3%) relate to people in positions of trust in the Police.

Table 4

Position of Trust Agency Type Overall Figures

Early Years	94	9%
Education - Alternative Provision	12	1%
Education - Higher	11	1%
Education - Other	11	1%
Education - primary	164	15%
Education - Secondary	85	8%
Education - Special	45	4%
Education- independent	28	3%
Health	49	5%
Ofsted - Social Care	1	0%
Other	78	7%
Other - Charities	5	0%
Other - Faith Groups	18	2%
Other - Gloucestershire Council	8	1%
Other - Independent Provider	336	31%
Other - School transport	7	1%
Other - Voluntary Organisations	7	1%
Police	28	3%
Social Care - Children's Services	33	3%
Social Care - Fostering	27	3%
Social Care - MASH	2	0%
Social Care - Other	4	0%
Sports Association	18	2%
Grand Total	1071	100%

6.7 Categories of Harm

As per **Table 5** below, the primary categories of harm initially identified in contacts was equally transferable risk and physical harm both at 27%.

The service focussed on educating agencies regarding transferable risk during 2022/23; including developing an information leaflet providing advice and guidance on transferable risk and how to assess it. There is an increase of 12% for contacts indicating concerns relating to transferable risk compared to 2022/23 (19%) reflects positively on the awareness work undertaken.

Table 5- Categories of Harm

Transferable Risk	299	28%
Physical harm	290	27%

Awaiting clarification	173	16%
Neglect	164	16%
Emotional harm	84	8%
Sexual harm	61	6%
Grand Total	1071	100%

6.8 Primary Outcomes

As outlined in KCSIE, the Allegations Management process allows for several possible Primary outcomes to be recorded. These are:

- Unfounded
- Unsubstantiated
- Malicious
- False
- Substantiated/founded.

The primary outcomes for all 1071 contacts received in 2023/24 are shown in **Table 6** below.

626 (58%) of these contacts, when assessed by a LADO, did not meet threshold for an allegations management process. Agencies who make contacts which do not meet the threshold, receive advice and guidance from a LADO, this will often include follow up for assurance.

99 (9%) of all contacts are currently ongoing allegations management processes, this is due to ongoing criminal investigations.

129 (12%) of contacts progressed to substantiated allegations.

119 (11%) of contacts progressed to unsubstantiated allegations.

45 (4%) of contacts progressed and were concluded as unfounded.

Table 6

Primary Outcomes

Did not meet LADO Threshold	626	58.5%
Malicious	1	0.1%
Ongoing	99	9.2%
Referred to other agency	43	4.0%
Substantiated/Founded	129	12.0%
Unfounded	45	4.2%
Unsubstantiated	119	11.1%
FALSE	9	0.8%
	1071	100%

Of the substantiated outcomes;

36% Independent providers

15% Early Years

12% Primary
 10% Secondary
 5% Health
 4% Fostering
 3% Children's services.
 2% GCC
 2% Faith Groups
 2% Education independent
 2% Education other (i.e. other local authority, school improvement staff, diocese trust staff)
 7% Other (i.e. school transport, police, charities, social care other)

6.9 Secondary Outcomes

Secondary outcomes are recorded for both contacts which result in advice and guidance as well as those which progress to an allegations management process. Of the 397 contacts which met threshold for an allegations management process, 99 (23%) did not require a secondary outcome (NFA). **Table 7** shows the secondary outcomes agreed in 2023/34, a percentage of which remain ongoing.

Table 7

Secondary outcome of all referrals	9	1%	Secondary outcome of all AM processes	9	2%
Cessation of Use	9	1%	Cessation of Use	9	2%
Conduct letter	1	0.1%	Conduct letter	1	0.2%
Continued registration with additional guidance	2	0.2%	Continued registration with additional guidance	2	0.5%
Demoted	1	0.1%	Demoted	1	0.2%
Deregistration	2	0.2%	Deregistration	2	0.5%
Disciplinary	4	0.4%	Disciplinary	4	1%
Dismissal	30	3%	Dismissal	30	7%
Informal Warning	1	0.1%	Informal Warning	1	0%
Internal Review	1	0.1%	Internal Review	1	0.2%
Letter of concern	1	0.1%	Letter of concern	1	0.2%
Management Advice	22	2%	Management Advice	22	5%
Management Monitoring	11	1%	Management Monitoring	11	3%
No Further Action	765	69%	No Further Action	99	23%
Organisational Learning	1	0.1%	Organisational Learning	1	0.2%
Panel decision - continue to foster	5	0.5%	Panel decision - continue to foster	5	1%
Probationary period extended	1	0.1%	Probationary period extended	1	0.2%
Referral to governing body	2	0.2%	Referral to governing body	2	0.5%
Reflective support	3	0.3%	Reflective support	3	1%
Resignation	10	1%	Resignation	10	2%
Review of Training	9	1%	Review of Training	9	2%
Risk assessment by Employer	8	1%	Risk assessment by Employer	8	2%

School conduct Policy to be followed	1	0.1%		School conduct Policy to be followed	1	0.2%
Self reflection and governance by the BSCH	1	0.1%		Self reflection and governance by the BSCH	1	0.2%
Support plan	3	0.3%		Support plan	3	1%
Training	30	3%		Training	30	7%
Warning / Retraining	7	1%		Warning / Retraining	7	2%
Ongoing	99	9%		Ongoing	91	21%
Awaiting Secondary Outcome	6	1%		Awaiting Secondary Outcome	6	1%
Written Warning	35	3%		Written Warning	35	8%
Grand Total	1071	97%		Grand Total	397	91%

7. Reflections & achievements for 2023/24

7.1 Compliments & complaints

There were 3 complaints received by the service during 2023/24. Complaints received tend to come from individuals who have been the subject of an allegation. There can be confusion regarding the role of a LADO and the LADO's independence which often requires clarification.

The Allegations Management Service has featured in Children's Services monthly compliments collection on two occasions for providing supportive and helpful advice and guidance (compliments highlighted at the beginning of this report). Compliments have also been received regarding the quality of bespoke training delivered by the service. For example;

'From their perspective your session was the best of the day, answered lots of questions they had, they feel they have never had some of that information before and more confident in reporting or discussing things with yourself now. it was a great mix of interactive questions, information and reflections. It was the most engaged I saw them all day! I honestly can't thank you enough!!'

Advanced Educator, Social Work Academy
(training session provided for ASYEs)

'This has been a brilliant training session. I am now going to discuss LADO in more depth when I facilitate L2 SG training & always discuss when I facilitate SG supervision. This should be mandatory training for all health professionals!'

Head of Safeguarding
Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust
(bespoke training for health professionals)

7.2 Training

The LADOs have provided bespoke allegations management training to areas they have identified as requiring a refresh and from services who make specific training requests. A summary of the training delivered in 2023/24 is outlined in **Table 7**.

Table 7

Date	Agency	LADO
22/08/2023	Strategic Health Group	NH
05/09/2023	Forest Green Rovers	NH
07/09/2023	Gloucestershire Health & Care NHS JF Foundation Trust	
20/09/2023	Active Gloucester	NH/NP
03/10/2023	Cheltenham Town Association Football Club Limited.	NH
11/10/2023	SAYEs Matt Stephens-Kear, Sophia Opoku, Agatha Anaisie	NH
07/11/2023	School of Larks	NH
16/11/2023	GCC HR	NH
21/02/2024	Homes for Ukraine	NH/NP

7.3 What went well in 2023/24

- We continue to provide timely responses to contacts into the service, the majority of those responses (91%) are provided by a duty LADO on the same day.
- Training - As set out within this report the team have been delivering bespoke training to a variety of agencies across Gloucestershire as when the need is identified or training is requested by the agency themselves.
- The team has worked closely with health colleagues to develop their awareness of allegations management and provide targeted training.
- Following the notable increase in allegations during 2022/23 regarding care staff employed by independent providers, the team have contributed to a review of commissioning arrangements for unregulated placements,
- A Liquid Logic allegations management pathway has been launched and is being used by the service. This will enable the team to create an improved data dashboard.
- Guidance around Transferable risk and how to risk assess, has been developed for all agencies dealing with allegations of this nature. The fact that Transferable Risk is now the highest category of harm this year reflects the impact of the awareness work the team have undertaken.
- The 'Managerless individuals' policy has been reviewed and updated to ensure individuals have a right to reply before a multi-agency decision is sought regarding concluded outcomes.
- We have seen an increase of 18% of contacts received from educational establishments this year.
- A LADO representative is now invited to attend every Rapid Review for a child in Gloucestershire.
- The service webpage has been redesigned to be more user friendly and includes helpful links for professionals and members of the public.

7.4 What we will focus on in 2024/25

- We suggest providing exceptions reports to partners to assist them in their section 11 duties. We can provide detailed data on where referrals are being received from and who they relate to. This data can be used comparatively with internal safe recruitment processes for partners assurance.
- The allegations management pathway on Liquid Logic needs further review to function as it needs to for the service.

- The service webpage will undergo further development. The webpage will have a number of new links added including to the revised National LADO handbook and a brief video explaining allegations management.
- A new contact form has been drafted and will become mandatory for all enquiries into the service, whether a referral or for advice and guidance. There will be a link to this form on the service webpage.
- Contacts into the service regarding police and health professionals remain low despite bespoke training being provided. We will continue to raise awareness with these agencies. Lead LADOs will be identified for health, police, education and social care with a responsibility to network, deliver advice and guidance and provide bespoke training.
- We look forward to the revised National LADO handbook due in January 2025 and review our own policies and procedures if required.
- Arrange a peer audit review by January 2025.