



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Cabinet
10 November 22021

<u>Item</u>
<u>Public</u>

REPORT OF THE CHILDREN'S LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICER (LADO) 2020-2021

**Responsible
Officer**

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1. Synopsis

This report provides an overview of the activity, data and performance of Shropshire's Local Authority Designated Officer from the 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. This report is for information and no decisions are required.

2. Executive Summary

"Local authorities should put in place arrangements to provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations and agencies on how to deal with allegations against people who work with children."

Working Together, 2018

The Local Authority is guided by legislation to provide a Local Authority Designated officer who reviews all allegations against professionals who work with children.

The 2020-2021 year has been exceptional due to the Coronavirus pandemic, which has resulted in a number of prolonged lockdowns across the country and regionally, meaning that a large number of organisations weren't operational during this period. For much of the year, most schools were only open for the children of keyworkers or those with specific needs, sports organisations were not running and many voluntary organisations, such as Scouting, could not open. Given the above, it would have been expected that the number of LADO referrals received during this period would have been considerably lower, however although there were 59 less referrals than the 2019/20 year, the difference is marginal (14%) and the figures aren't that dissimilar to previous years.

Other Key Findings include:

- The total amount of contacts during the year is 342 of which 43% did not progress beyond the initial contact stage
- 192 cases were progressed as referrals where some form of investigation was required.
- Just under 50% of all referrals related to allegations of physical abuse.
- Suitability has also remained consistent as the second most frequent reason for referral.
- Over half of the total number of referrals related to staff that work in children's homes
- the number of referrals involving the education sector has reduced considerably. This is most likely to be as a direct result of the fact that for almost 2 out of the 3 school terms in this period, the large majority of pupils were being educated at home.
- Foster carers are the next most frequent occupation resulting in referrals being made.
- Independent Childrens home still remain the most frequent referrers perhaps due to the large number present in Shropshire.
- Mainstream schools are the most frequently represented in education referrals involving teaching staff.
- 150 cases referred to the LADO did not progress beyond the initial contact.
- Of the 192 cases that progressed to an investigation, 46 cases were criminal matters investigated by the police.
- 145 cases resulted in investigations being undertaken by employers.

The full report is attached at Appendix 1.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Cabinet is requested to consider the information in this report and support the work of the Local Authority Designated Officer in fulfilling the Council's statutory and regulatory requirements.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults, Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community and other Consultation)

- 4.1. Risks to children continue to be managed through the LADO process.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. There is no additional information to be considered.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. The LADO will now be mainly working at home.

7. Background

- 7.1. None

8. Additional Information

- 8.1. None

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. No decision is required from Cabinet, but it is requested that the information is noted

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Kirstie Hurst-Knight

Local Member

All Members

Appendices

Appendix 1: LADO Annual Report 2020-2021