

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Local Authority Designated Officer Service Annual Report



April 2016 – March 2017

Executive Summary

This has been a year of considerable change in the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Service in relation to staffing and improving internal processes. Our aim is to ensure that we provide the best possible service in managing and overseeing allegations against people that work with children and who are therefore in a position of trust.

Some of the key issues explored in 2016-2017 were:

- Clear process
- Planning
- Outcomes
- Closing cases
- Allegation Management System
- Performance
- Staffing

Clear process

The process for managing enquiries and referrals in the service has been reviewed. A central phone number and email address ensure that the service provides a timely response, regardless of staff availability, and that messages cannot be delayed in individual mailboxes. Improvements to the referral form ensure clear, succinct information sharing from the outset. The Joint Evaluation Meeting agenda and template have been improved, using areas of the Strengthening Families Model to focus on risk.

Planning

The quality of LADO Actions Plans has been strengthened, adhering to a planning grid focusing on SMART outcomes, clear actions, responsibility of who will complete the task and timescales.

Outcomes

Employer responsibility for informing the LADO of outcomes is reinforced through all steps in the LADO process. A two-step outcome seeking process makes it clear that non-compliance will be shared with the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board, ensuring improved employer understanding of their responsibilities, their accountability and timely closing of cases.

Closing cases

The service has addressed the extensive backlog of unclosed cases, with a reduction of 83% from a starting point of 270 unclosed cases in April 2016 to 45 by March 2017. Timely case closure ensures cases are actively worked by the LADO ensuring focus on task and improved service delivery. The average length of time taken to close cases is being monitored.

Allegation Management System

The internal Allegations Management System has benefitted from improvements. Timely recording directly onto one system allows LADO time to be spent effectively on actively managing current cases.

Performance

Scrutiny of quarterly data is provided by the BSCB Safer Employment Sub Group, fed back to the LADO Officers and reviewed by senior managers. Performance data is used to ensure practice and capacity issues are addressed and lessons learnt are shared.

Staffing

The current staffing levels provide the necessary capacity to provide the optimum service to meet identified need and ensure the statutory requirements are met.

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Introduction

All agencies that provide services for children, or provide staff or volunteers to work with or care for children, are required to have a procedure in place for managing and reporting allegations against staff and volunteers, which is consistent with statutory guidance published by HM Government (revised guidance: *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015*). This guidance outlines the requirement of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to oversee the effectiveness, transparency and record retention of the process not only in terms of protecting children but also ensuring that those who are the subject of an allegation are treated fairly and that the response and subsequent action is consistent, reasonable and proportionate.

Working Together 2013 defines what constitutes an allegation as when a person who works or volunteers with children has allegedly:

- 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 or children in a way that indicates s/he might pose a risk to children.

In Buckinghamshire, all agencies are expected to follow the procedures in the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board's *Managing*

allegations against staff and volunteers working with children, which was revised in March 2015.

The revised *Working Together 2015* removes the automatic title of LADO and refers instead to "designated officers". Along with most other authorities, Buckinghamshire continues to use the title of LADO. *Working Together 2015* also allowed Local Authorities scope to change the arrangements for the referral of cases to the LADO, in line with local arrangements. It has been decided in Buckinghamshire that the majority of referrals will continue to come directly to the LADO rather than requiring them all to be directed through the First Response Team.

This annual report provides information for the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board and stake-holders on the number, nature and outcome of allegations made against staff within the children's workforce in Buckinghamshire, between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017. In addition to providing data collated from records maintained by the LADO, the report will provide an analysis of issues and trends that are considered to be relevant regarding inter-agency working together arrangements to improve outcomes for children and staff/ volunteers involved in this process.

Staffing & Resources

Local Authority Designated Officers

During the period between April 2016 and March 2017, the LADO Service kept the number of Local Authority Designated Officers stable with a full time establishment of 1.6 and a Conferencing Manager (service manager). Experienced interim staff were used to cover extended periods of staff illness absence during the year.

An Ofsted Monitoring Visit in August 2016 raised a concern that: "Capacity to manage allegations against professionals working with children remains insufficient to respond effectively to all referrals; consequently, tracking outcomes and closing cases are delayed." Following the backlog of cases being cleared, a review of staffing levels found that capacity is appropriate for the workload. However, LADOs need to maintain boundaries with enquiries that do not meet the LADO threshold and ensure referrers share their outcomes in a timely manner.

A full time permanent Conferencing Manager is now in post and provides management oversight for the Local Authority Designated Officer Service, Child Protection Conferencing Service and the Education Safeguarding Advisory Service.

The Local Authority Designated Officers are qualified social workers, with many years' experience in children's social work and management. The two individuals have been in the service since it was created in Buckinghamshire County Council and both have recently decided to leave. Recruitment has commenced for high quality Local Authority Designated Officers with replacements anticipated to be in post by August 2017.

Local Authority Designated Officer Caseloads

The number of active cases within the LADO Service fluctuates between 50-70 staff and volunteers, which averages up to 44 cases per FTE LADO Officer. 10 active cases are often linked to specialist provisions or group allegations which are managed as one case.

Business Support Staff

The Local Authority Designated Officers are supported in their work by one full time permanent Business Support Specialist. The Business Support Specialist has embraced improvements in the Allegations Management System, the referral form, template for Joint Evaluation Meetings and typing minutes, which allow for greater efficiency and management oversight. A permanent Business Support Coordinator provides direct line management to the Business Support Specialist and arranges cover during periods of annual leave.

Staff Training

The role of the LADO is very specialist and wide-ranging, as such it is important that the LADO can access national training and events. South East Regional LADO meetings are attended quarterly to share good practice and discuss specialist LADO issues, and the LADOs attended the Annual National LADO Conference in March 2017. There continues to be enthusiasm across the national LADO group to create a 'handbook' similar to that of the IRO Handbook, to provide nationally agreed process and best practice guidance in relation to case management.

Budget has been put aside to enable each Local Authority Designated Officer to attend approximately two external courses over the next year. Team development sessions have been used to agree plans to carry on improving the service and these will continue.

Budget

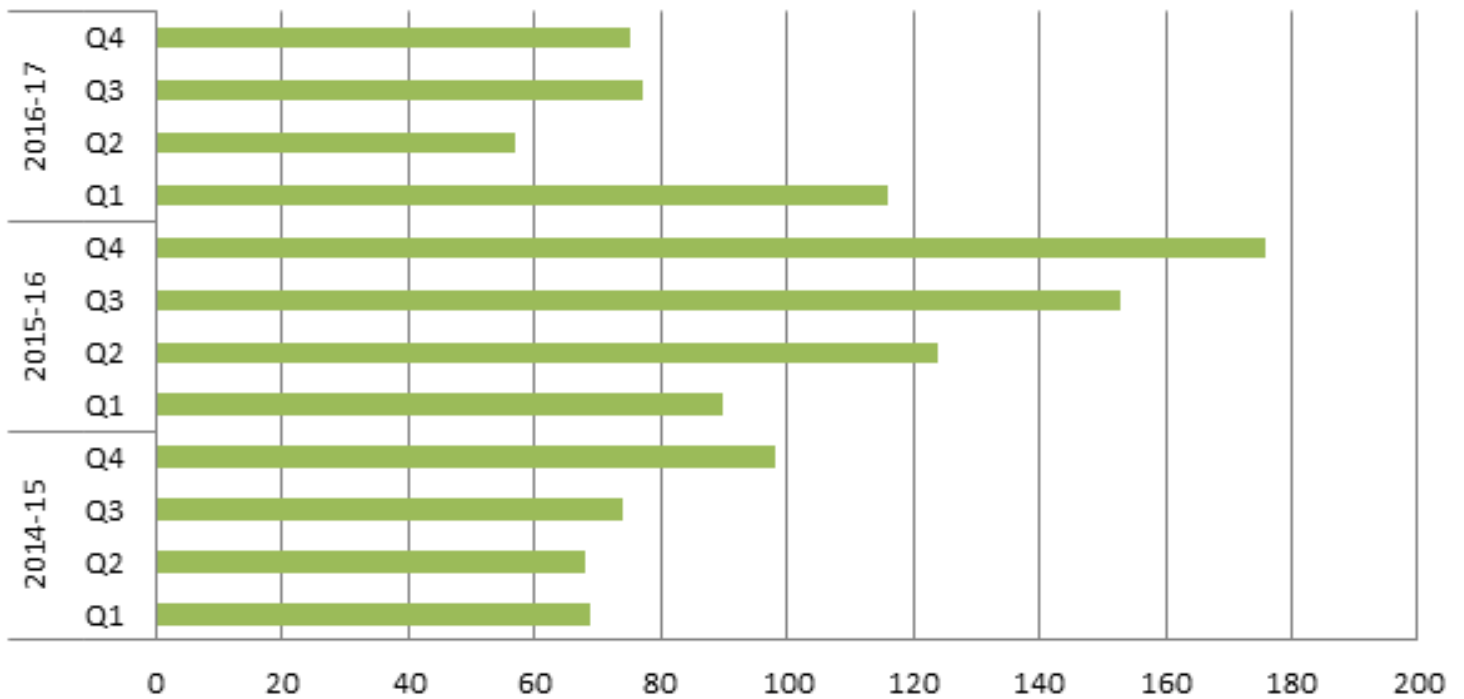
The LADO Service budget has shown an over spend during 2015-2016. This has been entirely due to the need to use agency staff to cover staff sickness absence. This over spend continues to be necessary but extra allowances have been made within the budget to accommodate this. Budget predictions for the next year show that the service should be in line with the forecast budget.

Activity

There have been changes to how the Local Authority Designated Officer Service collects data and these have impacted on the ability to track performance activity. Further changes are planned to improve data collection, enabling greater agency breakdown. There is no comparator data with other Local Authorities as this is not collated nationally. Contact via the South East Benchmarking group will be made to see if neighbouring LAs want to share agreed LADO data in the future.

Number of allegations made against people in a position of trust

Number of Allegations



	2014-15				2015-16				2016-17			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
■ Series1	69	68	74	98	90	124	153	176	116	57	77	75

Number of allegations:

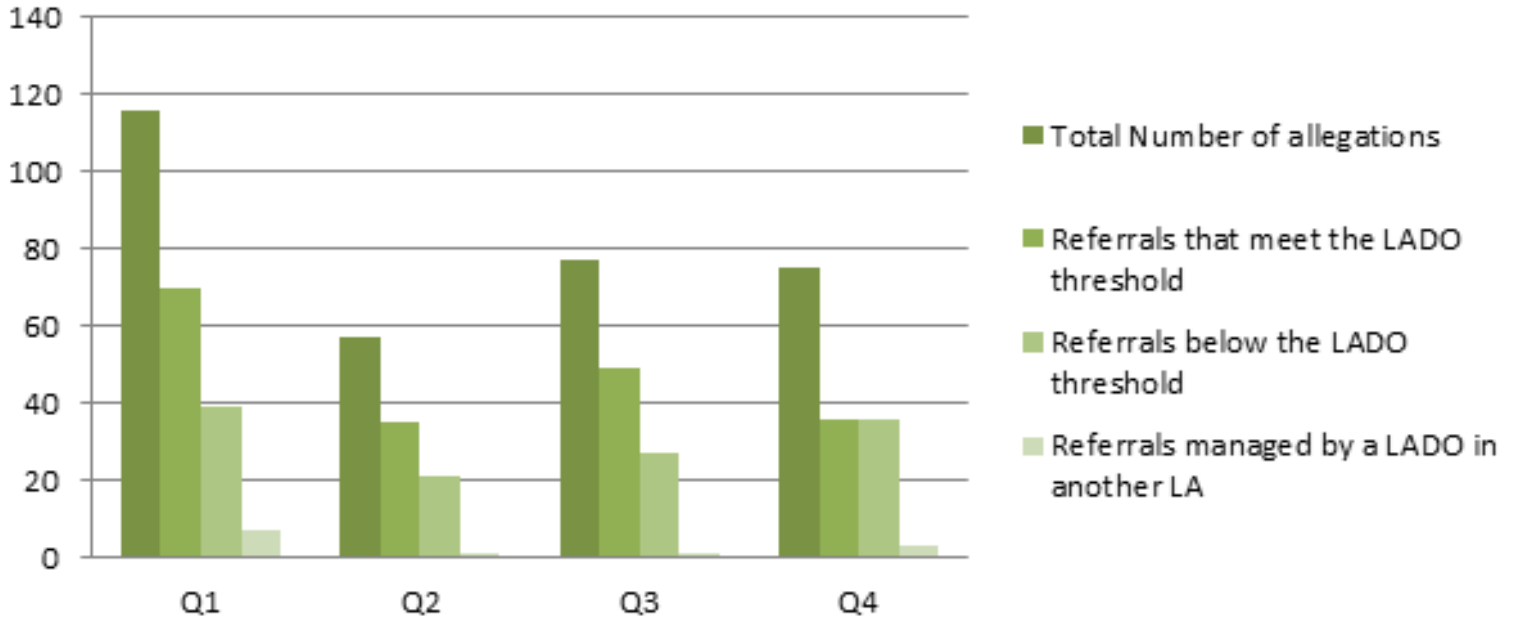
2016-17: 325

2015-16: 543

2014-15: 309

The number of allegations made against people in a position of trust has stabilised over 2016-17 after it rose dramatically in 2015-16. There is always some fluctuation due to the nature of the service. There has been a pattern of increased referrals in Q4 (January – March) but after improved processes and boundaries in the LADO Service in Q3 and Q4 2016-17, the numbers have stabilised.

2016-17 Allegations Threshold Breakdown



Threshold of Allegations 2016-17

Threshold met: 58%

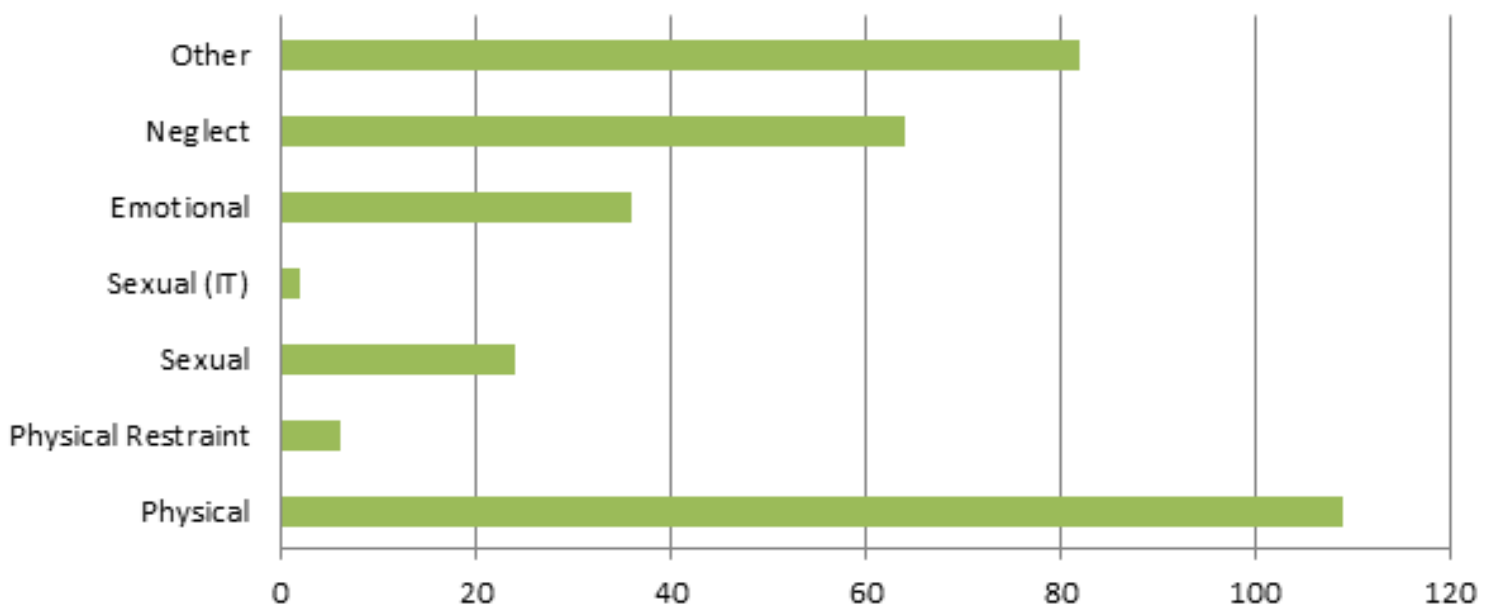
Threshold not met: 42%

The number of allegations received through 2016-17 reduced after Q1 but the percentage of cases that were referred that were below the threshold for LADO increased across the year.

This increase in the percentage of cases that do not meet threshold reinforces the importance of agencies understanding threshold. Although LADO provides support and guidance, it is important that the majority of LADO time is focused on threshold cases. Amendments to the data set will allow us to analyse how this breaks down across the referring agencies.

Types of allegations

2016-17 Type of Allegations



Types of Allegations 2016-17

Physical: 34%

Other (often Transfer of Risk): 25%

Neglect: 20%

Emotional: 11%

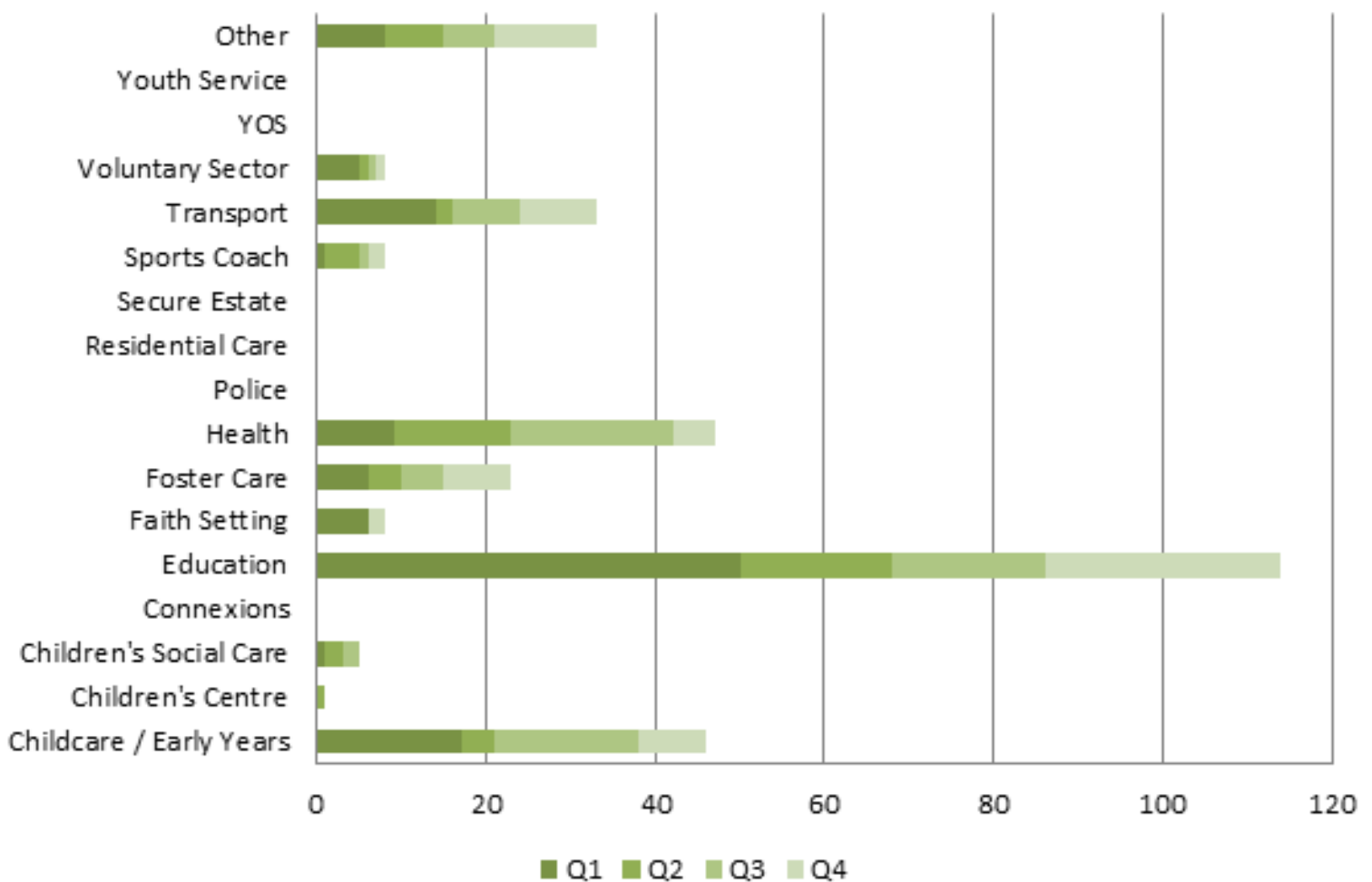
Physical abuse was the most prominent type of allegation made against people in a position of trust over 2016-17.

The use of the category 'Other' was used to capture 'transfer of risk' cases in the early part of the reporting year; the use of this category reduced every quarter. 'Transfer of risk' cases are those where there are concerns about the care someone in a position of trust, through

their employment or in a voluntary capacity, affords their own children. For example, their own children are the subject of a Child Protection Plan. This risk has been increasingly understood and is a growing area of LADO work. The LADO Service should be capturing these cases within the existing categories but further analysis of these cases will take place.

Allegations by sector

2016-17 Allegations by Sector



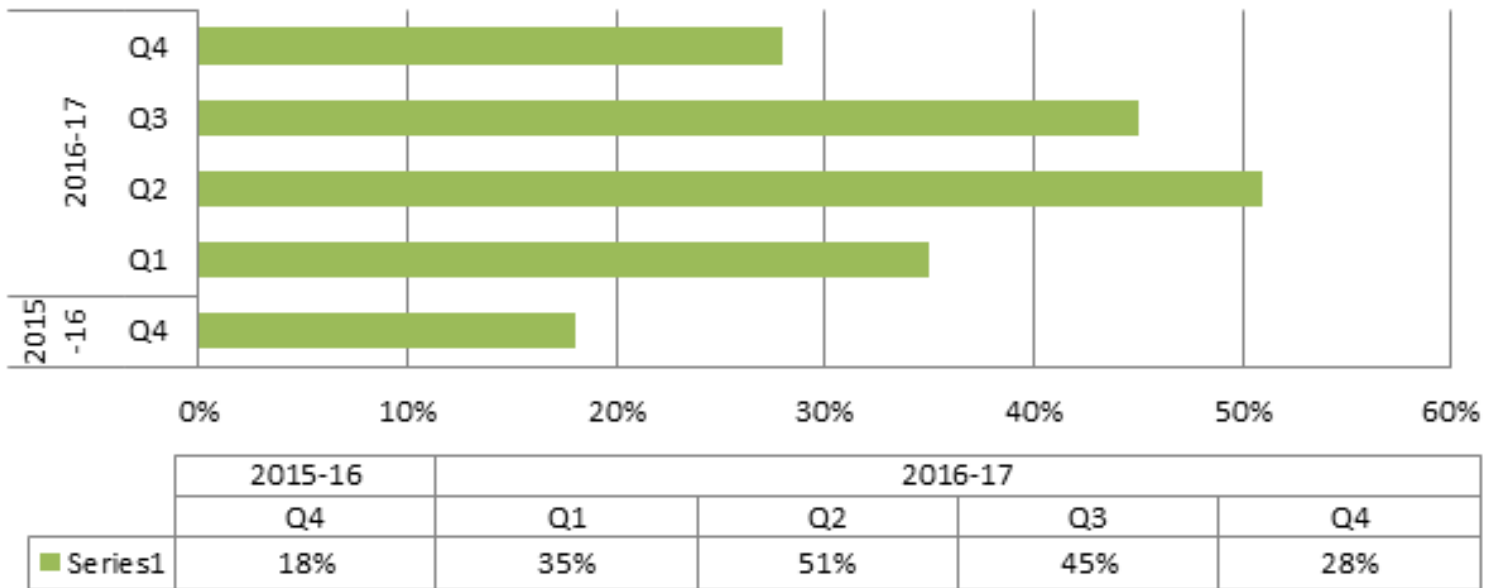
Education continues to be the highest referrer to the LADO Service due to the number of employees they have that are in a position of trust with children. It is positive to see Health as the second highest, as there were historic concerns that health providers were not always referring relevant cases. It would help to have 'Health' broken down as there are many providers in this sector. The sectors included in 'Other' are going to be explored further this year to enable potential adjustments to improve monitoring, particularly as this sector had

an increased number on Q4. Initial analysis indicates that the 'Other' category has been used for agency works, ancillary workers, adopters and cleaners.

There were a number of Freedom of Information Requests in Q3 focusing on sports coaches, due to cases in the national headlines. The data above shows that there have been seven referrals regarding sports coaches in 2016-17, and the national stories did not lead to an increase in this.

Allegations that required a Joint Evaluation Meeting

2016-17 % Allegations that led to a Coordination Meeting



When allegations are referred to the LADO, most should meet threshold. Of those that do meet threshold a Joint Evaluation Meeting (previously known as a LADO Strategy Meeting), or in some cases a Professionals Meeting, is held where concerns are significant.

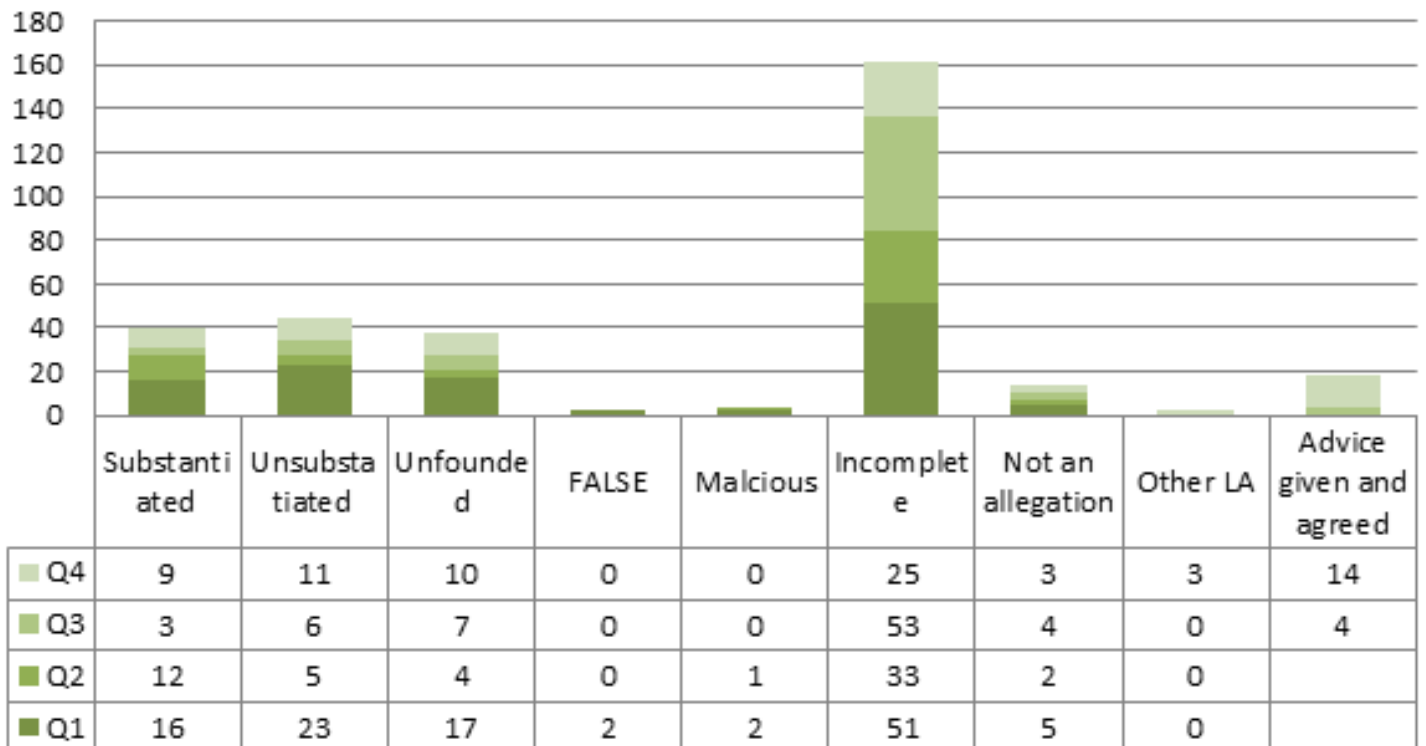
The data above shows the percentage of allegations where a Joint Evaluation took

place. Q4 2015-16 and Q1 2016-17 had high allegation numbers but a low percentage of cases that required a coordination meeting.

Q2 2016-17 had the lowest number of allegations for the year but the highest percentage that were considered significant.

Outcomes of allegations

2016-17 Allegation Outcomes



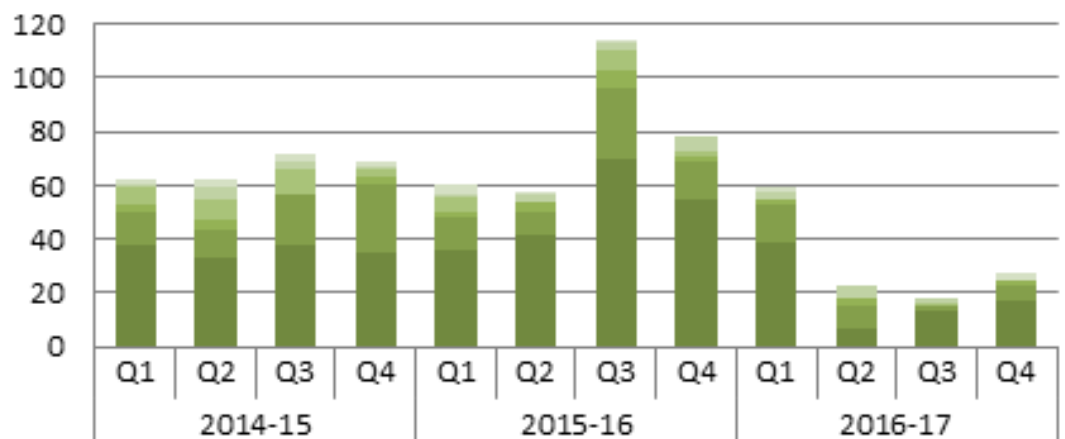
The 'Incomplete' category accounts for those cases that are still active at the end of the reporting quarter (not the year as a whole). The LADO Service worked hard throughout Q3 to close cases that remained active to the LADO Service. These predominantly spanned a 12-18 month period where outcomes had been reached by the sectors but had not reported back to the LADO. A reduction in incomplete outcomes across each quarter this year is very positive. The support of all agencies in ensuring

that timely outcomes are fed back to the LADO Service is greatly appreciated but improvement continues to be necessary.

'Advice given and agreed' was added as a category in Q3 to capture those cases that were referred but did not meet threshold, and the agency were advised on how to manage the case themselves. General signposting is not counted as an allegation.

Outcomes of investigations

2016-17 Investigation Outcomes



	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	2014-15				2015-16				2016-17			
DBS / Regulatory Body referral	2	3	3	2	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	2
Resigned	1	4	3	1	1	3	3	5	3	5	2	0
Dismissal	6	8	9	3	6	0	7	2	0	0	1	0
Written warning	3	4	0	3	2	4	7	2	2	3	0	2
Training	12	10	19	25	12	8	26	14	14	8	2	6
NFA	38	33	38	35	36	42	70	55	39	7	13	17

Outcomes of Investigations overseen by the LADO 2016-17

NFA: 60%

Written warning: 6%

Resigned: 8%

Training: 24%

Dismissal: 0%

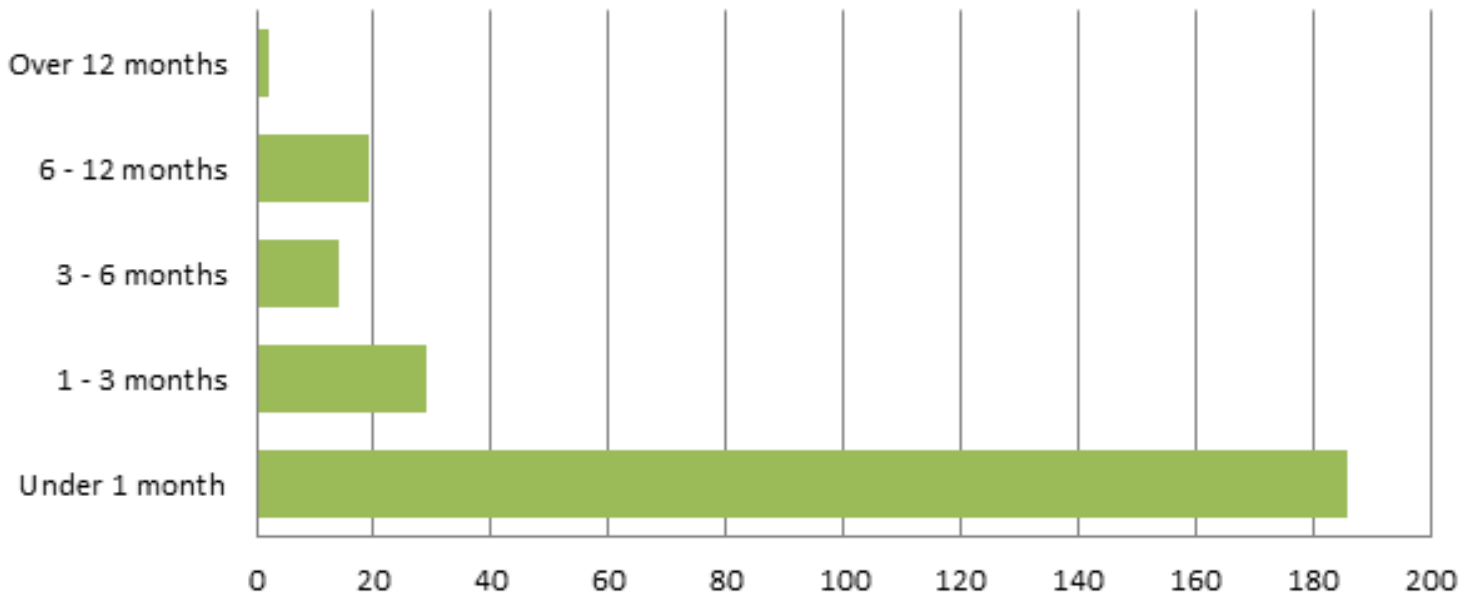
Referral to DBS/regulator body: 2%

A total of 84% of investigations regarding a person in a position of trust resulted in no further action or training. One person was dismissed on the basis of the safeguarding investigation.

Performance

Timescales for the completion of cases

2016-17 Case Completion Timescales



74% of cases that were completed in 2016-17 were completed in under one month, with 84% in under three months. This is positive.

Allegation management system

From 01/06/2015, all concerns referred to the LADO Service were recorded on LCS (Allegation Management System). There were areas of the system that needed development and these were also identified by Ofsted when they visited in August 2016. Investment in developing this system has led to its full use across the LADO Service and as one central record of work from Q4.

Further work is needed to resolve how a system that records information by individuals can capture group allegations, for example in criminal operations where there were a number of 'people of interest' and in residential care facilities where a number of staff were on shift and may be the subject of an allegation. This work is ongoing.

Other performance issues

Weekly data reports are used to track multiple data, including LADO caseloads, number of cases and completion timescales. This regular monitoring of cases plus discussions in supervision means that the LADO Service is taking an active role in driving forward improvements in safeguarding children.

Key Plans for 2017 - 2018

Objectives	Achieved by who	Achieved by when
Reduction of incomplete outcomes by timely caseload management	LADO Officers	01.06.2017
Recruitment of permanent LADOs	Conferencing Manager	01.08.2017
Record retention period agreed	Conferencing Manager and Head of Service	01.08.2017
Raising awareness and understanding of the LADO via training	Conferencing Manager	01.09.2017
Agreed method to capture 'transfer of risk' in types of allegations	Conferencing Manager	01.09.2017
Breakdown of sectors included in 'Other'	Conferencing Manager	01.09.2017
Benchmarking data to be explored with South East neighbouring LAs	Conferencing Manager	01.09.2017
Group abuse allegations management system in place	Conferencing Manager and ICT Service Transformation Service	01.10.2017
Review of impact of bail conditions on allegation management	Conferencing Manager	01.11.2017
Early Years referral agreement	Conferencing Manager via BSCB Safer Employment Sub-group	01.12.2017
Historic paper files cleared	Conferencing Manager	01.06.2018