



## **ALLEGATIONS AGAINST ADULTS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN**

**1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021**

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## **1. Introduction**

1.2 This report is submitted to the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Board, together with residents of Gloucestershire as an annual record of Allegations Management within Gloucestershire.

1.3 The Allegation Management team deal with referrals from all over the county and beyond relating to Gloucestershire adults working with children. This report provides an overview of this activity covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

1.4 The LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) role and Allegations Management team remain physically co-located with Gloucestershire's Safeguarding Children's Partnership. Structurally the team are located within the Safeguarding and Reviewing Service which has offered relevant leadership and resilience but issues around LADO cover still remains an issue. There is one full time and one part time Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO) supported by one Allegation Management Coordinator (this has recently become a job share post, shared between two members of staff).

1.5 The current LADO has been in post full-time since September 2018 having previously been a part-time LADO. The previous LADO was in post for a number of years and had a dual role within Education Safeguarding. Upon the previous LADO's departure from the Council the Education Safeguarding role separated from the LADO position which has helpfully allowed the post-holders to concentrate on their respective areas of business.

1.6 The Allegation Management Coordinator role has been consistently staffed over the past year with one permanent part time member of staff and a staff member from the temporary staff register. The coordinator role is presently under review to ensure we are maximising the use of this limited resource. We are also advertising to recruit to the post to secure this through permanent appointment. The role performed includes taking calls and referrals, data recording, coordinating meetings and archiving of data. With there being one full time post arrangements need to be developed to ensure appropriate cover is provided to the team in times of leave and sickness.

1.7 As a result of improvement activity within the team and the commitment of the staff to the quality of current data and the resolution of recording issues considerable progress has been made from last year. There remains room for improvement and we are confident that the Allegation Management team can continue to develop with a clear ambition for excellence.

1.8 I would like to pay tribute to the staff that have supported the LADO over the past twelve months for their commitment and hard work that has helped to develop this team and the allegation management practice within the county.

## **2. Allegations Management – Process**

2.1 S.11 of the Children's Act, Working Together 2018, and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2020 direct partners in their safeguarding duties to children. This includes maintaining effective inter agency procedures for dealing with allegations against people who work with children, and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of those procedures. The team employ the South West Policy and Procedures for Allegations Management in line with Allegations Management teams across the South West.

2.2 The current LADO completed a review of the role and processes in place in 2018 and along with the Ofsted feedback from their seventh monitoring visit (September 2019) which have resulted in a number of recommendations and improvements. Data accuracy is improving and is now better able to reflect actual volumes of work, inform performance

improvements, and offer thematic learning. Timeliness measures have also improved along with case recording.

### **3. Review of National LADO Activity**

3.1 The National LADO Conference has not taken place this year due to COVID-19 but virtual meetings are being arranged to ensure all LADOs remain updated with national developments. The National LADO lead is the Croydon LADO at this time who promotes key issues with other organisation including the Department of Education (DfE).

3.2 One of the ongoing priorities is for the National LADO Network (NLN) principles to be agreed by the DfE and included in the guidance document Keeping Children Safe in Education. This would allow the principles used by LADO's to be included within statutory guidance. Other areas of work being developed nationally are agency relationships including with the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) and Police teams, training for the role of LADO and the implementation of national standards for Unregistered Accommodation. Gloucestershire LADO sits on a national sub group to improve relationships with the DBS.

3.3 The revised version of Keeping Children Safe in Education is due to be released in the autumn of 2021. This document includes an additional section of low level concerns and schools being able to manage these internally. Given the breadth and room for interpretation around this section it will need monitoring to ensure important safeguarding information is shared with the LADO.

### **4. Review of Regional LADO Activity**

4.1 The Regional South West LADO group is now chaired by the LADO from North Somerset. Regionally, there are 13 Local Authorities represented on the group which has been running since 2007 and meeting quarterly. The LADO's are kept up to date with national and regional developments, and supported in aligning good practices. This year the group has concentrated on Peer Reviews (starting over the summer), standardising practice through leaflets for adults subject to AM, children identified and the evaluation of the service. The group are also discussing the development of a regional South West website which links into the national one. The South West group has been instrumental in supporting the development of Gloucestershire's processes and continuing improvement.

### **5. Review of LADO activity within the county**

5.1 The pathway for Allegations Management naturally prioritises criminal investigations, safeguarding responses (where a child has suffered or is likely to suffer from significant harm), and safe employment practices. It is however broader than this in the consideration of allegations indicating that someone working with children may 'pose a risk of harm' to them. The LADO is therefore often spanning decisions that involve 'beyond reasonable doubt' through to 'balance of probabilities'.

5.2 Allegations Management meetings consider all aspects from a multi-agency perspective and involve the person's employer or volunteer lead, police, social care and an employer's relevant human resources advisor. Each step of the process is coordinated by the LADO who also coordinates the actions of the involved agencies. This ensures a full picture is considered when assessing the risk posed by the person subject to the allegation.

5.3 One area of practice that is recognised to be a gap by the NLN relates to individuals who are not employed at the time of the allegations process. A number of instances of this have arisen in Gloucestershire, prompting the development of guidance on this matter for the team. We have shared this draft guidance within our national and regional networks to draw

on the thinking from other sites that equally acknowledge this as an area for development. Early indications are that our guidance could support the region with this practice and although not yet formally adopted it is good to see Gloucestershire promoting development at this level.

5.4 In addition to dealing with daily referrals the LADO chairs a safeguarding group within Gloucestershire's Muslim community. This group promotes safeguarding within other faith communities and meets regularly to plan events for professionals and the community as a whole throughout the year. Although the impact of COVID has prevented face to face events the group has continued to meet regularly and maintain safeguarding awareness training with Muslim committee members and senior members of the local Mosques and Madrassahs. The current work has been to share COVID guidance to all local settings and with the support of the safeguarding partnership and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner look to develop a community safeguarding role for volunteers. This includes them being given additional training to recognise safeguarding matters and refer to the statutory agencies in line with the County's processes. This role will also allow the safeguarding partnership to channel safeguarding information through to the wider community. Currently we have a number of volunteers identified and an introductory meeting will be held, COVID permitting, before safeguarding awareness training is delivered.

5.5 In addition to the above, awareness training has been provided to a number of organisations within the county including independent fostering agencies, care home providers and taxi drivers. With the additional LADO capacity and with support from the safeguarding partnership an awareness campaign is planned, post COVID for all relevant agencies within the county proactively identifying organisations that may benefit from receiving an awareness session.

5.6 In their 7<sup>th</sup> monitoring visit in September 2019, Ofsted reviewed the allegation management process within the county and highlighted the following areas for improvement:

- a) the case management system and the quality of case recording
- b) the timeliness of progressing cases which can impact on effective information sharing, and coordinated multiagency planning and response
- c) the inclusion of timescales within action plans following meetings
- d) the need for performance information about awareness-raising activity and evidence of impact
- e) availability of outcomes for individuals

5.7 Some of these areas had been acknowledged prior to the monitoring visit and were being improved nevertheless, the observations of Ofsted have been prioritised and the team have worked tirelessly to improve these areas. An electronic case recording system was jointly developed with a software provider, but due to a breakdown in this it has been discontinued. Throughout the development of this system we were maintaining a contingency database which had been refined in line with the Ofsted feedback. This system has been further developed and implemented with marked improvements in the fields highlighted by Ofsted. We are currently reviewing the viability of an alternative electronic recording system. Planning actions and reviews routinely now have timescales and are tracked by the LADO in line with the timescales suggested. The performance information presented below indicates progression on the points of timeliness and outcomes but more remains needed to raise this performance. The need for archiving historical paper records has been a sizeable task against which good progress has been made together with GCC's Information Management Service. This work, however, requires onsite activity which has been notably disrupted by the COVID restrictions. This work will be resumed in line with a return to face to face working within the Council. The team together with wider Local Authority record management improvements now have a paperless system with all records stored electronically.

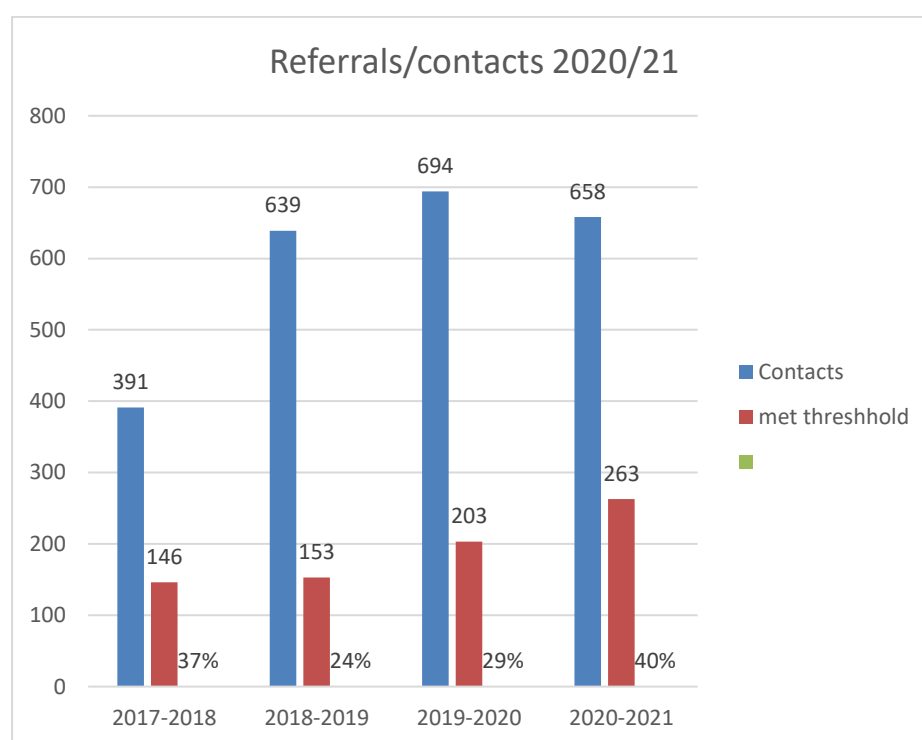
## 6. Allegations management performance information April 2020 to March 2021

6.1 In the last three years, volumes of activity in the team have risen significantly. This had partially impacted on the team's performance and quality as noted in the Ofsted visit before the additional LADO capacity had been recruited. The additional resource and support from a senior administrator together with a review of practices will ensure referrals are managed in a timely manner, up to date recording will be available and standards will not be affected when there are periods of absence. The additional part time LADO will hopefully help develop awareness sessions to organisations across Gloucestershire.

6.2 **Referrals/Contacts:** As per **Figure 1** below, for 2020/21, the total number of contacts and referrals was **658** which is a slight decrease of **36** (5%) from 2019/20 but **267** (41%) more than in 2017/18.

6.3 **263** referrals (**40%** of all contacts and referrals) were assessed as meeting the threshold for allegations management which is an increase of **11%** on last year's total and an indication that the quality of referral is improving. Each referral (complexity varies with each case) requires initial screening, arranging a meeting, regular reviews by a LADO and progression until a suitable conclusion can be agreed. Ongoing advice and referrals that do not meet threshold also need to be progressed.

**Figure 1 – Referrals/contacts**



**Table 1 – Outcomes of contact 2020/21**

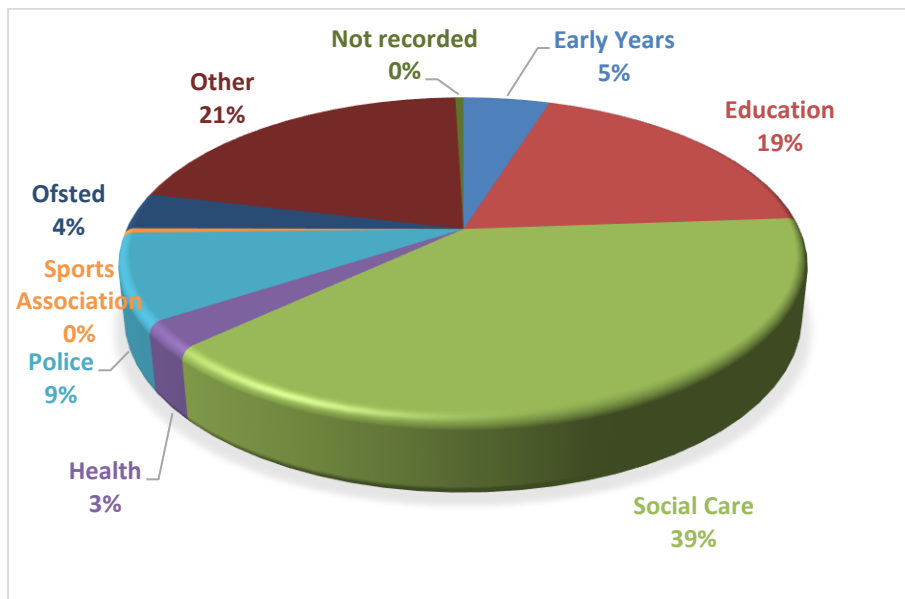
Contact Outcome	Actuals	%ages
Contact - Consultation pre referral - criteria not met	15	2%
Contact - Advice provided	67	10%
Contact - DBS Query	0	0%
Contact - Ofsted Concern	14	2%
<b>Contacts sub-total</b>	96	15%
Referral - to Adult Safeguarding	8	1%
Referral - to other Authority LADO	29	4%
Referral - criteria met threshold	214	33%
Referral - criteria met threshold - no meeting, investigation complete	49	7%
Referral - criteria not met	243	37%
Referral - to Children's Services	3	0%
Referral - insufficient evidence to proceed	1	0%
Referral - to Police	2	0%
Referral - Complex Allegations Meeting	1	0%
not recorded	12	2%
<b>Referrals subtotal</b>	562	85%
<b>Total</b>	658	

6.4 Based on **Table 1** above, contacts accounted for 15% with most of these requiring advice from the LADO. Referrals accounted for 85% of the activity. 40% of all contacts and referrals met the threshold for strategy, 7% met threshold but no meeting was required, and 37% did not meet threshold. There is a 20% reduction in referrals submitted not meeting the threshold which again suggests that the quality of referral has improved significantly.

**Table 2 – Contacts by agency**

Referring Agency Type Overall Figures	Total	
Early Years	32	5%
Education	125	19%
Social Care	258	39%
Health	18	3%
Police	58	9%
Sports Association	3	0%
Ofsted	24	4%
Other	137	21%
Not recorded	3	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>658</b>	

**Figure 2 – Referrals by agency as percentages**



6.5 As per **Figure 2**, the majority of referrals come from Social Care (39%) and Educational establishments (19%). Those subject to allegations are predominantly employed by Education (33%) and Social Care (17%); see **Figure 3** below. This is consistent with patterns in the last three years.

6.6 Referrals from social care and education are further differentiated as follows:

**Table 2 – Categories of referrals from social care**

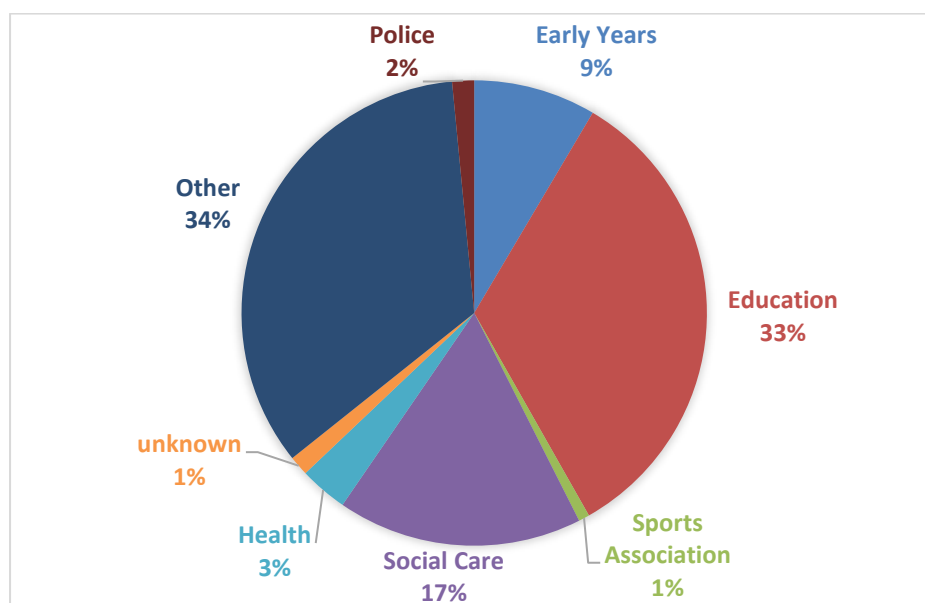
Category	Actuals	%age
Care Home	20	8%
Children's Services	170	66%
Charities (e.g. NSPCC)	0	0%
Fostering	22	9%
MASH	35	14%
Other	6	2%
Supported Accommodation	3	1%
Social Care - Youth Support Team	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>258</b>	

**Table 3 – Categories of referrals from education**

Referring Agency EDUCATION - Individual Categories	Actuals	%age
Education - Alternative Provision	5	4%
Education - Higher	5	4%
Education – Other (e.g. Madrassah, supply agencies)	4	3%
Education - primary	58	46%
Education - Secondary	27	22%
Education - Special	17	14%
Education- independent	9	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	



**Figure 3 – Employment of the subject of the allegation**



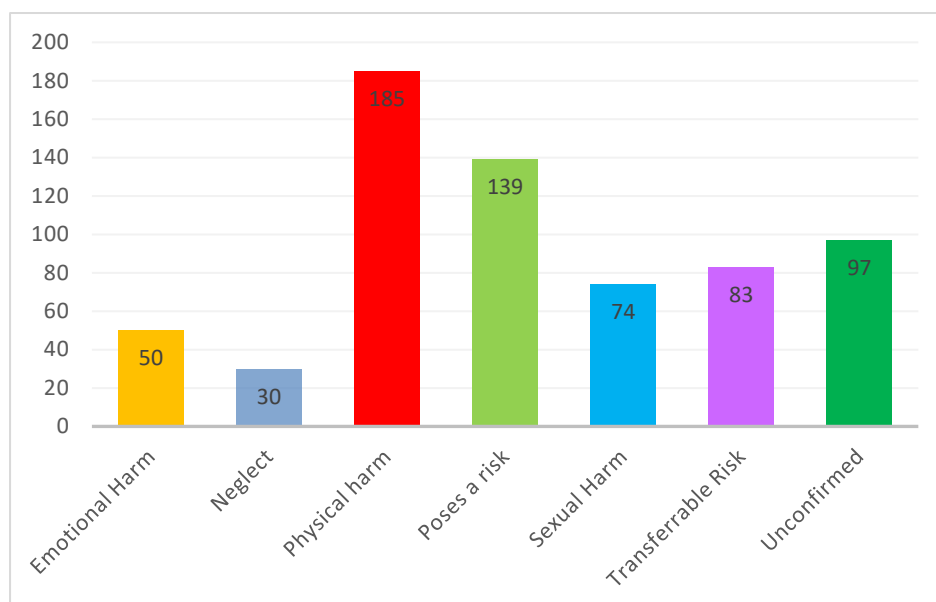
Employment of the subject of the allegation	Actuals	%age
Early Years	56	9%
Education	219	33%
Sports Association	5	1%
Social Care	112	17%
Health	22	3%
unknown	9	1%
Other	225	34%
Police	10	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>658</b>	

6.7 In relation to the above, most of the referrals relate to education 33%, social care 17% which include fostering followed by care homes. The percentage regarding Health and Police may indicate under reporting of allegations, awareness of the allegation management process or disproportionate safeguarding concerns amongst staff within Education and Social Care.

## Categories of Abuse

6.8 As per **Figure 4** below, the primary category of abuse in contacts and referrals was physical harm (28%) followed by the individual posing a risk (21%), and Transferrable risk (13%).

**Figure 4 – categories of abuse as percentages**



6.9 In 2020/2021 Physical Harm was the primary category (30%) with the second most contacts having the category of harm as posing a risk (21%) and Neglect/Sexual Harm sharing the same rate (13%).

## 7. Themes arising

### Quality of Referrals

7.1 This year's figures show an increase in the quality of the referrals to the LADO. Some of this is due to the consultation advice given, some due to awareness training. This improving quality reduces the LADO having to undertake unnecessary work on referrals and information being submitted.

### Transferrable Risk

7.2 Contacts and referrals that have met the threshold have risen over the past year detailing where professionals' personal circumstances potentially impacting on risk to children in their professional role. These transferrable risk cases are complex and require sensitive action plans being developed to support these individuals and effectively manage risk. This risk can also be challenging to identify a type of abuse category. The additional criteria of suitability may have contributed to this increase and with no national guidance to interpret this criterion the team will need to monitor this theme.

## Allegation Management Awareness

7.3 Throughout the COVID lockdown there have been a number of examples where organisations have not understood the role of the LADO the Allegation Management process and in particular how to internally investigate and present their findings within the Allegation Management process. Some examples include early year settings, manager-less organisations and some private organisations that work with young people. The team acknowledge that for some services this may be the first time they have navigated this process and support and guidance has been given in these cases. It is also recognised that some larger agencies within the county may not refer as many cases as one would expect. For these reasons an awareness campaign has been agreed during this financial year.

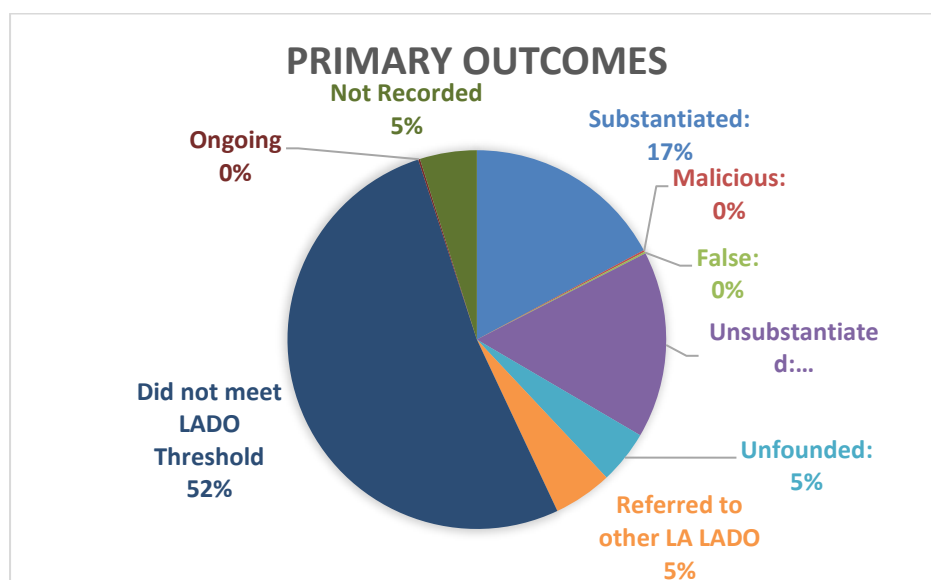
## 8 Outcomes

8.1 As outlined in KCSIE, the Allegations Management process allows for a number of possible Primary outcomes to be awarded to cases. These are:

- Unfounded
- Unsubstantiated
- Malicious
- False
- Substantiated/founded.

8.2 The Primary outcomes for the cases in 2010/21 are shown as percentages in **Figure 5** below.

**Figure 5 – Primary outcomes as percentages**



8.3 The data shown in figure 5 documents outcomes for all of the 658 contacts into the Allegation Management team. The 17% of substantiated outcomes needs to be compared against the 40% of referrals that reached the threshold for allegations management meaning of all the referrals where the threshold is met 42.5% were substantiated with 40% unsubstantiated.

8.4 As part of this process there are also a number of subsequent disposal actions (Secondary outcomes) which can be assigned by the LADO. These include (but are not limited to):

- Resignation
- Disciplinary
- Cessation of Use
- Dismissal
- Criminal Investigation
- Internal Investigation
- Training

8.5 Figure 6 demonstrates the recorded data submitted to the team regarding secondary outcomes. The chart shows 23% of cases that passed the threshold resulted in dismissal 16% other disciplinary outcome and 11% Resignation.

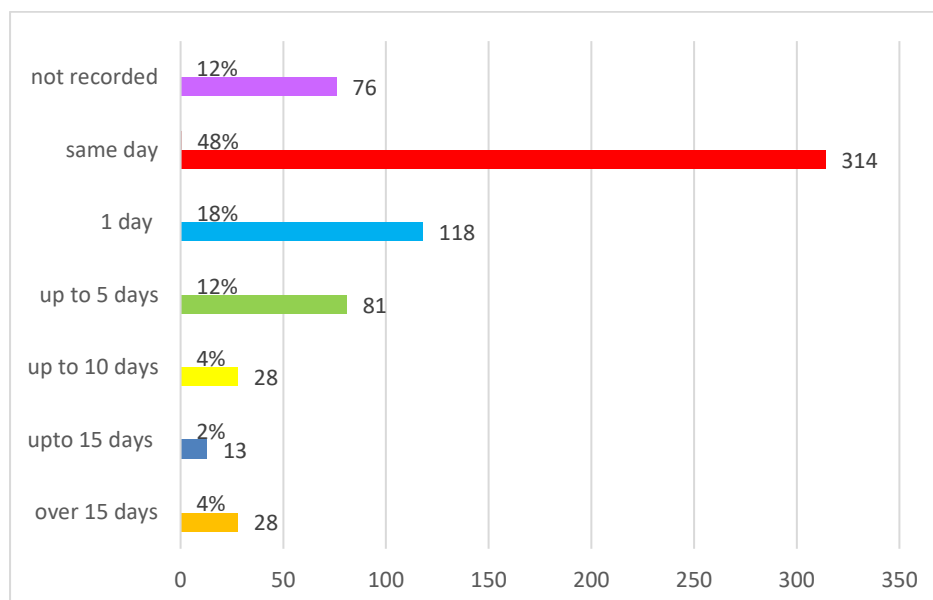
**Figure 6 – Secondary outcomes as percentages**

Secondary outcomes as percentages	Actuals	%age
Cessation of Use	6	5%
Criminal Investigation / Prosecution	8	7%
Deregistration	1	1%
Disciplinary	18	16%
Dismissal	25	23%
Informal Warning	2	2%
Internal Investigation	6	5%
Internal Review	2	2%
Management Advice	9	8%
No Further Action	4	4%
Resignation	12	11%
Risk assessment by Employer	6	5%
Training	6	5%
Warning / Retraining	5	5%

## 9 Timeliness measures

9.1 As a result of historical weaknesses in data availability and accuracy improvements have been made to capture this data but it is acknowledged that there is more work to be carried out to improve this area of data reporting. In total 263 cases, met the threshold.

**Figure 7 – Days between referral and decision**



9.2 From **Figure 7** which analyses all of the 658 contacts with the team it is evident that 314 cases (48%) were decided on on the same day as the referral, and a further 118 (18%) within 1 day. In total 78% were responded to within 5 days.

9.3 In terms of the days between the LADO decision on threshold and the first Allegations Management Meeting (AMM), **Figure 8** demonstrates that most of these were undertaken within 5 days, 89%. Some of the reasons for the meetings not being held within the 5 day target include annual leave for the LADO and the unavailability of other professionals (including disruption through school holidays with educational colleagues).

**Figure 8 – Days between decision and meeting: 1st April 2020 - 31st March 2021**

### Days between decision and meeting

Days between decision and meeting	Actuals	%age
under 5 days	173	89%
6 to 10 days	19	10%
over 10 days	3	2%
contacts that needed meetings	195	30%

The timeliness measures set out for LADO in KCSIE are:

- 80% of cases are resolved within one month
- 90% of cases are resolved within three months
- All but the most exceptional cases within 12 months.

of the 607 closures recorded to date	Actuals	%age	Target
1 month	448	68%	80%
3 months	91	82%	90%
12 months	68	92%	100%
still open	51	8%	
<b>Total</b>	658		

9.4 For the reporting period: 68% of cases were resolved in one month; 82% of cases were resolved within 3 months; and 92% of cases were resolved within 12 months. At the close of the reporting period 8% of the cases remained open. Of this 8% cases open as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, these primarily relate to ongoing criminal investigations and may be a reflection of the current criminal justice system post pandemic. The team will be looking at monthly data and meeting quarterly to review the timeliness data. In addition LADO's will focus on their monthly reviews to progress cases in a timely manner. If themes are identified these will be share with the organisations and the wider Safeguarding Partnership.

## 10 Review of open cases

10.1 During this reporting period, the team have continued to review open files to ensure they are progressed in a timely manner. As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 there were 66 open cases within the team.

- 39 in progress cases (59%) relate to ongoing police investigations. (oldest entry 16/8/2019)
- 20 in progress cases (30%) relate to ongoing Internal Investigations. (oldest entry 23/10/19)
- 7 in progress cases (11%) relate to awaiting information before a LADO decision can be made.

10.2 Themes Identified that affect the timescales that AM team are measured on;

- 1- Police Investigations, both the investigation itself, CPS decision and court outcome
- 2- Fostering Internal Investigations/Standards of Care investigations/panel decisions
- 3- Delay in further information being received after initial LADO advice
- 4- A number of referrals where the setting not confident in undertaking Internal Investigation

10.3 COVID-19 has hindered this process of late introducing delays to responses from external agencies that are needed to progress these files. Another barrier to this exercise has been where the subject of the Allegation Management process is no longer employed and there are no obvious routes of contact; or worse, the closure of a setting makes finding relevant contacts very difficult. In addition some of the older records are paper-based and it is these that were identified as problematic by Ofsted. The paper records prove slower to work with than digital formats, but as noted above this backlog is now largely resolved. but

as noted above this backlog is now largely resolved. Another issue has been the complexity and length of some investigations, including those in the criminal justice system.

## **11 Complaints**

During this financial year the Allegation Management team has received two ongoing complaints one relating to the LADO decision and role in a safeguarding concern and one regarding the LADO decision to progress through Allegations Management.

## **12 Summary of key issues**

12.1 This past year has been very busy due to the volume and complexities of incoming work as well as the challenges of working through the COVID pandemic. The team should be congratulated on the way they have risen to the challenges in such a professional manner and maintained this important service throughout. As can be seen in the performance figures, the data captured is an improvement on previous figures but further improvements are a focus for the team.

12.2 I am confident with the additional part time LADO and appropriate administrative capacity that the performance, quality and reach of the team will continue to improve, making this an efficient and effective team within the local authority.

## **13 Priorities for LADO 2021-2022**

1. Continue to improve the quality of data relating to the Allegation Management process. This includes progressing new case management software.
2. Quarterly performance meetings to promote timeliness and ensure all cases are subject to regular review.
3. Continue with a programme of awareness training for professional organisations.
4. Continue to work with faith groups in the county to ensure a consistent safeguarding message is shared.
5. Implement a Quality Assurance process for allegations management to include an evaluation process to measure the impact of this service.
6. Develop an approach that places the child(ren) at the forefront of the AM approach in Gloucestershire.
7. Align the LADO contribution on safer recruitment with the GSCP offer.