

Committee(s)	Dated:
Safeguarding Sub Committee	27/09/2017
Subject: Designated Officer Annual Report for 2016 to 2017	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Pat Dixon, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager	

Summary

This report summarises the work of the Designated Officer (DO), formally known as the Local Authorities Designated Officer (LADO) for 2016 to 2017. The role of the DO is set out in *Working together to safeguard children*, March 2015 and the *London Child Protection Procedures*, 5th edition, Chapter 7. All allegations made against staff (including volunteers) that call into question their suitability to work or be in a position of trust with children, whether made about events in their private or professional life, need to be formally reported to the DO.

The report identifies that there has been a reduction in referrals to the DO for 2016 to 2017; this in part has been due to more rigour in the application of thresholds. There is also some indication that the role of the DO is not fully understood by some professionals. Therefore, a recommendation from this annual report is to deliver more in-depth training on the management of professional allegations, using anonymised case scenarios from across London.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

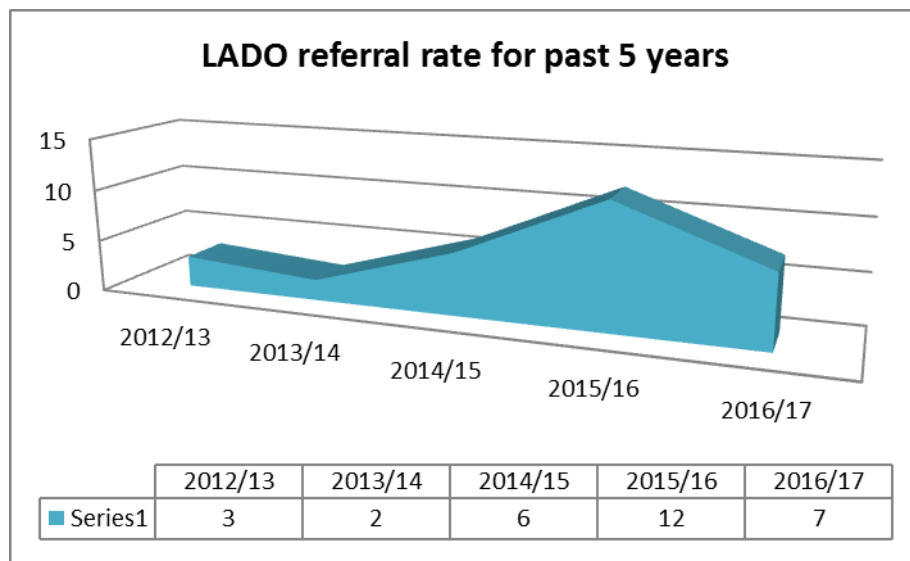
Main Report

Background

1. In the City of London, the DO work is carried out by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager. The current DO is a qualified social worker with a background in child protection investigation and experience of managing professional allegations for over 14 years. In 2016, the City of London Corporation was subject to the Ofsted “single inspection framework” of local authorities’ children’s services. In this inspection, the role of the DO was described as being effective in raising awareness about professional allegations, demonstrating a commitment to good practice in the management of professional allegations.
2. In 2016, peer audits were completed by the Hackney DO on City of London cases. The audits found that the City of London was adhering to thresholds and that decision making was grounded in research-based analysis. There was only one recommendation from the peer audits, which related to case recordings being on the electronic recording system. This has been slightly delayed due to changes in the recording system, as the City of London Corporation is moving from Frameworki to Mosaic. The new recording system has been configured to include the work of the DO in the future.

Current Position

3. There have been concerns in the past about the low referral rate to the DO in the City of London; in 2015 to 2016 there was a concerted effort to raise awareness of the role. This awareness campaign increased the number of referrals and awareness sessions were carried through into 2016 to 2017 as part of the staff induction programme. However, as can be seen from the graph below, there has been a significant reduction in referrals for 2016 to 2017.



4. In 2016 to 2017, seven referrals were made to the DO; however, of those seven referrals only one met the threshold for a professional allegation. There does appear to be a discernible reduction in the number of appropriate referrals that meet the threshold for the DO in comparison to previous years. This may in part be due to a more rigorous application of thresholds, as there appeared to be a lack of clarity between what constituted a referral to the DO and what was a general safeguarding enquiry.
5. There was also evidence that some agencies were sometimes unable to differentiate between when a referral needed to be made to the DO and when it should be dealt with by their own internal disciplinary procedures. Often the situations that were referred were related to complex human resource issues, rather than meeting the threshold for a professional allegation.
6. Although six referrals did not meet the threshold for the DO, one of the referrals resulted in learning, which is leading to improvements in safeguarding for children and young people in the City of London. A member of the public raised concerns that parents and carers were not always aware of the potential risks when hiring nannies and au pairs. When this area was researched, there appeared to be limited information for parents and carers on recruiting nannies and au pairs safely. This is now being redressed by information made available through the Family and Young People's Information Service.

Conclusion

7. Due to the decreased number of referrals and the lack of clarity in relation to thresholds, there is evidence that although professionals are aware of the role of the DO, they have a limited understanding of when to make a referral or the process involved. This has highlighted the need for more in-depth training on the thresholds and remits of professionals responsible for making referrals, to ensure that they understand the potential risks involved. This will hopefully give professionals the confidence to know when and how to make referrals to the DO.
8. In collaboration with the Metropolitan police, Hackney DO and the City of London police, a training package has been developed to support the in-depth training required. As part of this training, professionals will use anonymised case scenarios, which have been collated through the DO London network. These scenarios will support an understanding of the range of cases being dealt with by the DO and the potential outcomes.
9. The DO will deliver this training, which will be in addition to that offered by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board. Success will be measured through the number of referrals and contacts being made and whether or not they meet the threshold for a professional allegation.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – City of London Designated Officer (DO) Annual Report 2016-17

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