



**London Borough  
of Hounslow**

**Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)  
Annual Report**

**1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024**

**Report completed by:**

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## 1. Introduction

This is the annual report for the London Borough of Hounslow's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Team. The purpose of this report is to provide evidence and assurance in respect of the overall effectiveness of the management of allegations in the Local Authority for 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The LADO Team is underpinned by statutory guidance that includes Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and the London Child Protection Procedures. The National LADO Network principles, minimum standards, and LADO threshold document guides the Hounslow LADO's practice. The role is mandated by the Local Authorities duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

## 2. Progress against 2023/24 priorities

Table 1: Progress against 2023/24 priorities

One Hounslow	Priority	Progress
<b>DO NEW</b> 	<b>Priority 1:</b> Refresh the LADO training to include IICSA recommendations to promote awareness of child sexual abuse in all agencies.	<b>Achieved:</b> LADO training and induction include information on mandatory reporting of CSA, by all professionals.
<b>BE A ROCK</b> 	<b>Priority 2:</b> Embed the new LADO Quality Assurance schedule and utilising the LADO dataset as part of the Quality Assurance process.	<b>Achieved:</b> The LADO quality assurance is well embedded, and findings are included in wider Departmental quality assurance reports and analysis.
<b>PASS THE POWER</b> 	<b>Priority 3:</b> Promote the LADO function to co-ordinate and manage complex strategy meetings across the Department.	<b>Achieved:</b> All Social Work teams are aware that the LADO teams can co-ordinate and oversee complex strategy meetings in extra-ordinary circumstances.
<b>LEAD WITH HEART</b> 	<b>Priority 4:</b> Further develop the service feedback collation to enhance the voice of the child/young person within the LADO process.	<b>Achieved:</b> A section specifically focusing on the 'voice of the child' is included in the ASV meeting guidelines and the voice of the child and the child's parents/carers input is clearly recorded on the LADO referral form, LADO minutes and in consultation where appropriate.
<b>HARNESS THE MIX</b> 	<b>Priority 5:</b> Refresh a tailored training program for Police and Health partners	<b>Achieved:</b> Local LADO training has been provided to Police and Health partners and LADO training is included in the HSCP training schedule.

## 3. Highlights of our LADO Service

In Hounslow we have a robust, effective, and timely LADO team with an outturn of 95% (against a target of 95%) of all contacts to the LADO service being responded to within the statutory timescale of one working day in 2023/24. The effectiveness of the LADO Service was commended by Ofsted during a full inspection in October 2023 with Inspectors stating: "Response to allegations against adults or volunteers who are working in a position of trust with children is proportionate and timely."

The LADO team continue to work closely with partner agencies to promote the role of the LADO and ensure that agencies are aware of their responsibility with regards to referrals to the LADO. The LADO team offered eight formal training sessions with education settings, health providers, early years and Feltham Young Offenders Institute (FYOI), respectively. These formal sessions were in addition to ad hoc induction meetings with partner agencies as needed throughout the year. We do not have data with regards to the number of

professionals or agencies who have attended the formal sessions, however this will be an area of monitoring and tracking in 2024/25.

## Wider LADO multi-agency working

The London LADO network meets monthly and provides support and guidance to LADOs in around London to ensure LADO practice is consistent. The LADO team regularly attends this meeting and is actively involved in developing the local and national LADO protocol which will shape LADO practice at a national level.

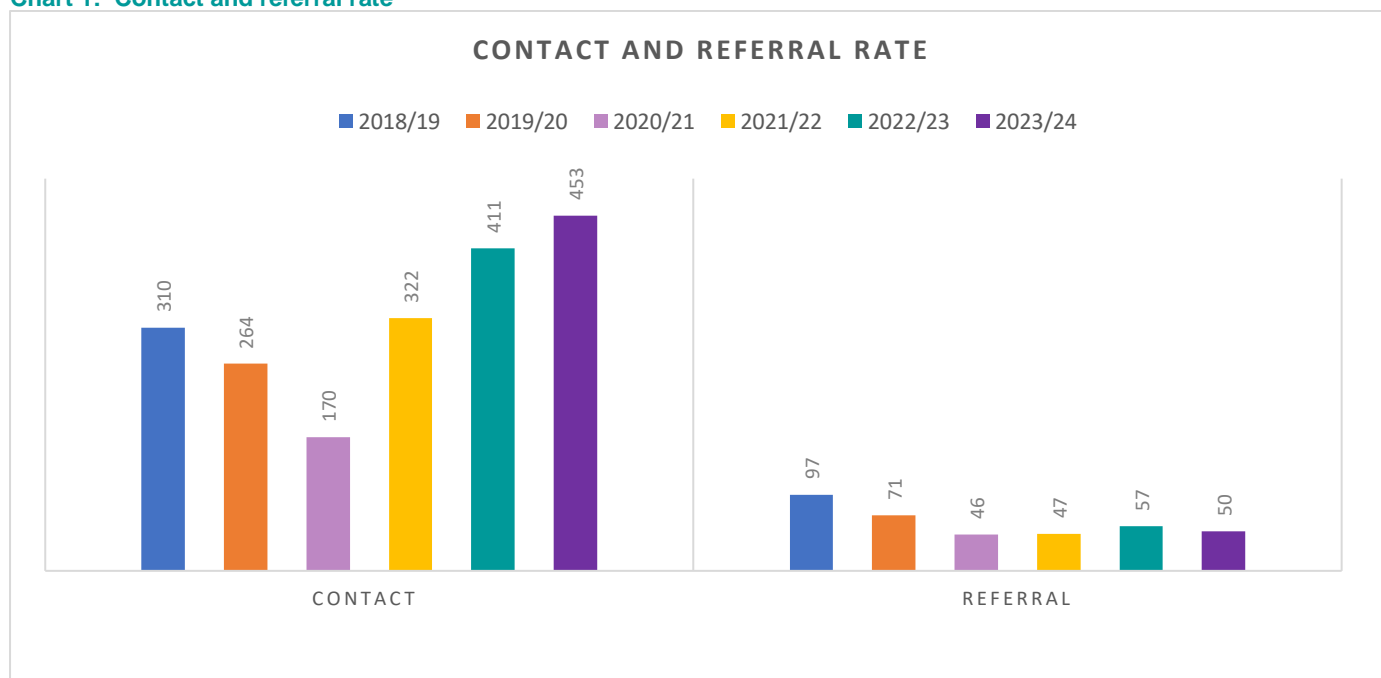
The LADO team has established good working relationship with the Early Years and School Improvement teams and attends quarterly meetings to discuss outstanding cases, active cases and look at developing trends. Meetings are also held on an ad hoc basis when there is a need.

Through the safeguarding deep dive in 2023 around working with asylum-seeking hotels the LADO quickly identified an area of need and supported and constructively challenge key agencies and the Home Office to have a Standards of Practice protocol, which they have now developed in consultation with Hounslow LADO (re. the LADO component). Significantly this includes a clause that: "This SOP applies to all staff, agency staff, contractors, and casual staff". This SOP will enable the identified group to demonstrate its commitment to keeping children safe with whom it works alongside. The identified group acknowledges its duty to act appropriately to any allegations, reports, or suspicions of abuse.

## Impact of LADO service

It is clear from the data that partner agencies have confidence in the LADO team and agencies are more aware of their own responsibility to seek LADO advice or make a referral to the LADO team. Comparative data over the last 5 years indicates that the contact<sup>1</sup> rate from partner agencies have continued to increase, in particular over the last 3 years. In 2023/24 there was 10% increase in contacts, however the number of actual LADO referrals<sup>2</sup> decreased with 12%.

Chart 1: Contact and referral rate

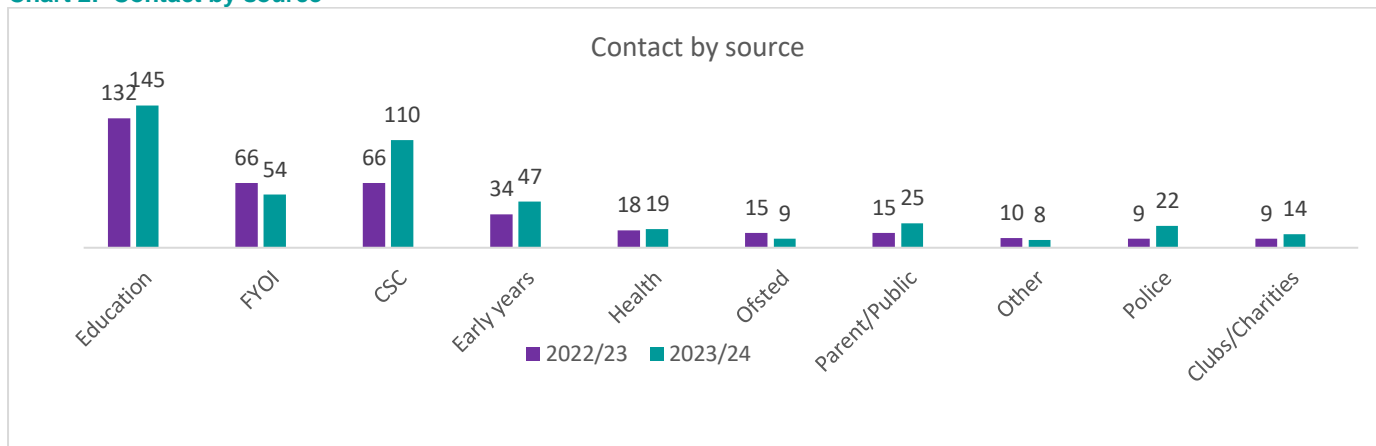


It is positive to see that there has been an increase of 144% in respect of Police making contact with the LADO team, with 23% of those contacts resulting in a referral and an ASV meeting.

<sup>1</sup> Contacts refers to any contact made by a professional with the LADO service.

<sup>2</sup> Referrals refer to contacts meeting the threshold for a LADO referral and resulting in an ASV meeting.

**Chart 2: Contact by source**



This increase in LADO contacts from the Police is a direct result of the work the LADO team did in 2023/24 to raise awareness of the LADO role and function with the Police, coupled with wider discussion through the HSCP Safeguarding Effectiveness subgroup. It is accepted that further work with the Police is needed to ensure they refer allegations against their officers in a timely and appropriate manner to the LADO team. This work will be supported by the National LADO Network, who are developing bespoke training for the Police with the aim to roll this out nationally in 2024/25.

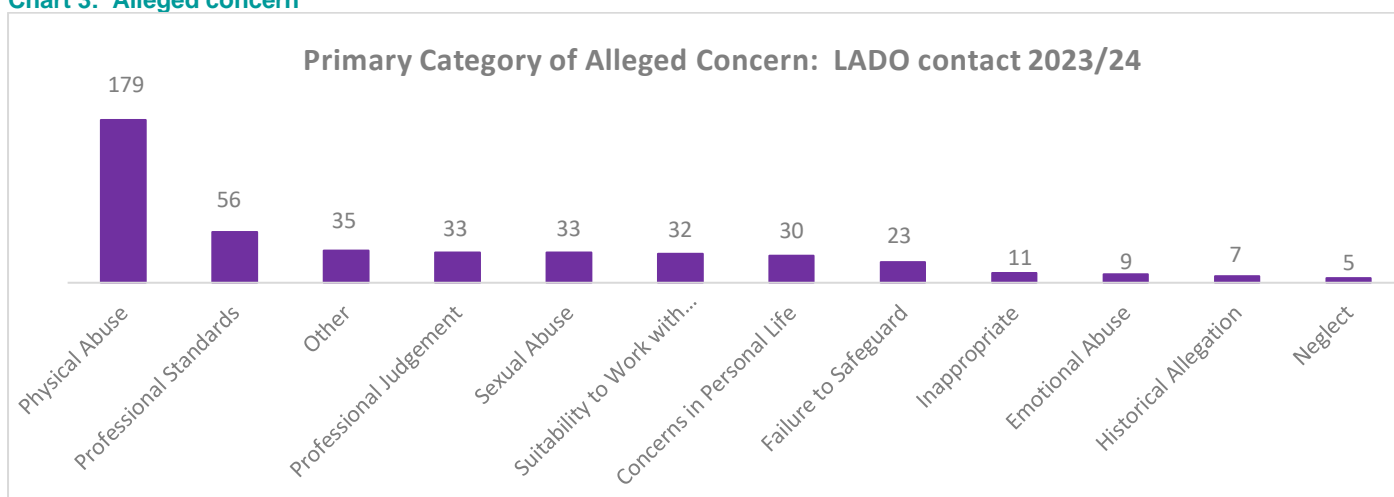
Contacts from FYOI has seen an 18% decrease this year. This is an appropriate reduction following safeguarding training being done with staff at FYOI and is evidenced by regular audit activity with FYOI.

Education and Children's Services remains our highest contact sources and in 2023/24 contacts from education provisions increased by 10% and contacts from Children's Service increased by 67%. Despite the number of contacts from both sources seeing an increase in 2023/24 only 13% of contacts from Education and 11% from Children's Services resulted in an ASV. This suggest that some of the contacts the LADO team deal with, might not have needed LADO oversight or advice.

In 2023/24 our focus was to raise awareness of the LADO role with all partner agencies and build trust and confidence with them. This was also recognised by Ofsted who stated: *Assiduous work by the designated officer is raising awareness and building trust across services and consequently there is an increase in referrals to the service.*

We therefore do not deem the high contact rate as a challenge for this year, however further work will be done in 2023/24 to ensure the LADO team is not inundated with inappropriate contacts or matters that should be dealt with by other teams. This work will also be coupled with further awareness raising with agencies with lower contact rates such as health partners and the voluntary sector. This is particular important to ensure the demand can continue to be met by the LADO team and balancing that with receiving appropriate contacts and referrals in a timely manner.

**Chart 3: Alleged concern**



Physical abuse remains the highest reported category of alleged abuse in all contacts received by the LADO team. This year 40% of all contacts fell in this category, which is an 8% increase from 32% in 2022/23. It must be acknowledged that this does not suggest that professionals in Hounslow are causing more harm to children or young people, but rather a better awareness of appropriate professional actions, such as use of restraints and better reporting when professionals or volunteers behaves in a way that has or could cause harm to a child, including seeking timely LADO advice. The very small number of contacts (11%) converting to an ASV for concerns in relation to physical abuse, further support this position.

This year there has only been a 1% increase in contacts where sexual abuse is the main concern, from 6% in 2022/23 to 7% in 2023/24. This very small increase is not unexpected as we know sexual abuse is under reported nationally as outlined in the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse<sup>3</sup>, which was published in October 2022. In 2023/24 only 2% of all children subject to child protection plans were under the category of sexual abuse and although child sexual abuse was a key priority for the HSPC in 2023/24 there are still a concern that sexual abuse remains under reported.

With education being the highest referrer to the LADO team, sexual abuse is not a category where we would expect to see a significant rise, especially as 98% of all education settings (including early years and child minders) are Ofsted graded good or outstanding.

To support raising awareness of child sexual abuse across the multi-agency network the LADO team includes information about sexual abuse awareness in their LADO training and induction. The LADO dip-sample in relation to contact and referrals for sexual abuse showed the LADO are consistent in recording alleged abusers name, sex and age, and obtaining DBS status and ensuring settings are aware of their responsibilities to assess risk of harm. This is however an area that will continue to have oversight and scrutiny through the HSCP for further awareness raising and training at a multi-agency level. All other categories of concern have remained similar to reported concerns in 2022/23.

We know the LADO threshold for referrals and subsequent ASV's are applied correctly, and this is evidenced in our audit activity. Dip-sample activity in relation to the application of LADO referral threshold found good practice and communication with partner agencies and identified application of threshold and timeliness of ASV meeting and feedback to be a strength.

In 2023/24, 73% against 66% in 2022/23 of ASV's had an outcome of substantiated or unsubstantiated, with only 12% against 22% in 2022/23 being unfounded, 10% needing no further action and 4% being false/malicious. The decrease of 10% in unfounded allegations in 2023/24 provides strong evidence that referrals are appropriately progressed to an ASV, with good information sharing and gathering at the referral stage.

In Q4 the LADO team implemented a tier 2 evaluation process, in conjunction with the update of the London Safeguarding Procedures. The purpose of this function is to ensure all agencies involved are satisfied with key evidence and information presented to correctly apply the LADO threshold and progress to an ASV. This function further ensures that cases that does not meet the ASV threshold but needs more LADO input due to complexity can be measures and managed in a timely manner. Tier 2 data was not available for this report and we will include tier 2 data in the LADO dataset for 2024/25.

### **LADO Oversight at Feltham Young Offenders Institute**

The LADO team continue to have robust oversight and a strong presence at the FYOI. The relationship between the LADO team and FYOI is positive and has promoted overall safeguarding practice and knowledge within FYOI. The work the LADO team is doing was recognised by Ofsted during our full inspection in October 2023, with inspectors stating: *"Additional local authority designated officer capacity and a clearly written joint protocol are continuing to support the ongoing work with Feltham Young Offender Institution."*

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<sup>3</sup> [The Report of the Independent Inquiry Into Child Sexual Abuse - October 2022 | IICSA Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#)

The LADO team provides a high level of quality assurance support to FYOI and in 2023/24 sixteen monthly audits were completed, jointly with FYOI, the Designate Safeguarding Nurse and a representative from FYOI's Health Care Team. The LADO provided oversight on 35 cases where FYOI identified an internal concern but did not deem it to be a LADO matter. The LADO further reviewed 24 Serious Incident Warning Signs (SIWS), reviewed CCTV and/or BWC for 9 open LADO referrals and reviewed 10 incidents where an over 18-year-old was involved in a peer-on-peer assault on A Side.

No issues were raised by the LADO with regards to the internal decision making by FYOI and none needed to be escalated to the LADO. The audits evidenced that the use of restraint was appropriately in cases, and good practice noted with ongoing health support offered to young people, regardless of them retracting their allegation against an officer.

FYOI accepted areas for further development, such as ensuring officers evaluation of risk is completed before action taken, for officers to have access to information explaining the child protection medical process and educating young people around search processes including use of cameras and decency blankets. Some audits noted that the timeliness of paperwork completion following an incident could be improved, including use of force paperwork, MMPR logging and improving the quality of F213 report writing.

Areas of improvement is scrutinised and monitored through the HSCP FYOI Subgroup, with additional support from a full complement of social workers at FYOI. Alongside this the LADO attends the safety meetings at FYOI 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.

Although the LADO team is assured about current safeguarding practice as evidenced by the audit activity at FYOI, it must be noted that the 2024 HMIP outcome was very disappointing. The inspection of Feltham A saw a reduction in the level of Safety to 1 from 3 in its last inspection. Despite the drop in grade good practice was noted by inspectors and no current concerns, immediate actions or recommendations identified by the inspectors. The drop in grade for Safety, was mainly attributed to the instability over the summer of 2023 when violence had increased with a particularly challenging cohort. The establishment has stabilised since that period and month on month the data which drove the inspection outcome becomes less relevant to the safeguarding and wellbeing of young people. The LADO team and the HSCP sub-group remains reassured about practice and the oversight and scrutiny of the sub-group and the HSCP remains strong.

#### 4. Quality Assurance

This year the LADO has gradually embedded a robust quality assurance process including a schedule of activity and quarterly reporting to the HSCP Safeguarding Effectiveness and FYOI subgroups. In addition to the quality assurance activity at FYOI, the LADO team completed a further 6 peer audits which noted good case recording, joint working and appropriate applications of thresholds. Areas for improvement such as evidencing the voice of the child, updating the referral LADO form, and rolling out additional training and induction sessions where all actioned and completed in 2023/24. In 2023/24 the Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance moderated 67% (4) of the peer audits and agreed with the outcomes of all the audits.

The LADO team did seven dip-sample activities focussing on LADO timeliness, application of threshold and LADO responses to sexual abuse. This audit activity provided an opportunity for the LADO team to make changes to the LADO minutes and referral forms to ensure the voice of the child is captured in the work the LADO does. This also identified areas for further multi-agency training in respect of the LADO role and the LADOs offered bespoke training to education settings in 2023/24.

Wider learning for the multi-agency network identified through the LADO audit activity and data includes; low contact and referral rates for Police and Health, partner agencies understanding of the role and remit of the LADO and considering learning at national level such as the independent enquiry into sexual abuse<sup>4</sup> and a

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<sup>4</sup> [The Report of the Independent Inquiry Into Child Sexual Abuse - October 2022 | IICSA Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#)



report published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in February 2024 in relation the Metropolitan Police Service's handling of the sexual and criminal exploitation of children<sup>5</sup>.

Quality Assurance is business as usual for the LADO team and they provide robust and effective oversight across the department and into the wider multi-agency network. We are very proud of how well we embedded a bespoke monthly LADO quality assurance process in 2023/24 and a key priority in 2024/25 will be to refine this process further by also introduce the Ofsted grades for all peer audits.

## Feedback

There have been no informal or formal complaints in respect of the LADO team in 2023/24.

We know our LADO service is strong and of a good standard and we know this due to the feedback we receive from professionals. The LADO team have moved away from asking professionals to complete feedback forms, instead asking professionals to provide email via email if they deem it appropriate. Some examples of this are:

- CAFCASS: "This was a tricky one to deal with and I thought you did an excellent job. It has been great working with you."
- Education: *"You are such a thoughtful LADO and take your role seriously and invest in it. Always great to talk to you so thank you for your support."*
- Education.....*made a point to acknowledge the "fantastic support" you/your team gave the school recently – thank you*
- Health: *"Can I just say how professional the whole process was and how impressed I was with the way you chaired the meeting. Please feel free to pass to your manager!"*



## 5. Conclusion

In Hounslow we have a very effective, efficient, and robust LADO service, who has a sound understanding of LADO threshold and has continued to deliver a high quality and timely service. We are confident that our LADO team has established good working relationships with professionals across all agencies, which has increased their confidence in the LADO team and decreased their anxieties with regards to referrals to the LADO team.

The LADO team is an excellent example of a team whose practice is exceptional and timely and the relationships they have with the wider partnership is exceptional. Our quality assurance process, both formal and informal has ensured that we are able to make incremental changes to systems, process, and referral forms to ultimately ensure that professionals working with children and young people are suitable, safe and fully aware of their responsibilities to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.



## 6. Priorities for 2024/2025

Table 2: Priorities for 2024/25

One Hounslow	Priority
<b>DO NEW</b> 	Safely reduce the LADO contact rate.
<b>BE A ROCK</b> 	Review and enhance the LADO dataset by including additional performance and effectiveness targets, including the tracking of training attendance.

<sup>5</sup> [The Metropolitan Police Service's handling of the sexual and criminal exploitation of children - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/his-majestys-inspectorate-of-constabulary-and-fire-and-rescue-services/)



<p><b>LEAD WITH HEART</b></p> 	<p>Enhance our quality assurance process and reviewing the audit forms and including Ofsted grades for peer audit. The use of feedback to enhance practice will be included in the overarching quality assurance process.</p>
<p><b>HARNESS THE MIX</b></p> 	<p>Fully embed the tier 2 evaluation meetings and building the relevant forms and process into LCS.</p>