



# **Managing Allegations against Adults who work with Children in Croydon**

**(Maintaining safe Organisations in Croydon)**

**The annual report of the Local Authority Designated  
Officer (LADO)**

**April 2018 to March 2019**

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## **1. Executive Summary**

### **How much have we done?**

The LADO Service dealt with 673 contacts during 2018/19. Overall this represented a 3% reduction in consultations to the LADO service from the previous year.

Early Years, Education and Fostering agencies continue to be the top referrers, with Education settings accounting for 46%.

Of the investigations undertaken 49% were substantiated.

The service undertook 11 School safeguarding inspections.

### **How well have we done this?**

94% Investigations were completed within 6 months.

### **What difference has it made?**

16 people were referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service or a professional body as presenting a risk to children.

## **2. Introduction**

This report is written to provide an overview for the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board of the activity of the Designated Officer (LADO) over the period April 2018- March 2019 in managing allegations against people who work with children and are therefore in a position of trust.

All organisations and agencies working with children and families are required to have clear policies and procedures in place that differentiate between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or a complaint. This requirement is expected of voluntary agencies, such as sports clubs and associations, as well as professional and statutory agencies and providers such as schools, social work agencies and health organisations.

The Designated Officer should be notified of any allegations within 24 hrs by employers and voluntary organisations and ensure that all allegations are dealt with as quickly as possible in a consistent, thorough and fair process. The Designated Officers in Croydon ensure a consistent approach through the [London Child Protection Procedures and Practice Guidance](#).

Within Croydon, the LADO Service works closely with educational colleagues and provides support and advice to educational designated safeguarding leads as outlined within Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018.

The following report sets out the key findings of LADO activity analysing data collated during this time and drawing upon anonymised case examples to provide insight in to the complexity and sensitivity of the work.

### **3. The Role of the LADO**

Working Together<sup>1</sup> states that organisations and agencies working with children and families should have clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. Such policies should make a clear distinction between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice or a complaint. An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Behaved in a way towards a child that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children

In addition, the London Child Protection Procedures<sup>2</sup>, revised in 2018, add the following:

- Has behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns. These concerns do not have to directly relate to a child.
- As a parent or carer, has become subject to child protection procedures;
- Is closely associated with someone in their personal lives (e.g. partner, member of the family or other household member) who may present a risk of harm to child/ren for whom the member of staff is responsible in their employment/volunteering.

The Designated Officer (LADO) is responsible for:

- Identifying the level of concern, this may be explored through an Evaluation Meeting where there is disagreement.
- Providing advice, information and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations around allegations and concerns regarding paid and unpaid workers.
- Managing and overseeing individual cases from all partner agencies.
- Ensuring the child's voice is heard and that they are safeguarded.
- Ensuring there is a consistent, fair and thorough process for all adults working with children and young people against whom an allegation is made.
- Monitoring the progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with as quickly as possible.
- Recommending a referral and chairing the strategy meeting in cases where the allegation requires investigation by police and/or social care.

### **4. Service Structure:**

Croydon LADO service is staffed by two key personnel. The Senior Local Authority Designated Officer and a Local Authority Designated Officer. The Senior LADO is responsible for the provision of the service and has dedicated hours to fulfil this task. The LADO is a full time post dedicated to this role. Both personnel are qualified social workers registered with the HCPC.

The Head of Service for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance oversees the service providing supervisory support and regular oversight of performance and cases. The title 'LADO' has been retained in order to provide consistency and familiarity of the role across London and with partner agencies.

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<sup>1</sup>Working Together to Protect Children Para 4. Page 57

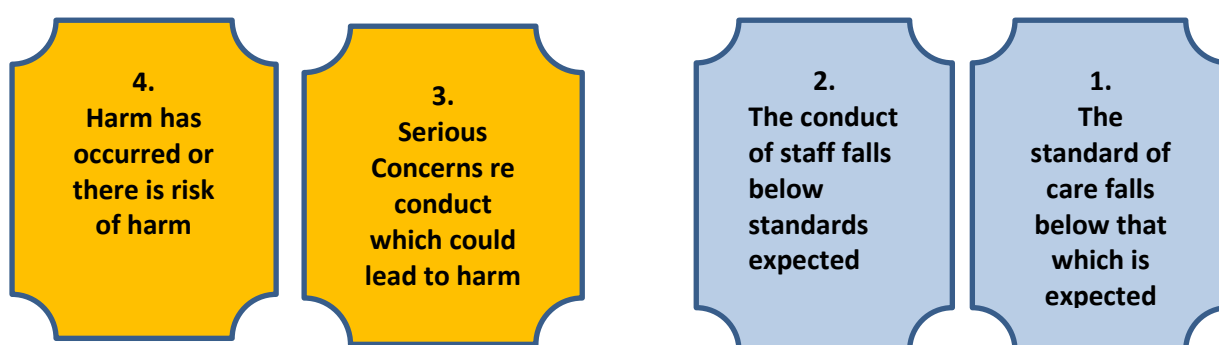
<sup>2</sup> The London Child Protection procedures Chapter 7 para 7.2.3.

## 5. Activity and Performance Data

This section presents and analyses performance information drawn from the LADO data base and the Children's Recording System (CRS). Work within the LADO service is measured in three main categories

- Consultations, where contact is made with the LADO
- Referrals, where an allegation/concern requires further involvement due to concerns regarding a person's suitability to work with children.
- Investigations lead and overseen by the LADO. These investigations are conducted either by police where cases reach a possible criminal threshold, by the employer, or by the regulatory organisation, such as Ofsted.

In all circumstances the LADO considers concerns against four levels as set out below



Where levels one and two are identified, the LADO will record an allegation and oversee such investigations are necessary. Where a matter is considered to fall within levels 3 and 4, the LADO will provide advice and guidance as to how best to proceed.

In addition, the data held by the LADO also provides information as to the origin of referrals, the area of work in which allegations are made, types of concerns and outcomes. This allows the LADO service to identify trends and patterns, areas for development, and potential stress areas.

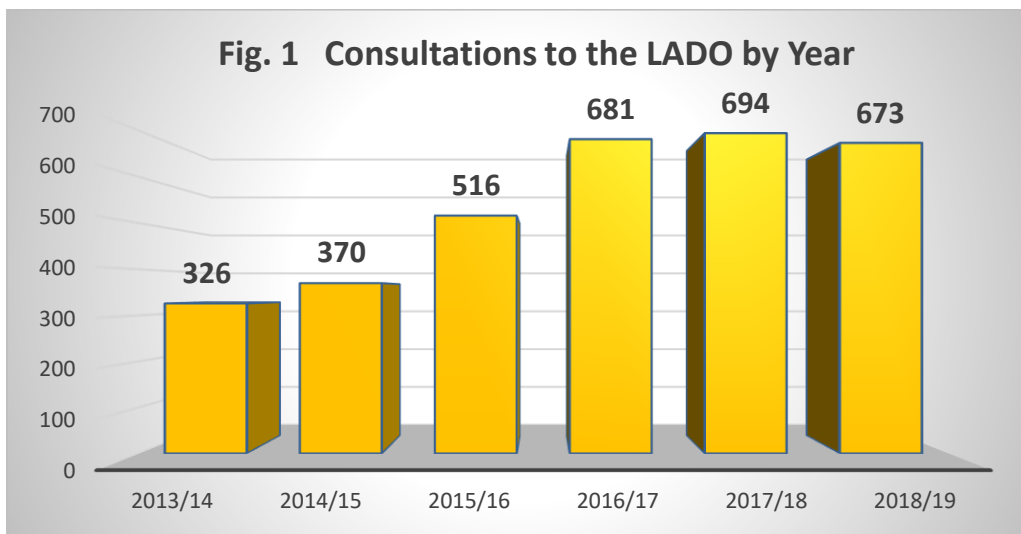
Managing allegations Strategy meetings and Evaluation Meetings are carried out as indicated in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013, 2015 and 2018. and the Department of Education Statutory Guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018. The London Child Protection Procedures also guide LADO practice.

The meetings draw together and co-ordinate three strands of enquiries through:

- The police in relation to possible criminal matters.
- Social care in relation to the needs of any child or young person.
- The employer in relation to disciplinary and employment matters, including support to the adult about whom the allegations have been made.

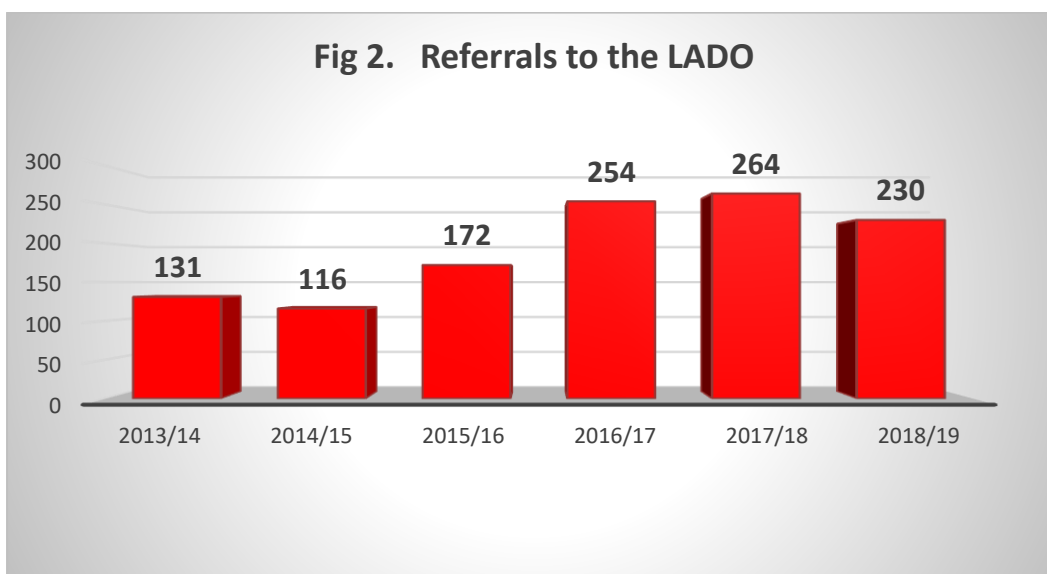
## A. Consultations and Referrals

Figure 1 shows the levels of contacts with the LADO in Croydon over the last six years.



The numbers of consultations that meet the threshold for LADO intervention, (Tiers 3 and 4) sits at 34%. This compares with other London Boroughs where the conversion rate is between 25 and 40%<sup>3</sup>. Croydon has a high level of Nursery provision and Independent Fostering placements within the Borough which account for a relatively high level of activity compared to other Boroughs.

Figure 2 shows a similar year on year average over the last three years of 250 referrals per year. The significant increase in consultations and referrals in 2016/17 has been followed by a stabilising of numbers over the last three years.

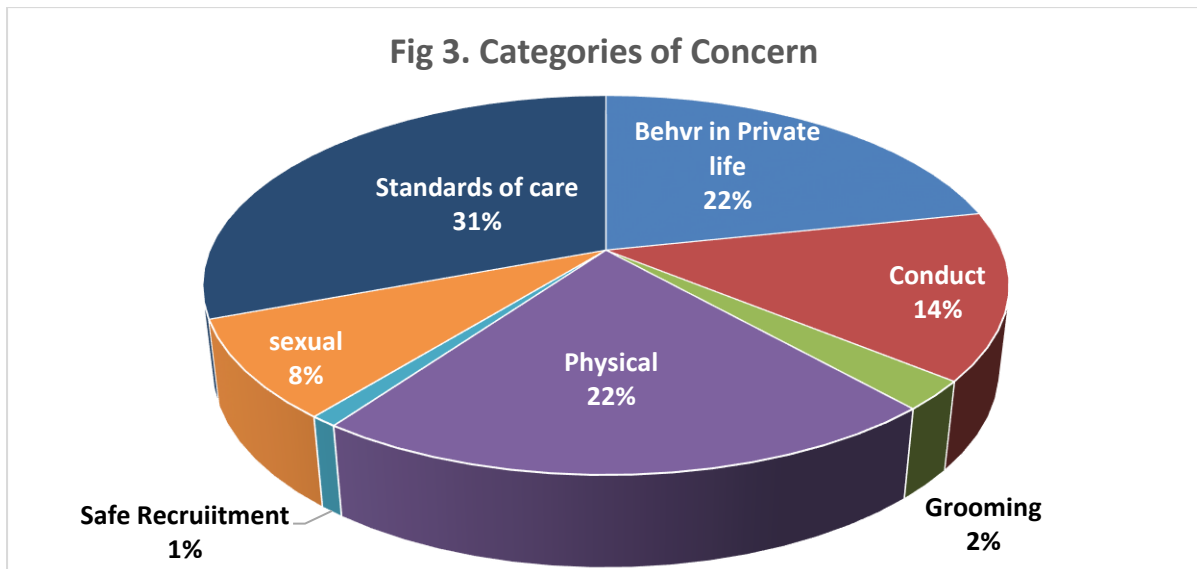


<sup>3</sup> Comparison work collected for the London LADO Network January 2019.

## B. Categories of Concern

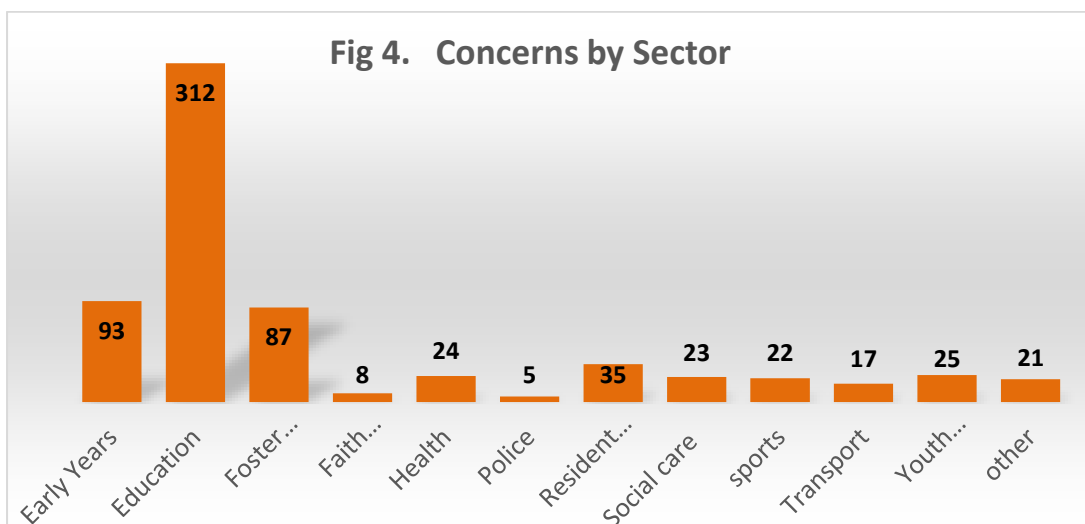
At the point of contact with the LADO the cause for concern is recorded. Figure 3 below sets out the categories as percentages of the total contacts.

Standards of care remains the largest area of concern at 31% of the total, with allegations of physical abuse and behaviour in personal life providing the second highest reasons for contact.



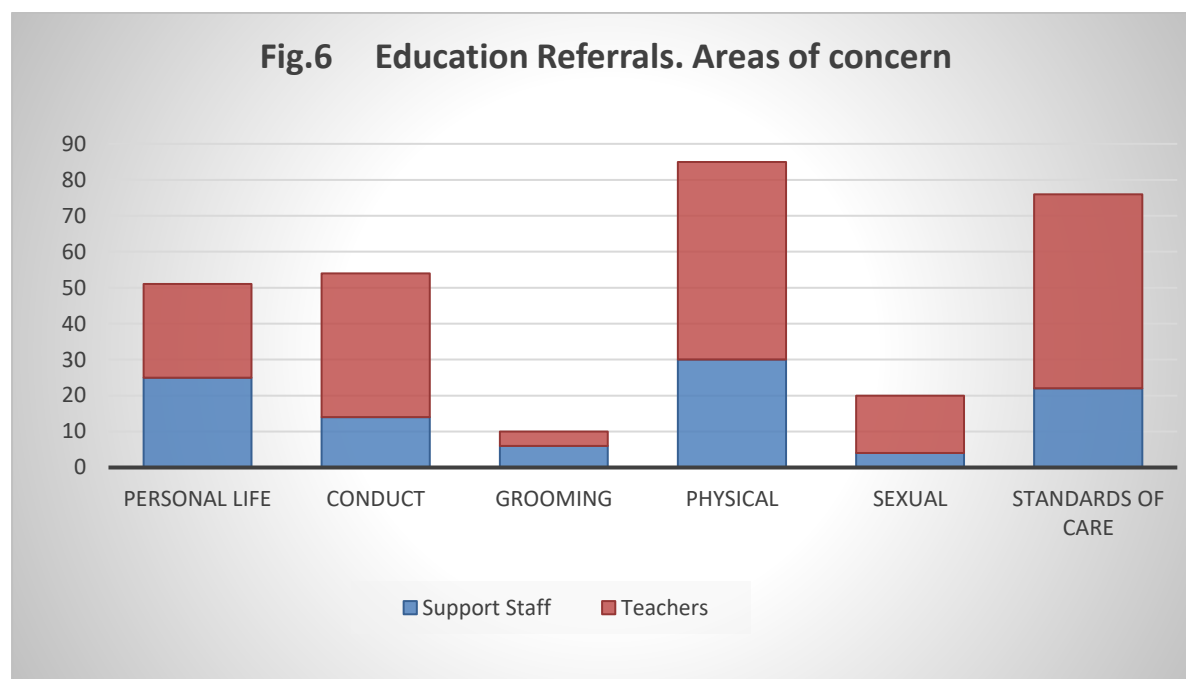
## C. Referrals by Sector

Fig 4 shows that the highest numbers of concerns refer to staff working in schools. This sector makes up the highest proportion of the children's workforce and comes into contact with almost all children in Croydon over the age of 5 years. This sector accounts for 46% of the LADO Service's total workload.



## D. Education Consultations

A further analysis of the Education referrals is provided below. Within this sector, a significant proportion of concerns relate to physical interventions. Many of these relate to allegations that pupils have been pushed, grabbed or pulled by staff.



There continues to be an increase in consultations relating to behaviour in personal life and this includes arrests for concerning behaviour (e.g. downloading of indecent images of children) and allegations of domestic violence.

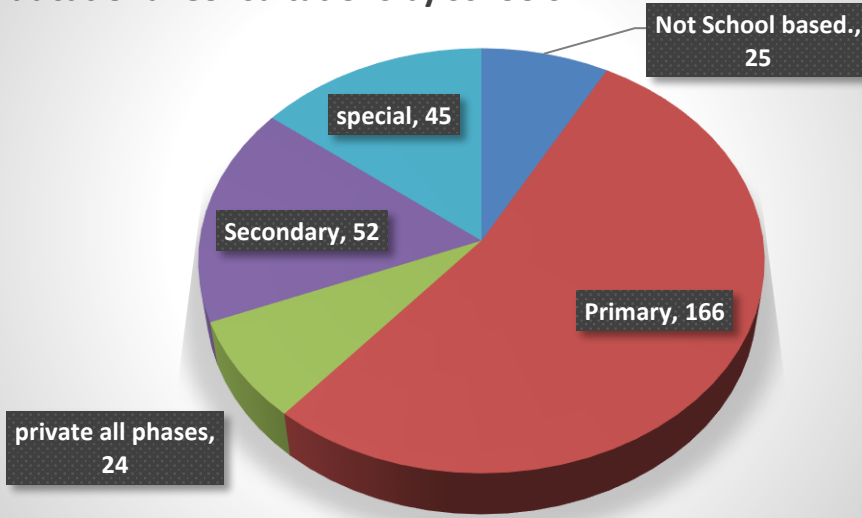
Following a number of years of engagement with Croydon schools, the LADO is well established as a source of consultation and support where matters of staff conduct and behaviour are of concern and this is reflected in the positive feedback received from school heads. Moreover, performance data indicates that this reach is across the schools in Croydon and includes schools at all phases, academies, special schools and schools from within the independent sector. The LADO has undertaken awareness raising over the last 2 years with the Independent Schools Sector and the figures above include consultations with 9 out of the 12 schools based within Croydon.

Primary Schools account for 53% of all school referrals. An increasing issue is the use of restraint of pupils to avoid harm to themselves or others. Keeping Children Safe in Education<sup>4</sup> allows for school staff to use appropriate force to restrain pupils and can cause injuries to the child. The test which needs to be applied relates to proportionality and degree. In these circumstances the LADO provides Schools with external scrutiny to ensure such reviews and investigations are transparent and thorough.

<sup>4</sup> Keeping Children Safe in Education. Sept 2018



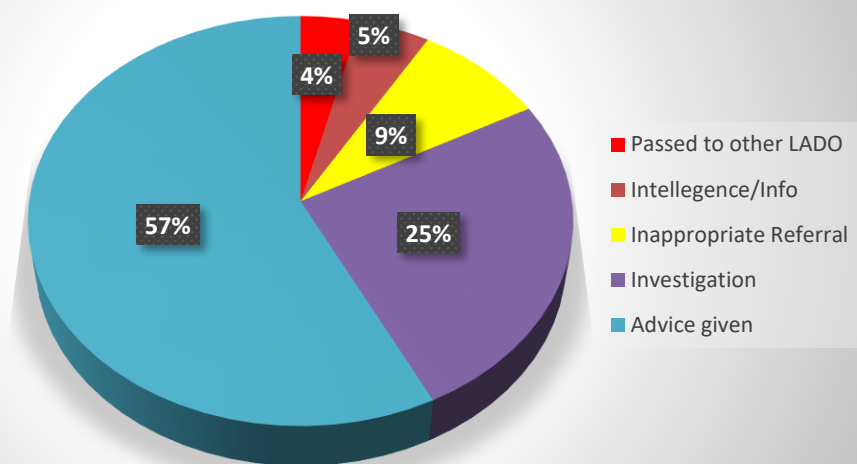
**Fig. 7 Educational Consultations by schools**



**E. Outcomes for all Consultations.**

The chart below (Fig 8) illustrates that 25% of consultations lead to investigations overseen by the LADO. Of all consultations, over half did not meet the threshold for a referral and investigation. Advice and guidance was given to employers as to how to best manage the concern/complaint. Of all the consultations 9% were considered to be inappropriate matters for the LADO to pursue. These included concerns raised directly by parents which were primarily complaints about school processes/decisions, or safeguarding referrals by schools which should have been referred to the Single Point of Contact and did not involve an adult in a position of trust. In all cases the LADO ensures that appropriate action is taken.

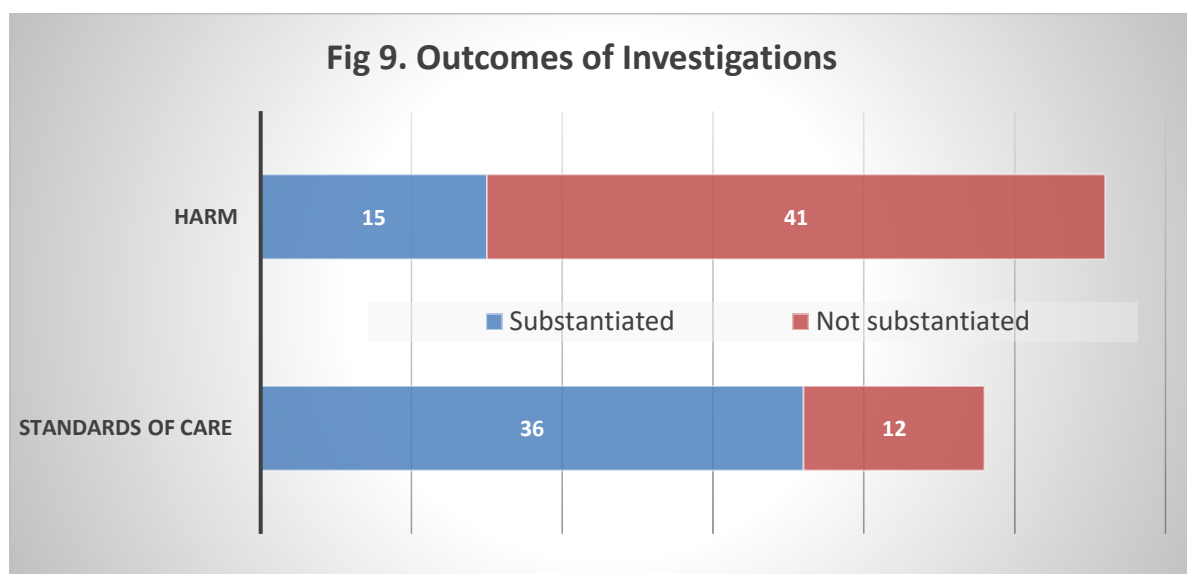
**Fig 8. Outcomes of LADO Consultations**



## F. Outcomes of Investigations managed by the LADO

Where Investigations reach a conclusion, all cases receive an explicit and definitive outcome as set out in Working Together<sup>5</sup>. As mentioned earlier, allegations monitored by the LADO are considered using two thresholds of concern, where harm or the risk of harm is evident, or where there are significant concerns regarding standards of care.

Fig 9 illustrates that where an outcome has been reached 75% of standards of care concerns were substantiated whilst 25% of concerns regarding harm caused to children or young people were substantiated. These figures do not include the 32 cases still active at the end of the year.



Where allegations of harm have been substantiated, all 10 cases were referred by employers to the Disqualifying and Barring Service (DBS) as individuals who present a potential risk to children. Six were referred to Professional standards agencies such as the Teaching Standards Agency.

## G. Length of Investigations

The duration of investigations is impacted upon by a variety of issues. Police investigation and criminal prosecutions can take time and provide an additional complexity to some investigations. Investigations should be undertaken in the shortest time possible to ensure a fair and accurate outcome. Investigations impact upon everyone involved and place stress and anxiety upon both children and adults.

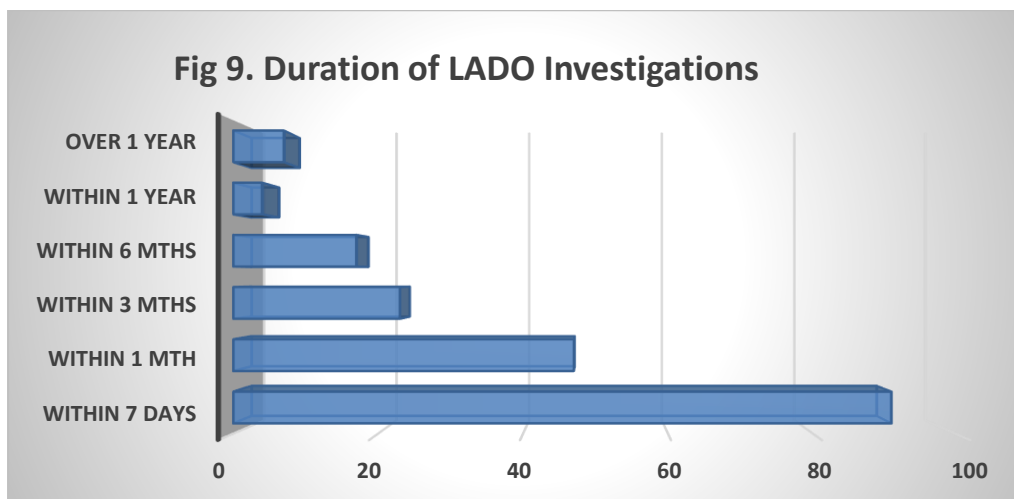


Figure 10 shows that 94% of investigations are completed within 6 months. This improvement on previous years is due to close monitoring of active allegations and ensuring that outcomes from employers are effectively tracked. In addition, recent changes in case law relating to disciplinary investigations has resulted in employers having the ability to conduct management investigations regarding staff conduct prior to the conclusion of criminal prosecutions.

## **6. Development of the LADO Service**

Over the last five years the LADO service in Croydon has widened its reach and increased awareness of the role. The service has expanded with a dedicated LADO and increased scrutiny of case progress and decision making is in place. The service raises awareness and provides advice through a number of forums:

### **A. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)**

MAPPA stands for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. It is the process through which the Police, Probation and Prison Services work together with other agencies to manage the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community in order to protect the public. The LADO attends these monthly meetings. In addition attendance at the meeting allows networking with fellow professionals in the Police Jigsaw Service and Probation service.

### **B. Safeguarding Visits to Schools**

Where complaints are made by staff, or parents to the Ofsted complaints hotline, these concerns are passed to Croydon's Head of Educational Standards and where there are safeguarding concerns to the LADO. These concerns can often relate to organisational issues rather than individuals. In order to support organisations to create safer cultures, the LADO supports the Head of Education Standards in conducting unannounced safeguarding inspections of schools. During 11 visits in 2017/18 these inspections highlighted issues regarding safeguarding recording, communication with parents, staff training, safe recruitment, and behaviour management. Schools report that they have found these to be a challenging and supportive experience.

## **7. Publicising the LADO Function**

The LADO role is publicised among Child care services in Croydon through:

### **A. Maintaining a presence.**

The LADO service attends the following regular meetings

- The Primary Phase Head Teachers Breakfast meetings
- School Designated safeguarding leads Network meetings.
- Education Sub Group of Croydon's Children's Safeguarding Board.
- Safeguarding Network Meetings for Early Years Group Settings
- Welcome meeting for NQTs in Schools each Sept re Safe behaviours
- Monthly Multi Agency Public protection arrangements meetings (MAPPA)

### **B. Training and Awareness Raising**

The LADO Service provides specific training and awareness raising where organisations request it, or where previous contact suggests a need. These sessions have the advantage of being tailored to the needs of the individual organisation or agency and can also reflect identified deficiencies in allegations management as well as wider safeguarding issues. These have included

- Training to 3 Independent Children's homes
- Dedicated sessions with 8 Primary Phase schools in Croydon
- Awareness raising sessions with two independent Fostering Agencies, meeting with groups of Foster Carers
- Training for Chairs of Governors of Primary and Secondary Phase schools
- Sessions regarding allegations management for Croydon foster carers

In addition the LADO has met with the Fostering Panel and provided an insight into the issues raised by a Serious Case Review specific to the Panel.

### **Business Support to the LADO service**

Since June 2019 dedicated business support has been provided to the LADO Service. This has meant that the service now has a central point of contact who is office based and able to respond immediately to telephone calls to the LADO service, identifying when the LADO and Senior LADO will be available to respond. It also means that all evaluation meetings will be minuted consistently by an experienced minute-taker, improving the quality and timeliness.

## **A. Relationships with social work Teams**

Of the 690 consultations received by the LADO service around 10% originated by teams from Croydon Children's Social care. This is in part due to work completed by the LADO Service with these teams which has included speaking at team and Service level meetings. In particular, with the development firstly of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), and more latterly, the Single Point of Contact (SPOC), the LADO Service has maintained strong links with these services to ensure that the LADO is involved at an early stage in referrals where concerns exist regarding adults working with children, be it on the basis of behaviour in personal life, transferable risk or allegations made directly to SPOC.

## **8. Wider LADO Networks**

### **A. The London LADO Group**

The Croydon LADO is an established member of the London LADO Group and is currently one of three coordinators of the group. The Group meets on a bi-monthly basis and shares practice, and case work experiences as well as reviewing interfaces and cooperation across boroughs, including identifying themes and emerging patterns. This offers significant opportunities to compare and benchmark thresholds and levels of intervention, draw on the experience of others, and consider alternative approaches. The group also meets regularly with members from the Disqualification and Barring Service, Police, Anglican and Catholic Dioceses Safeguarding Teams, and a variety of other stakeholders.

As part of our membership of the Group, Croydon have been involved in meetings between The Metropolitan Police's Department of Professional standards and the LADO Group across London in an attempt to increase awareness of the role of the LADO and how it can add value to disciplinary issues relating to police officers.

In 2019/20 the chairing role for the NLN rotates to London and the Croydon LADO has assumed the role of joint chair of the National group in tandem with the LADO from Kingston (Achieving for Children).

### **B. Peer Support**

The Croydon LADO has provided mentoring support to 2 new LADOs in London who were new into post with little previous experience in the role. This support has consisted of meetings to discuss and review processes and thresholds, access to Croydon procedural and process documents, telephone consultations and general support.

## **9. Actions for 2019/20**

The following area have been identified for the coming year

- Integrate secure recording system for LADO service in to Children's Social Care records.
- Obtain dedicated business support to improve service response to enquiries and referrals.
- Develop monthly induction workshops on role and function of the LADO to engage new staff and those who require support on referring to and using the LADO service
- Increase the percentage of cases resolved within 6 months.
- Improve awareness of LADO role and procedures through presentations of organisations and online information.
- Improve school awareness of appropriate use of restraint.
- Increased involvement in National LADO Network through joint chairing and organising of the National LADO Conference.