



City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**

# **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report 2018 - 2019**

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Date: May 2019

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## **1. Introduction**

The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is to manage allegations about individuals who work or volunteer with children and young people under 18 years where they have:

- 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 pose a risk of harm to children.

The LADO procedure is underpinned by the following key documents.

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018),
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSE) – Statutory guidance for schools and colleges (September 2018)
- Fostering Services : National Minimum Standards - standard 22 (2011)
- Adoption : National Minimum Standards - standard 22 ( 2014)

There are thousands of people working in a professional or voluntary capacity with children in the City and it is anticipated that occasionally things go wrong and that children's safety and well-being is jeopardised by those who are charged with protecting them.

It is the role of the LADO to support the wider community and specifically the organisations working with children and young people in handling allegations where children may have been harmed.

### **Purpose of the report**

This is to provide an overview of current LADO activity, compare it to previous years activity and analyse both data and the impact of the LADO role.

During 2016 , 2017 and part of 2018 referrals were consistent but there has been an increased level of referrals in the year 2018-2019 creating an increase in demand. .

This report examines the referral data in some detail and the source of the greatest number of referrals in the city, which remains the education sector and those sectors where referrals are disproportionately low e.g. private, voluntary and independent sectors.

### **Safeguarding Children Board**

The SCB has a duty to ensure that there are effective multi-agency procedures in place for dealing with allegations made against people who work with children and that all allegations are investigated in accordance with those procedures. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) discharges these responsibilities and is required to produce an annual report.

Stoke on Trent's Safeguarding Childrens Board has now changed whereby Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire, have come together as a single Safeguarding Partnership to deliver a system that protects children, especially the most vulnerable. This followed Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 introducing a new duty to be placed on three agencies: Local Authorities, the Chief Constable and Clinical Commissioning Groups to make arrangements for the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

## **Business Analysis**

The LADO activity and outcomes are reported through the Business Analysis Team and are sent on a weekly basis to the LADO and to Safeguarding and Quality Assurance (SQA). This includes the number of referrals; the employment sector of the person subject of the allegation; allegation by abuse type and the outcome of the investigation. The data currently has limitations because of the flow of the Liquid Logic system that means that some data has to be collated manually . There are changes that need to be made to the managing allegations form to enable it provide a broader suite of performance data.

In many cases people working with young people may not have intended to cause harm and require remedial action and support to improve their personal or organisational practice to prevent and minimise future incidents in which children could be harmed.

It is those with a malicious intent that the LADO process is rightly most concerned with identifying and ensuring they are dealt with robustly so as to minimise the risk to our children and young people in the future.

## **2. LADO Guidance**

The Statutory Guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (July 2018) outlines the process and criteria for managing allegations against persons working with children in a either a paid or voluntary role.

The guidance sets out the importance that the co-ordination of any actions to address welfare concerns, in relation to the child or children involved, are taken without delay. It stipulates that local authorities should have a *designated officer* Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or team of *officers* to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children. The

guidance also states that the role requires the relevant qualifying skills and expertise of a registered social worker.

The details of the procedure to manage allegations against people who work with children is contained within the Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board Procedure 'Allegations of abuse made against a person who works with children' which is accessible through the Safeguarding Board website [www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk](http://www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk)

### **3. The Role of the LADO in Stoke-on-Trent City Council**

A dedicated LADO post was created in April 2016 following an Ofsted recommendation the previous year. Dylan Harrison, the initial appointee left the authority in November 2017 and there were interim arrangements in place within the Safeguarding and Referral Team (SRT) until the appointment of a permanent LADO, Linda Hancock, in April 2018. The LADO is embedded within the SRT which accepts all safeguarding referrals for the City. In turn the SRT is co-located within the Staffordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which hosts safeguarding staff from Children's and Adults Social Care, Police and Health partners across the County and the City.

The location of the LADO within SRT and the MASH provides the opportunity for the quick processing of referrals as they are received in through SRT and there is opportunity to assess risk through the sharing of information with other statutory agencies within a safeguarding role. The location of the LADO function within SRT also provides a single point of contact for referrals.

The LADO also has oversight of all Ofsted complaints that come into SRT. These are screened to ensure there are no safeguarding concerns that are child specific or involve LADO subjects. These are then passed to Education Services for the appropriate action. Ofsted have also contacted the LADO for information regarding an establishment in preparation for an inspection or relating to particular concerns. This is sometimes a challenge as in the current recording system (Liquid Logic), allegations are recorded by the subject's name and not by the organisation or establishment.

There are also regular requests to the LADO from the Disclosure and Barring Service (Local Police Team and Public Body) for information about LADO subjects and also relevant safeguarding information held by the Local Authority.

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

The LADO post holder was also the Council's representative on the Staffordshire Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Panel which generally meets weekly to consider and mitigate risk posed by the most dangerous ex-offenders in the community.

The LADO also provided Practice Manager cover to the Safeguarding Referral Team.

The LADO has been recently relieved of these additional duties in February and March of this year due to capacity issues within the LADO role.

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 and Licensing Panel as necessary where safeguarding issues arise and provides briefings for elected members and other staff on safer employment practices.

### **LADO Role Overview**

There has been a permanent LADO in post since 16 April 2018 which covers most of this financial year. Prior to this there were interim arrangements and in discussion with the previous acting LADO, Emily Dempsey it was viewed that most professionals recognised the role of the LADO and the point of contact and this has enabled timely referrals being made.

There is evidence of strong relationships that have been forged between the LADO and social care, safeguarding leads in education, health and also within Stoke On Trent's internal and private residential and foster care settings. There has been a proactive approach from these sectors to get LADO issues addressed and resolved.

There are embedded procedures within the LADO role which are aligned with HR by having initial discussions and informing them in a timely manner. This helps give clarity to the nature of investigations relevant to individual cases.

There are challenges such as the significant amount of informal enquiries that do not meet the threshold for LADO but require a response. This matches both the regional and national picture that LA's face trying to capture this for accountability but also to evidence the amount of time spent advising and support agencies.

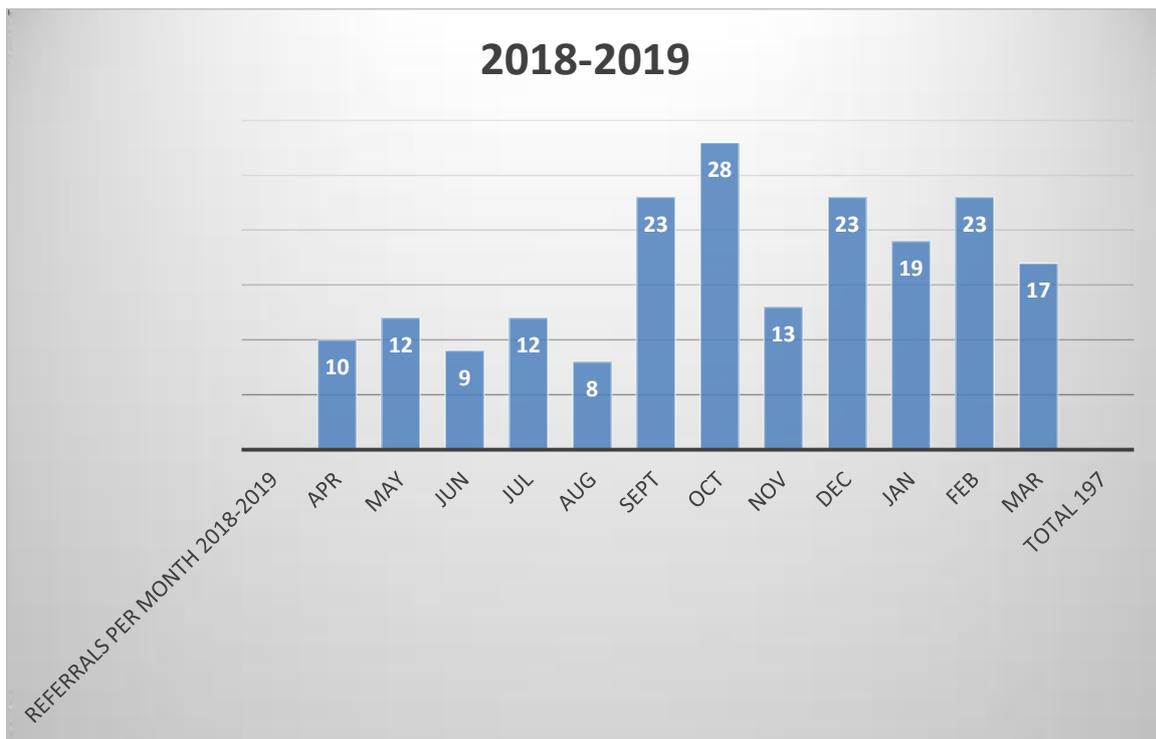
One of the other challenges for the LADO role is to develop awareness across all services of the thresholds for a LADO referral by developing confidence within agencies to undertake enquiries to ensure they use the LADO process effectively. This will assist agencies to put in safe, proportionate measures to manage risk confidently while the concerns are addressed through their own enquiries as well as through the formal LADO process.

## **4. Referrals 2018– 2019**

There were 197 referrals to the LADO during 2018 - 2019 which is a rise from 178 in the previous year. In addition to referrals, the LADO also advises on a significant number of situations which are recorded as LADO Advice rather than referrals. There was a total of 62 contacts to LADO in 2018 - 2019 that did not meet the

threshold for a referral but required discussion, support and advice and were recorded as such.

Education settings accounted for around 52.8% (104) of all the LADO referrals within the last financial year from a combination of schools, academies and colleges. This is followed by referrals from Social Care 19.8% (39). The remainder are from Foster Care, Youth Sector, Health and Faith Organisations. There are also 9.1% (18) recorded as 'Other'. These include pre-school child care settings, sports and leisure sectors and other professional roles both in the statutory, private, voluntary and independent sectors.



The highest numbers of referrals were recorded in October 2018 with a dip during November 2018.

There is added value of a dedicated LADO in relation to work on non-recent abuse cases. This develops a more thorough approach to identifying patterns of behaviour across employment settings.

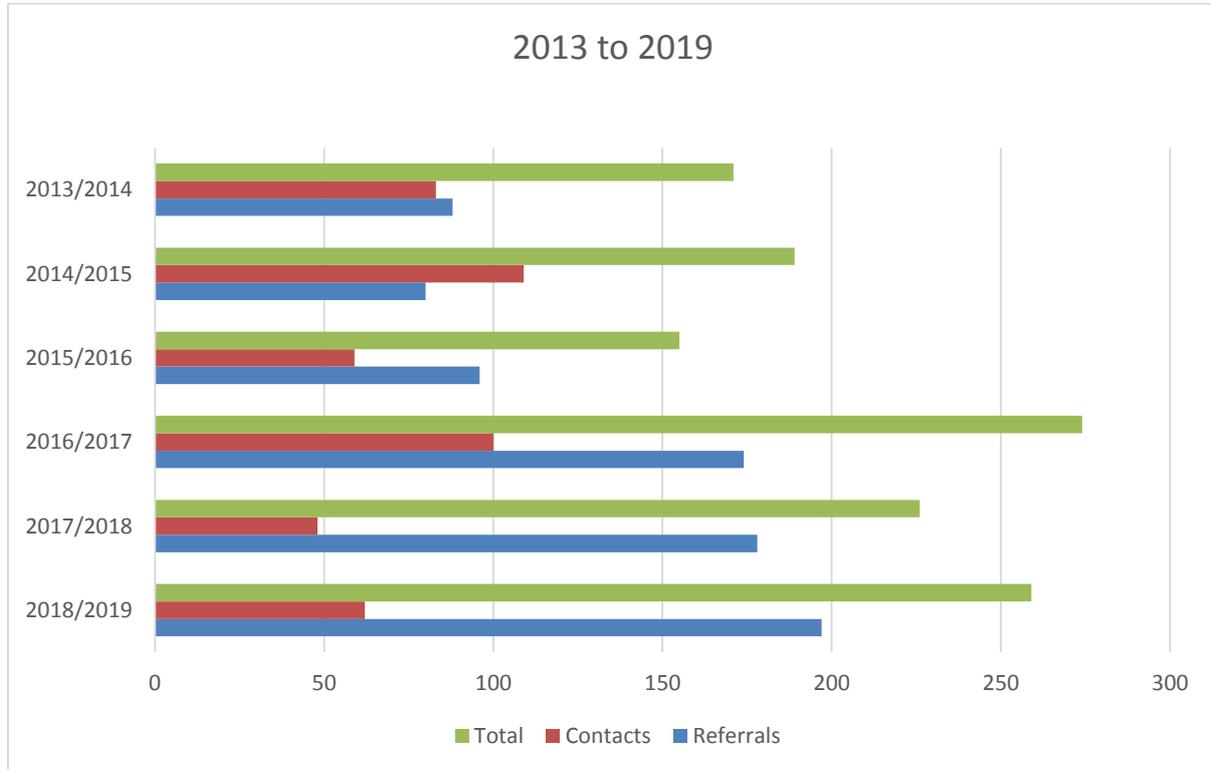
### Comparative Data over 6 years

	Referrals	Contacts	Total
<b>2018/2019</b>	197	62	259
<b>2017/2018</b>	178	48	226
<b>2016/2017</b>	174	100	274
<b>2015/2016</b>	96	59	155
<b>2014/2015</b>	80	109	189

<b>2013/2014</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>171</b>
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*\*Discrepancy in reported data from 2016/2017 of LADO referrals as monthly business review indicates there were 174 referrals not 185 as stated in the LADO Annual Report 2016/2017*

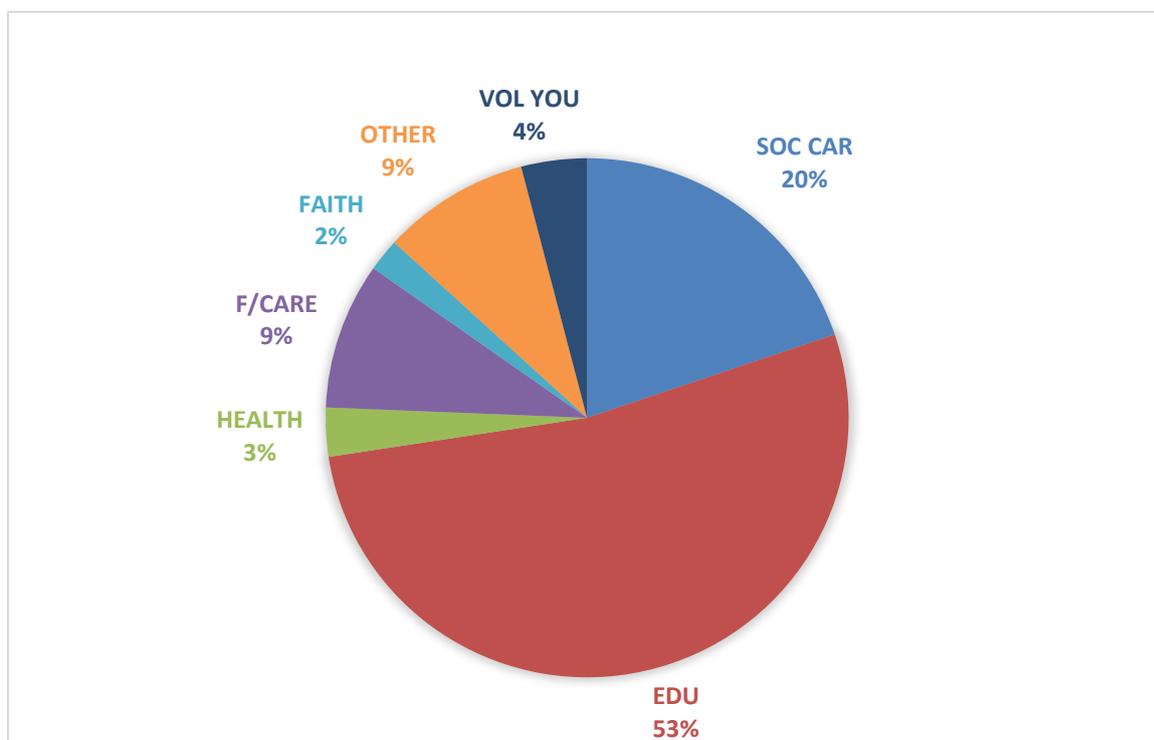
### LADO Referrals 2013 – 2018 (Stoke-on-Trent)



Since Summer 2016, all LADO referrals were recorded on CareFirst, the Stoke-on-Trent City Council Children’s Social Care database using a ‘Managing Allegations’ form. Since July 2018 this has changed to Liquid Logic Childrens System. There is an allegations workspace on the system where the new ‘Managing Allegations’ form sits. This information is restricted for confidentiality and security. The form mirrors the previous one but has additional data fields to capture the category of abuse, sector involved and the employment details. There is also the option to record LADO Advice on the same system where informal discussions have taken place and the concerns do not meet the threshold to initiate a LADO referral.

Between April 2018 and March 2019, there were 52 LADO referrals that required multi agency meetings, of those 7 required subsequent second LADO meetings and 1 required a third meeting . This is slightly fewer than in the previous year despite the increase in referrals. There has been a determined effort to only meet when necessary to progress the case, as often timely phone calls and discussions can resolve issues without getting around the table. This has also ensured that that new referrals have been dealt with in a timely manner while managing the volume of existing cases. In looking at the previous LADO referrals sometimes meetings were held when it was deemed not necessary.

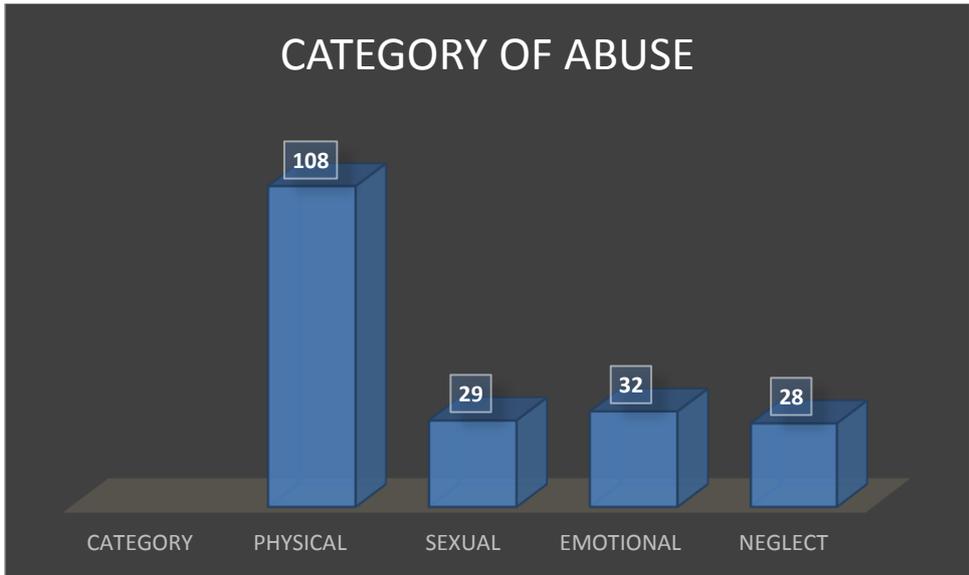
## 5. Analysis of the Data



As expected the number of referrals to the LADO received from the Education sector of the children's workforce far outstrips the other sectors, accounting for over half of all LADO referrals which is the similar to the previous year.

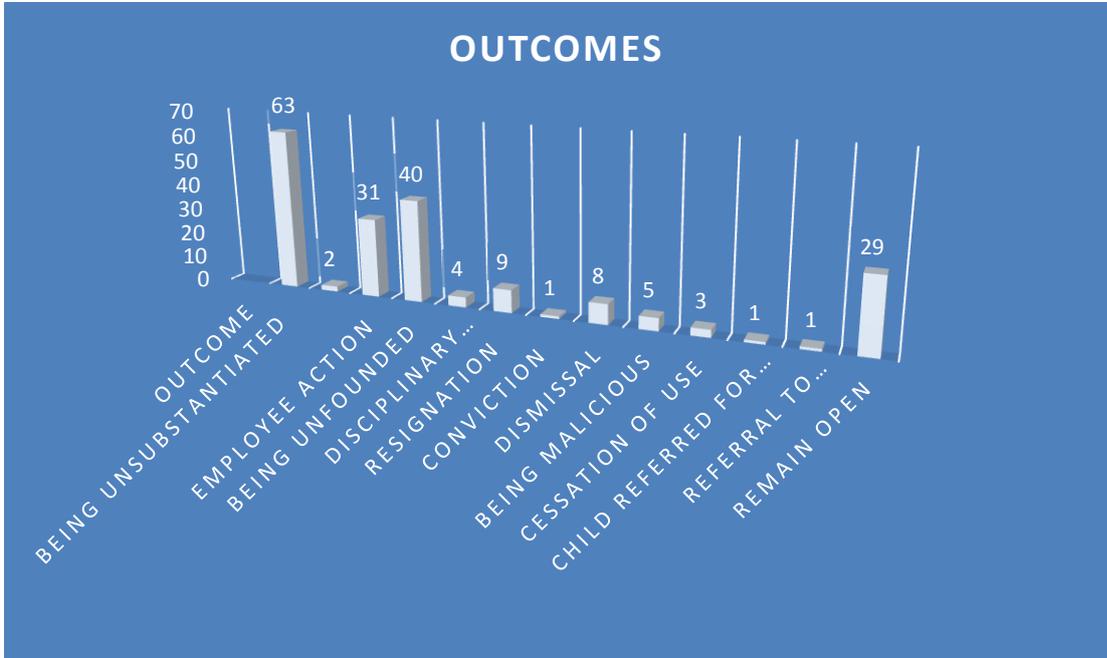
There were additional referrals from faith groups, and sport settings and lone workers demonstrating that children and young people can be at risk in a wide range of settings in the wider community from the adults working or volunteering with them.

Referrals from Social Care organisations (mostly residential settings) and regarding Foster Carers together make up almost 30% of all allegations. Clearly there are far fewer children in any form of residential care than in the nursery and school population. This proportionate example highlights both the intensive nature of this work and also the inherent risk to individuals, particularly foster carers who often work on a one-to-one basis with very vulnerable young people.



Over half of all referrals made to the LADO are for allegations of Physical Abuse (55%) followed by allegations of Emotional Abuse (16%), Sexual Abuse (15%) and Neglect (14%) being fairly equally split to make up the remainder.

In terms of outcomes of LADO's these are represented as follows:



Being Unsubstantiated	63	32%
Criminal Investigation	2	1%
Employee Action Only	31	16%
Being Unfounded	40	20%
Disciplinary Procedures	4	2%

Resignation	9	5%
Conviction	1	0% **
Dismissal	8	4%
Being Malicious	5	3%
Cessation of Use	3	2%
Child Referred for Support	1	0% **
Referral to Regulatory Body	1	0% **
Remain open	29	15%

\*\* Percentages are rounded up so 0% in the table above represents less than 1%

Employers Actions covers internal organisational actions such as the issuing of informal management guidance, providing training and sanctions whereas disciplinary procedures are more formal and remain on the employees record. The role of the LADO is often to support employers with advice on the process of handling safeguarding allegations and to provide examples of how other organisations may have handled comparable events.

To be considered as a LADO referral, the allegation by its nature is a serious matter, but only a relatively small proportion (in total of 197 referrals) result in a dismissal (8) resignation (9) or disciplinary procedures (4). Only the most serious allegations result in criminal investigations (2), or referral to a regulatory body for regulated professions such as doctors, social workers, teachers etc (1). In each case of dismissal the employer will be guided to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service. Still rarer are prosecutions. In Stoke-on-Trent only one LADO referral in from 2016 – 17 resulted in a conviction.

As Education makes up a large proportion of LADO referrals (104) it is relevant to examine this data in more detail.

#### Education Referrals to LADO by Category

Physical	68
Emotional	13
Sexual	13
Neglect	10
Total	104

Allegations relating to Physical Abuse against education staff (68) accounts for 34.5% of all LADO referrals (197) across the children's workforce in the City in the year. Allegations of Physical Abuse (68) make up 65% of the referrals to Education followed by Sexual and Emotional (13 each) 12.5% and Neglect (10) 9.6%.

#### Education Referrals by Age Setting and Type

Primary	39
Secondary	22
Special Schools	20
Agency Teachers	6
Alternative	4
College	1
Education Transport	12
Total	104

This data does not capture the LADO referrals made regarding Early Years settings such as Day Nurseries and Child Minders. These are recorded under the 'Other' sector and are broken down as follows .

Nurseries	2
Child Minders	4

Any nurseries attached or in school settings are captured in the data for Primary Education.

## 6. Training and Awareness

The LADO assists in delivering the "Managing Allegations Training' that is facilitated by the Safeguarding Children Board Training Office. The sessions are approximately 3 to 4 times per year.

There have been 2 sessions this year so far and the representation of attendees has been as follows.

Learning	21
Private Sector	3
Third Sector	3
City Council	3
Faith Groups	2
Social Care	1
Health	1

As the figures show there is low representation in areas such as health and social care and there is more work to be done in promoting the uptake of the training.

The feedback from the training has been positive. 92% of attendees commented that they felt the training met its objectives. Written and verbal feedback raised issues around the process of information gathering and concerns were raised about access to LADO advice in the absence of the LADO.

The LADO has also attended a team meeting held by the Early Years Team to establish processes for managing referrals in conjunction with Ofsted and outlining roles and responsibilities around allegations against lone workers or the self-employed.

LADO has also met with HR to establish working relationships and agree process of when to involve / inform HR of the relevant information.

Ideally the LADO would like to accept the numerous offers of attending various agency and sector team meetings however current capacity would not allow for this

## **7. Challenges**

In addition to the volume of the referrals made within the last year there was a significant number of LADO referrals open from the previous year. While this is to be expected with a number which would carry over, there were some that needed to be reviewed before closure. This backlog could be due to the delay in appointing a replacement LADO and interim arrangements meant that LADO duties would fall to the Practice Manager at SRT as being additional work.

In addition to the 197 new LADO referrals within the year, 38 LADO referrals were processed and subsequently closed. This created extra pressure on the LADO role. There were additional resources (Social Worker and Family Support Worker) provided in December and January from the Safeguarding and Referral Team to chase up information to ensure this backlog was cleared. There have also been 3 older LADO referrals that were closed but required further correspondence and meetings to address unresolved issues.

It has been recognised by Senior Management that the LADO service requires extra resources especially the need for administration support to offload some of the tasks that take up valuable time such as arranging meetings, minute taking and general information gathering. There are also no current firm arrangements for LADO cover for annual leave, flexible working or training. Cover has been picked up by the Practice Managers in SRT who are able to give safeguarding advice in the absence of the LADO. Ofsted also noted the concerns about the capacity within LADO following their inspection in February 2019. It is expected that there will be an audit or peer review of the LADO process following the Ofsted inspection.

## **8. Achievements**

There is added value to having a dedicated LADO in post based at the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub as this gives them rapid access to police information including soft intelligence and other agency information to inform decision-making and assess risk. There are now closer working relationships with Staffordshire LADO's and other regional colleagues on cross-border issues

Strong working relationships have been established with education, health, police residential and foster care as well as other sectors. This has enabled closer communication and agencies have felt at ease to discuss issues giving them a better understanding of the thresholds for LADO. This appears to have led to the increase in referrals by raising the profile of LADO, however it has allowed for informal discussion to take place to give employers the confidence to deal with matters while being assured there has been scrutiny around the safeguarding issues.

The relationship between the LADO and the Local Authority Human Resources has strengthened with recognition of the named representatives for each sector. Working relationships have been positive and representatives can all be easily contacted and issues are discussed in a timely manner.

The LADO attended the National LADO Conference held in Doncaster in May. This was the first opportunity for the new LADO to meet with the regional West Midlands network. It was an informative day with key note speakers, workshops and briefings. There was some very thought provoking guest speakers discussing issues such as collusion that works against safeguarding. There was also an informative session with the Disclosure and Barring Service. The networking opportunities were invaluable to seeking peer support in what is often a lone role.

The LADO continues to be a permanent member of the council's safer employment panel and advises on positive DBS.

There are also regular meetings with the LADO, SM for Quality Assurance and LA Transport and Licensing to discuss issues arising and to review processes.

There has been agreement from senior management for additional support to LADO. A post has been advertised, however this has not been taken up as yet so minute taking is being provided by Service Support in the interim.

The LADO data for this financial year has been carefully collated from both Care First and Liquid Logic systems. There were some data gaps due to the way the current form is designed, however the LADO is confident that the current data is extensive and accurate.

## **9. Developing the LADO Role within the City of Stoke-on-Trent**

The co-location of the LADO within the SRT and within Stoke and Staffordshire MASH has significantly raised the profile of the role within Early Intervention & Children’s Social Care. It has also brought benefits from having a single point of contact for the LADO through the SRT.

Since there has been a dedicated LADO, the profile has increased and development activities that have taken place may account in part for the significant increase in the number of referrals in the last 3 years. The rise could be attributed to the stronger relationships that have developed with agencies, early years settings and the PVI sectors . There is also now a bespoke LADO referral form which ensures concerns are captured and documented in a timely manner and all the relevant information is available

The Stoke LADO has continued to be a member of the West Midlands Regional LADO Network, which is a confident and well-attended quarterly forum, providing peer support to LADO’s across the region.

In looking at the LADO data it is noted that the referrals from health, faith groups, the voluntary youth sector, child minders and day nurseries are proportionately low in comparison to education and social care. Apart from promoting the role of the LADO through awareness, it is a challenge to understand the vast make up of smaller organisations that are not known to the Local Authority.

## 10. Update on actions for 2018-2019

1. **Review working arrangements e.g. desk and note-taking** – Previously the LADO was ‘hot desking’ due to the capacity of desk space in SRT. However in January 2019 there were refurbishments to the MASH layout and now the LADO has a permanent desk. There has been difficulty in staff being released for the secondment to support LADO but this is being taken forward.
2. **Liquid Logic** has now been fully implemented with a bespoke allegations work space on the system.
3. **LADO One Minute Guide and the LADO procedure** have been revised and updated.
4. **Meet the LADO sessions** have been limited to HR and the Early Years team due to capacity of the LADO.
5. The LADO has been unable to attend **Private Providers** forums due to capacity.

## 11. Actions for 2019/20

Review the capacity within the current LADO role.	Strategic Manager and Assistant Director	July 2019
Establish administrative support to the LADO	Strategic Manager and Assistant Director	July 2019
Annual Review of the OMG and LADO policy	Linda Hancock	July 2019

Modify the current 'Managing Allegations form in LL to capture the required data	Linda Hancock Elaine Webster	August 2019
LADO briefings to increase LADO awareness across Social Care, Schools, Small Group Homes and Health partners	Linda Hancock	Throughout the year.
Attend quarterly private providers forums on managing allegations.	Linda Hancock with Staffordshire LADO's	Throughout the year
Attendance of the West Midlands Regional LADO network	Linda Hancock	Quarterly throughout the year
Improve understanding of the range of unknown Private, Voluntary, Charity and Independent organisations that operate in the Stoke on Trent LA area.	Linda Hancock Elaine Webster	August 2019