

One Minute Guide



Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) managing allegations against people who work with children

Date: September 2024 next review Sept 2025 | Version: 13

Legislative background and guidance frameworks

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)** is the statutory guidance that details the role of the LADO (Designated Officer or team of Officers). Working Together was updated in December 2020 and added a fourth criteria relating to suitability to work with children.
- **Richard Inquiry 2004** (following the murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in Soham by Ian Huntley).
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006** (legislation following Richard Inquiry).
- **Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education 2019**
- **Protections of Freedoms Act 2012** (amends the SVG Act and introduces Disclosure and Barring Service).
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education DfE (2018)** also updated in January 2021 to include the fourth criteria re suitability.
- **Disclosure and Barring Service referral guidance** available on the DBS website.
- **Allegations against residential workers (children's homes national minimum standards – DfE (2011)**
- **Allegations against foster carers (Fostering Services - National Minimum Standards- DfE (2011)** see also *Stoke on Trent Fostering: Concerns, Complaints & Allegations*
- **Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board Procedures** (LADO procedures) <http://www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk/ccm/content/safeguarding-children/professionals-folder/procedure-manuals/d---cyp-specific-circumstances.en>
- *Procedures – Safeguarding Practice Guidance – Allegations of Abuse (Stoke)*

Background in Stoke-on-Trent

Since August 2021 the LADO service for Stoke-on-Trent City Council has been located with the ChAD team at Steel House.

The LADO service applies the following criteria when evaluating each allegation referred to it through ChAD. The service manages allegations against adults (18 years and over) who work in a position of trust or in regulated activity with children and young people.

Has the individual:

- behaved in way that has harmed or may have harmed a child ;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child ;

- behaved towards child(ren) in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children (*would pose risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children*)
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

The role of the LADO includes:

- Involvement in the management and oversight of individual cases within Stoke-on-Trent;
- Providing advice and guidance to schools, employers and voluntary organisations in regard to allegations and concerns, including when and whether to share information about the allegation with the staff member concerned. This will involve discussion with social care and police where there are child protection and/or criminal concerns
- Liaising with schools, health, social care and other employers including the Private, Voluntary and Independent sectors about the process of investigation and evaluating the presenting information.
- Monitoring the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible consistent with a thorough and fair process
- Raising awareness of the LADO function and providing LADO training
- Where appropriate challenging schools and employers if their decisions do not appear to ensure the protection of children.

Designated Manager

Each agency that is represented on the Safeguarding Children Partnership is required to appoint a Designated Manager to whom concerns or allegations are passed and who then either makes or delegates the making of the referral to the LADO if appropriate. The Designated Manager (DM) role is that of a senior manager within an organisation, generally the Head Teacher within schools or the Registered Managers within residential settings, nurseries and fostering agencies.

Ofsted

Following the Council’s Ofsted inspection (February 2019) it was highlighted that *“There is insufficient capacity to manage the arrangements for responding to allegations about adults in a position of trust or working with children.* The LADO post remains a dedicated full time LADO post and the capacity remains under review.

Where we are now

There were 131 referrals to the LADO during 2020 - 2021 which is slightly higher than the previous year (122) although lower than the three years prior to that. In addition to referrals, the LADO also advises on a significant number of situations which are recorded as LADO advice rather than referrals. There were a total of 104 contacts to LADO in 2020 - 2021 (albeit that the actual figure is likely to be higher as there were no records for September and October 2020) that did not meet the threshold for a referral but required discussion, support and advice and were recorded as such. This is double the previous year (53).

Education settings account for many of the LADO referrals although figures have dropped considerable in the past two years which seems to account for the drop in referrals to LADO overall (25% this year as opposed to between 40-50% in previous years). This is followed by referrals from Social Care and Foster Care which together have accounted for 40% of referrals in the past year.

There is now an Education Lead who is based at the MASH and they are able to manage the education enquiries and provide advice, guidance and support to head teachers and designated safeguarding leads to support them in effectively discharging their duties regarding safeguarding. The Education lead also deals with Ofsted complaints in relation to schools where no specific allegations are made against individuals.

Where there is an identified child who has been harmed or where there has been a possible criminal offence, this should always be referred to children's social care and/or the police to undertake a joint investigation (s47 enquiry) or police investigation as appropriate.

Following LADO involvement, the allegation may be deemed to be either: Substantiated, Unsubstantiated, Unfounded or Malicious. There is an option of taking no further action after initial consideration and these can be recorded as LADO advice. As well as the LADO referral outcome, there are options to record outcomes of police investigations, social care assessments and the employers own process of investigating allegations. This would also capture any other actions such as referrals to regulatory bodies.

For more information about managing allegations, the Safeguarding Children's Partnership offer multi-agency Managing Allegations training as part of the annual training programme. Currently information can be found on the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board website under Learning Zone/online training booking. However, a website is under development for the Stoke on Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership where the Stoke on Trent information will be held separately. The following link is to the current joint website:

<http://www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk/ccm/content/safeguarding-children/professionals-folder/procedure-manuals/d---cyp-specific-circumstances.en>

All referrals to the LADO should be reported through the Children's Advice and Duty service (ChAD) which will screen referrals for any actions by children's social care. Please telephone 01782 235100 if you need to make a referral. There is a LADO referral form available from ChAD / SCB. If you require advice from the LADO please ask to speak to John Hanlon. If the LADO is unavailable advice can be sought from the Duty Social Workers / Practice Manager in ChAD who will determine the safeguarding concerns relating to children and redirect your call appropriately.

Where we want to be in the future

- The LADO arrangements are well-briefed and embedded across the City of Stoke-on-Trent
- Safer employment practices are consistently applied across children's workforce
- The capacity within the LADO role is meeting the demand

Who leads and who else is involved

- John Hanlon – LADO based at Steel House 01782 233342
- Karen Ford – Service Manager Quality Assurance and Child Protection 01782 234194
- Francine Salem - Strategic Manager Safeguarding & Quality Assurance – 01782 236563
- All SCP agencies have a designated manager

What other services does this subject link to?

- Stoke on Trent Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD)
- Staffordshire Police – MASH, Child and Adult Safeguarding, Common Law Police Disclosure
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- Safer Employment
- Human Resources
- Regulatory bodies, e.g. SW England, Ofsted, TRA etc

Any other relevant duties for the LADO

There are regular requests to the LADO from the Disclosure and Barring Service (Local Police Team and Public Body).

The LADO also responds to Freedom of Information requests regarding LADO data.

The LADO works alongside the Safeguarding Board Training Officer to provide Managing Allegations Training to a wide range of agencies in the City.

The LADO also sits on the council's Safer Employment Panel.

The LADO responds to requests for information from regulatory bodies such as SW England, Ofsted, TRA etc.

Contact for more information

Francine Salem, Strategic Manager Safeguarding & QA 01782 236563

Karen Ford – Service Manager Quality Assurance and Child Protection 01782 234194

John Hanlon LADO John.Hanlon@stoke.gov.uk 01782 233342 / 07385 362877

Children's Advice and Duty Service - ChAD.referrals@stoke.gov.uk 01782 235100