

LADO Annual Report

1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Report completed by:

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1. Introduction

This is the annual report for the London Borough of Hounslow's LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) Service. Its purpose is to provide an overview and analysis around the management of allegations against staff and volunteers working with children and young people. It covers the period of 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The LADO Service is underpinned by statutory guidance that includes Working Together to Safeguard Children (revised 2020) and the London Child Protection Procedures. The National LADO Network principles, minimum standards, and LADO threshold document guide Hounslow LADO practice. The role is mandated by the Local Authorities duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. It is a requirement, nationally, for all employers within the children's workforce to have clear and robust procedures in place when responding to allegations against staff, whether they are paid or voluntary. Working Together provides the harm threshold to apply when an allegation is made against a member of staff, and it is believed that 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, or;
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.
- Behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns

The LADO Service accepts referrals that meet the harm threshold and progresses these as allegations or suitability to practice concerns. The Service also accepts contacts assessed to be outside the threshold, relating to quality of care, professional conduct, and practice and these are dealt with as consultations or safeguarding advice. The LADO's key role is to provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations when there has been an allegation against a member of staff. The LADO liaises with partner agencies, including the police, employers, OFSTED, health care providers and other professional bodies to monitor the progress of referrals and ensure they are dealt with consistently and as quickly as possible. The LADO oversees the investigations into these allegations to ensure organisations operate a thorough and fair process, providing additional oversight and scrutiny until the investigations are concluded.

2. Staffing arrangements

In Hounslow, the LADO service is located within the Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service. The LADO Service is usually fully staffed with two permanent, part time LADOs (both are qualified social workers) and one part time Business Support Officer (BSO). Since July 2022 to date, the LADO service has been without a BSO and the additional work has been managed by the two LADOs, a permanent member of staff is yet to be employed. One permanent member of staff is currently on maternity leave and her role is being covered by a full-time locum LADO. This was a smooth transition and did not cause any impact to the service or the LADO presence within Hounslow.

3. Progress against 2021/22 Priorities

The below table comments on the progress the LADO service made in achieving outcomes that were set at the end of the 2021/22 reporting period. Areas of strength for the service has been in educating, and working together with professionals, settings, regulatory bodies, and members of the public to ensure robust and timely investigations. For many professionals there is much anxiety attached to dealing with an allegation or participating in an allegation's meeting. Clear, dependable, and timely communication is a top priority for Hounslow LADO, with much care and reassurance given to professionals and members of the public about how to support staff, children, and their families through what is often a difficult experience.

The LADO service has solidly advocated the Hounslow community that *'no concern is to small'* for which to contact the LADO for. The consistent message has been and continues to be that Hounslow LADO take the threshold criteria that someone has behaved in a way that *'may have harmed'* a child very seriously. This is reflected in the Allegation Episodes that include both safeguarding consultations and referrals. Out of the 374 Allegation Episodes recorded in the previous reporting year 333 (89%) were *'Safeguarding Information and Advice'*. Overall, 90% of these were concluded within a month and 10% over one month. LADO involvement may have included just one phone call or email or else could have included numerous phone-calls, email exchange, in person and MS meetings, internal investigations and the necessary guidance to support settings to effectively address allegations and suitability to practice concerns.

In January 2023, the LADO advised on LADO records retention. It is important for the reader to note that there is currently no clear national mandate on record retention and this continues to be a work in progress for the National LADO network. Current guidance states, 'In the absence of a differing individual or regional protocol, LADO records should be kept ensuring that details of allegations are available should they be required.' Working together 2010 advised that allegations should be kept on a staff member's personal file for 10 years or until normal retirement age, whichever was the latter. There has never been specific guidance on the length of time LADO records should be kept.' (National-LADO-Standards-Draft-version-3-June-17.pdf (national-lado-network.co.uk) This is an area for Hounslow LADO to continue consulting with the wider LADO network about.

Table 1. Priorities for 2022/23				
One Hounslow	Priority	Outcome		
DO NEW	Continue to raise awareness of the LADO service to professionals and volunteers working with children.	Achieved: 13 LADO presentations and training sessions were delivered to settings that include: Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP), Unaccompanied & Asylum- Seeking Children accommodation providers, CHCC Children's Network, Hounslow Through Care Team, Early Years Managers & Childminder, Short Breaks Unit & the DBS.		
	Establish a strong working process with fostering and placement teams in Hounslow including when historic abuse cases come in and case files are requested.	Through LADO involvement that facilitated robust multi-professional working together a historic abuse case was substantiated. Hounslow LADO have been upskilled on the DBS process and referral criteria and developed a close working relationship with DBS regional advisor. DBS regional advisor has shared with LADO policy guidance around police decision-making process of disclosures that has strengthened LADO advice. The LADO outcome letter template includes a statement about DBS referral and		
BE A ROCK	Ensure that the profile of the service is raised to increase the awareness of not only professionals and volunteers working with children know about it, but also the children and young people accessing services.	Achieved: LADO attended Hounslow's Managers forum that was facilitated by Hounslow' Participation Service, thus increasing LADO visibility and link for the young people.		
	Continue to offer briefings to social care staff, schools, foster carers, early years and services for young people and children. Offer support to organisations working with children and young people to support safer recruitment including discussions around the need for DBS referrals (and who does this) and discussions around wording on references where a substantiated outcome has been recorded.	Where children have made an allegation, actions to keep them updated about LADO investigation process and outcomes have been agreed and recorded in LADO meeting minutes.		

Table 1. Priorities for 2022/23

PASS THE POWER	Ensure new GDPR legislation correctly applied, and information is stored safely, securely and in line with this legislation	In January 2023, the LADO advised Hounslow Information Governance on National LADO records retention policy.
\$ \$		There has been no incident of LADO Hounslow of breaching confidentiality, nor complaint received with concerns about confidentiality.
		Where there was an incident of high-profile individual of concern LADO have consulted with the Operational Manager and Legal Advice to ensure GDPR has been complied with and ethical dilemmas resolved sensitively and effectively.
	The LADO service will oversee those investigations are carried out in a timely and fair manner and will see the process through to its conclusion.	Overall, 90% of Tier 1 Allegation Episodes are completed within one month. A Dip- sampling review investigated those Episodes that fell outside of this period and found that of these Episodes 83% gave clear rationale for keeping the Episode open beyond one month.
	Review the referral form to ensure it provides all relevant information to make an informed decision.	The LADO referral form has been updated to better track whether settings are reporting within 24 hrs of known incident of allegation. This however, as demonstrated by the data continues to need tweaking as the old LADO referral form is still in circulation and where the date of incident isn't known this is presenting a challenge in terms of data recording.
	The LADO service will liaise with other local authorities, to determine (if there are multiple concerns) which LA is best placed to manage the process.	Hounslow LADO have worked closely with LADO from other local authorities using national LADO protocol to guide boundary discussions and decisions. This has been strengthened by committed attendance to the quarterly London LADO work meetings.
LEAD WITH HEART	Ensure that employers of individuals who are the subject of LADO investigations offer support throughout the process and are fully aware of the outcome and who is doing what.	Achieved: The anecdotal comments from professionals and managers continues to be positive. Unsolicited feedback overwhelmingly indicates that Managers and Team leaders continue to experience Hounslow LADO as supportive.
	Ensure that, if possible or relevant the child/young person's voice is heard.	The ASV Meeting Minutes template has a heading to ensure the young person's experience and voice is considered, recorded, and meaningfully acted upon in every meeting.
HARNESS THE MIX	Ensure that all appropriate agencies are involved, from the outset in the LADO investigation and that at the end of the process everyone is aware of what is	Achieved: The LADO team continues to offer a high- quality customer service with 100% of

expected of them, and that outcomes are communicated as appropriate.	notifications from this dip review responded to within the target of one working day. A Dip-sampling review noted that there is a strong theme of LADO ensuring robust multi-professional and multi-agency working to assess thresholds. There is a consistent theme of LADO ensuring settings are equipped with knowledge and tools to risk assess and carry out meaningful internal investigations.
Quarterly meetings to be held with Hounslow's School Effectiveness Team and Hounslow Early Years Team to share information and discuss what support can be offered, if needed.	Hounslow LADO have continued to work closely with the School Effectiveness team and Early Years team. LADO have supported and guided the new School Safeguarding Lead to understand LADO processes and decision-making.
FYOI- embed a peer audit process with another YOI.	This has been discussed with Cookham Wood and still to be implemented.

4. Wider LADO work

There is clear practice guidance between LADOs that work in other London boroughs and Local Authorities around threshold for involvement. Hounslow LADO has worked within this guidance using the national LADO protocol to guide boundary discussions and decisions. These professional relationships have been strengthened by committed attendance to the quarterly London LADO network meetings. Furthermore, Hounslow LADO have contributed to wider London and National LADO policy development through sharing views and practice anecdotes.

5. LADO Oversight at Feltham Young Offenders Institute

The LADO service continues to provide extensive support towards FYOI, the relationship and work that has gone into this area of safeguarding has ensured that the safeguarding knowledge within FYOI is enhanced by our colleagues working there.

To ensure that the safeguarding knowledge and practice is consistently of high standard at FYOI, the LADO carries out monthly audits to ensure any cases that have not been discussed with the LADO (due to falling below threshold) are being carried out in a timely manner and in the child's best interest. To date, this function evidence good decision making by FYOI, and highlighting the extensive input the LADO has put in over the last 12 months.

Early 2023, saw no present Designated Social Workers within FYOI and some parts of the role was taken up by the LADO, although the day-to-day work such as visiting boys in their room, completing inductions etc was completed by the establishment workers, the safeguarding function was managed by the LADO. This has seen an increase in the workload conducted by the LADO within FYOI, but it has also promoted the working relationship between both organisations.

The LADO has continually attended the subgroup with Hounslow Safeguarding Children Partnership and has provided both written and verbal feedback and assurance reports. Alongside this the LADO attends the safety meetings at FYOI as an additional layer of scrutiny regarding safeguarding processes in Feltham. The LADO also participates in quarterly meetings with YCS and other LADO's whereby the LADO contributes to key discussions about any practice changes from the YCS or relevant updates.

FYOI has recently seen a large number of new officers recruited, although this is a positive step in ensuring the regime can be followed daily it has had an implication on the referrals coming through. Through analysis of these referrals the general theme and trend is that new officers often delay in responding to incidences,

allow the more experienced member of staffs take the lead and their inexperience can reflect in their practice. At Feltham, recruitment and retention of officers continues to be a challenge. However, following the most recent inspection of Feltham YOI (A side) in 2022 the report outlined, 'noticeable positive practice. (1.52) Safeguarding procedures were very good. Complaints by children were referred to the on-site team of local authority social workers within 24 hours. Concerns were escalated appropriately to the local authority designated officer (DO), again within 24 hours. The social workers worked closely with prison staff and the DO attended the prison regularly. (See paragraph 3.11).'

The extensive work that the LADO has undertaken in Feltham YOI over recent years is being recognised by the staff, young people and inspectors which is a positive attribute to the working relationship that continues to be built.

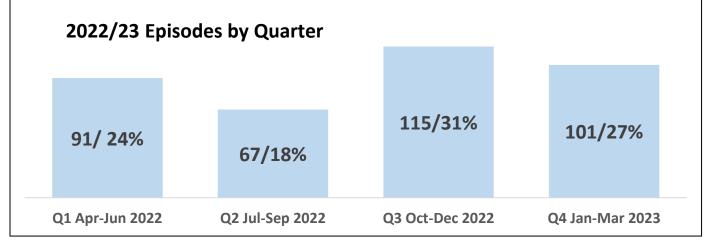
The LADO attends all FYOI subgroup meetings on a quarterly basis and submits both a written report and verbal feedback at the meeting. The subgroup gives partner agencies involved the opportunity to pose questions to the LADO about the LADO work at Feltham YOI and to provide a critical view on any processes in place. The LADO previously formulated and has maintained monthly audits at FYOI on cases that are managed internally without LADO oversight. These audits include Hounslow's Safeguarding Nurse, who is able to access the young people's medical notes to ensure that the correct procedures were followed regarding their care.

The slight decrease in referrals reflects the impact of a stable workforce and challenging work undertaken in promoting the importance of referring concerns or allegations to the Local Authority. It is important to note that the LADO has spent considerable time and resources educating FYOI colleagues on the role of the LADO, understanding threshold and implemented varies systems. It is felt that this has created a manageable referral rate in comparison to previous years as the referrals coming through to LADO are now more appropriate and focused which supports the correct application of threshold.

6. Performance Data

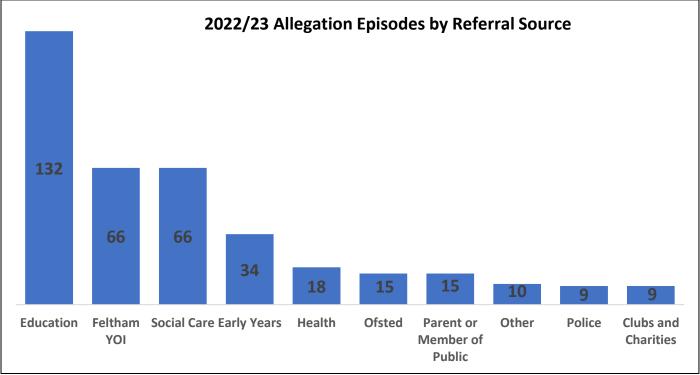
Following the 'Covid years' the LADO service has returned to normal service with no restraints around how meetings and practice is carried. In comparison to reporting period 2022 – 2023 there has been a slight decrease in the total number of contacts (recorded as Allegation Episodes, AEs) from 397 to 374.





In this reporting year 2022/2023 of the total Allegation Episodes, formally recorded as Referrals. This year has seen a small reduction in episodes from last in all quarters, bar Q3, which has seen an 11% increase. From a systemic point of view the societal movements that might have influenced notifications and allegations made to Hounslow LADO could include that the annual rate of inflation in the UK reached 11.1% in October 2022, a 41-year high, correlating with the rise in consumer goods and services. In terms of the LADO practice, the service carried out the majority of its training activities September and November 2023. This may have correlated with increased confidence from Hounslow professionals to contact the LADO and report allegations and concerns.





Referral Source indicates the Employment Type category of the person who made the first contact with LADO regarding an alleged incident or concern. Education includes various education establishments such as primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, Special Educational Needs training institutes. 'Other' includes contacts from persons for whom there is not a Referrer Employment Type category: Adoption Agency, Lawyer, and Young Person. The remaining are a small number of contacts (one or two) that include NSPCC, Community Transport, and Faith Groups.

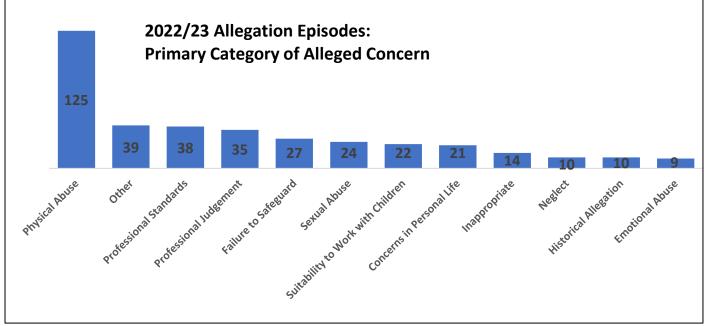
In comparison to the reporting period 2021/22 there has been a decrease in Education referrals from 42% to 35%. This is most likely to be correlated with the training provided to the sector however would need focussed dip review to ascertain if this is indeed the case.

FYOI and Early Years referrals have stayed about the same, 16% in 2021/22 to 18% in 2022/23 for FYOI and 9% in both years for Early Years and Nursery sector. Social Care referrals have seen a slight increase, 14% in 2021/22 to 18% in 2022/23. There has been a change in data recording for this sector so this figure isn't easily analysed and will be more comparable for future reports. Health referrals have seen an increase from 2% in 2021/22 to 5% in 2022/23.

Police referrals have increased from 0.3% to 2%. While these are small percentages it is worthy to note that in 2021/22 the LADO service only recorded one police referral, compared to 9 in the recent year. This is indicative of a stronger working relationship with the police referral team and of the systemic changes taking place within the police force to imbed LADO – police working together protocol.

Due to the relatively low levels of referrals from our health and police partners LADO will explore the reasons for this through continued professional working together and provide tailored LADO training and support where necessary. Through analysis of this data, both sectors remain relatively low similar to the last reporting year. In regard to the Police, this appears to be a pattern amongst most London LADO's and this has been explored through the London wide LADO meetings with guest speakers from the Met Police. As the Police have their own internal complaints process, often matters are not reported to the LADO and/or know to the LADO. It is hoped that whilst working in partnership with the Police this is the start of a positive working relationship that should see LADO input into concerns that relate to children and/or young people.





This Graph indicates how disproportionately large allegations of physical abuse are, making up 33% of LADO Allegation Episodes. These could range in severity from allegations of being touched on the shoulder to slapped in the face or assaulted to the point of hospitalisation. Physical abuse made up 33% of the total Allegation Episodes. Of these 53% were from FYOI, 23% Education, 10% Early Years, 13% Social Care. Sexual abuse made up 6% of the total Allegation Episodes. This compares to the recorded 2.5% in 2021/2022. Of these 6%, 44% were from FYOI, 33% from Education settings, 22% from Football clubs. An explanation for this increase could be linked to improved public and professional awareness about indicators of sexual abuse and in taking seriously the voice of the child.

Particularly relevant to the LADO service is the Independent Enquiry into Child Sexual Abuse 2022 that states, 'Complaints of sexual abuse in YOIs and STCs were rarely investigated properly, with little evidence of involvement of the statutory authorities, signifying a failure to adhere to normal child protection procedures. (The Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse; 2022, p.13) With the introduction of a statutory requirement to mandatory report allegations of child sexual abuse, and the LADO service's commitment to educating Hounslow professionals, this figure is likely to increase over the coming reporting year.

Across all of these categories where there is indication of a possible criminal offence LADO consults with or refers to the police. Where there is indication of possible significant harm or risk of harm LADO consults with or refers to Children's Social Care teams. Across all of these categories the sole role of LADO might be to record information to be noted by Hounslow LADO or to signpost to other organisations as they did not meet LADO threshold, either in terms of harm or safeguarding advice.

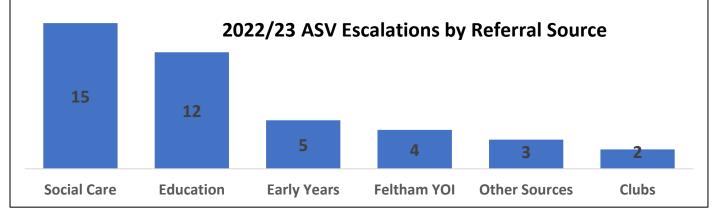


Figure 4. ASV Escalation by Referral Source 2022/23

ASV Escalations refers to those Allegation Episodes that are categorised as Tier 3, meaning that they required at least one initial Allegation Against Staff and Volunteers (ASV) meeting. Referral Source indicates the Employment Type category of the person who made the first contact with LADO regarding an alleged incident or concern. 'Other' includes contacts from persons for whom there is a smaller number of referrals. This includes Health, the Police, a Semi-Independent Unit and Faith Group.

The total number of ASVs completed in the reporting year 2022/23 was 41, 11% of the total 374 Allegation Episodes received. This equals the total percentage of 43 ASVs completed in the reporting year 2021/22 that was also 11%. This statistic indicates that a consistent escalation threshold has been applied despite staffing changes. Newly planned moderation activities for the following reporting period will enable the LADO service to evaluate this hypothesis qualitatively.

The most marked difference is that in 2021/22 most ASV Escalations came from FYOI in contrast that in 2022/23 most ASV Escalations (33%) were referred by Children's Social Care, either in Hounslow or from another Local Authority, and an education setting. Understanding this drop in FYOI referrals will be a focus of the LADO Quality Assurance activities, which will include dip reviews into how LADO threshold has been applied to ASV escalations for FYOI.

Figure 5. ASV outcomes



In this reporting year 2022/2023 of the total 41 Allegation Episodes:

- 32% had an ASV outcome of Substantiated compared to 30% in 2021/22
- 32% had an ASV outcome of Unsubstantiated compared to 30% in 2021/22
- 22% had an ASV outcome of Unfounded compared to 28% in 2021/22
- 10% had an ASV outcome of NFA compared to 5% in 2021/22
- 5% had an ASV outcome of Malicious compared to 0% in 2021/22

As with the above-mentioned graph, this statistic indicates that a consistent outcome threshold has been applied despite staffing changes. Newly planned moderation activities for the following reporting period will enable the LADO service to evaluate this hypothesis qualitatively.

7. Feedback

Feedback comments range from good, very good to excellent. They indicate that professionals are very satisfied with the service received and particularly that the service can respond quickly following the initial concern being raised. Feedback confirmed that it was appreciated that meetings are arranged promptly, are professionally managed (very responsive and outcomes are very clear), well-structured and easy to follow. Meetings minutes were seen to be good, effective, and concise.

Feedback was that LADO training content delivered was '*immensely positive*,' '*appropriate and useful*, *including* the voice of the child, professional curiosity, LADO thresholds. Feedback stated that professionals welcome the opportunity to discuss concerns prior to making a referral. In the absence of a BSO, who previously circulated feedback forms (as introduced in 2021/2022) the feedback has been obtained through email correspondence and training feedback. A feedback form for professionals was developed in December 2022, however due to capacity pressures without a BSO these feedback forms have yet to be sent out, followed up and collated. It is hoped that once a LADO BSO is employed in May 2023, the feedback forms

can be circulated again and solicited feedback analysed alongside unsolicited feedback to improve LADO service delivery.

7.1. Complaints

There have been a no formal complaints received about the LADO Service in 2022/23. This could be explained to be as a result of the highly collaborative approach that LADO consistently practice. Another explanation could be the clear and accurate minutes that the LADO record and distribute, sharing confidential and sensitive information only where necessary. Hounslow LADO use secure codes to send documents, and redact minutes, to preserve sensitive and confidential information.

8. Quality Assurance Process

Peer audits have, in the past taken place monthly, with each LADO auditing the other's cases, and three audits being carried out in the FYOI. This quality assurance measure provides the establishment with a critical friend to ensure threshold is being appropriately applied, processes are being correctly understood and followed and to provide feedback on the internal action taken. The audits have seen an expansion in professional oversight and has welcomed colleagues from the partnership and health to provide an additional layer of expertise.

Completing peer audits is in line with the National LADO network that lists peer audits as the main quality assurance activity. This annual report has gone beyond this minimum requirement of peer audits audit and included dip samples audit activity to understand and apply the data meaningfully.

Due to high numbers over the last two quarters of this reporting period, the absence of a dedicated BSO, and no Social Workers in Feltham, there has been pressure on the LADO service to complete the monthly peer audits. A bespoke LADO audit schedule, including arrangements for moderation by the Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance will be launched as of 1st April 2023.

Because LADO have had to collate data without a dedicated BSO there has been much learning about how the information recorded on the Liquid Logic System (LCS) database translates into the Excel spreadsheet. The main learning from the previous quarter has been to use LCS data spreadsheets to identify practice and recording strengths and discrepancies. The LADO service could use qualitative data, through what is now a user-friendly Excel spreadsheet template, to highlight areas that need qualitative analysis and thereby enhance LADO service performance in a meaningful way.

9. Conclusion

In the reporting year 2022/23 Hounslow LADO continued to provide a dedicated professional service to address allegations and concerns of harm for Hounslow children. With over 50% of LADO outcomes recorded as "not substantiated" the service has demonstrated commitment to a fair and compassionate process for those who have allegations against them while ensuring the voice of the child is heard throughout. The high number of safeguarding advise provided by the LADO, further indicates good working relationships with partner agencies with advice and actions clearly recorded. The Hounslow LADO have worked to appropriately assess thresholds of harm and risk of harm throughout every stage of the investigations. This has been tirelessly, and often beyond working hours, in the best interests of children residing in Hounslow who come into contact with professionals.

Quantitative data evidence a LADO service that is well utilised with feedback that reflects it is valued by professionals across a wide range of services and organisations. LADO continue to work very closely with these partners, particularly Children's Social Care teams, Early Years, and the School Effectiveness team. This has ensured a better understanding of LADO referral processes and identification of the LADO harm. Both the Early Years and School Effectiveness teams are supported not only through quarterly meetings but in being able to offer a joint response in a timely manner when contact is made with the LADO service. More focussed networking and training will be offered to Health and Police partners to ensure their understanding of and commitment to LADO protocol and processes.

Service capacity will need to be monitored in light of what could be an emerging pattern of increased Allegation Episodes over the last two quarters of 2022/23 that could carry into 2023/24, following the independent review into child sexual abuse and proposed recommendations. Alongside this the service can

expect to see a rise in referrals from Health and Police partners as a result of mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse allegations and increased societal pressures. The anticipated delay for 18+ year old young people transferring to an adult prison will likely impact on LADO capacity as additional advice and consultation might be needed in the early stages of this change. A possible increase in allegations against supply and locum professionals, that correlates with current the staffing crises in Health and Education, also need to be considered. Particularly as these result in more complex and thereby time-consuming investigations for LADO to manage.

Hounslow Children's Social Care can be proud that the LADO service, this past year, has played a key role in actualising the Hounslow commitment of partnership working to create a community in which children and young people can be safe, grow, and flourish.

10. Priorities for 2023/24

Table 2. Priorities for 2023/24- The Year ahead

One	Priority
Hounslow	
	Priority 1: Refresh the LADO training to include IICSA recommendations to promote awareness of child sexual abuse in all agencies.
BE A ROCK	Priority 2: Embed the new LADO Quality Assurance schedule and utilising the LADO dataset as part of the Quality Assurance process.
PASS THE POWER	Priority 3: Promote the LADO function to co-ordinate and manage complex strategy meetings across the Department.
LEAD WITH HEART	Priority 4: Further develop the service feedback collation to enhance the voice of the child/young person within the LADO process.
HARNESS THE MIX	Priority 5: Refresh a tailored training program for Police and Health partners.

*NOTE: There is no standalone priority for LADO work at FYOI for 2023/24. The reason for this is that the LADO work at FYOI is business as usual. Any matters arising from audits will be included into the LADO action plan and assurance reports to the HSCP FYOI Subgroup as needed.