

# Cabinet

## 29 January 2026

### LADO Annual Report 24/25

### For Review and Consultation

**Cabinet Member:**

Cllr C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

**Local Councillor(s):**

**Senior Leadership Team:**

P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

**Report author and job title:** Megan Cameron-Brown, Head of Quality Assurance & Partnerships

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**Statutory Authority:**

**Report status:** Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

#### Executive summary

1. This report provides an overview of the activity, performance and developments of the Dorset Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) service between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. The LADO service is responsible for managing allegations against people who work or volunteer with children, ensuring that concerns are responded to swiftly, proportionately and in line with statutory guidance including *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)* and *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)*. Demand for the service has continued to rise, with 796 contacts this year—an increase from 656 in 2023–2024—reflecting strengthened professional awareness and improved understanding of safeguarding responsibilities across agencies. Of these contacts, 172 progressed to a referral (22%), with concerns most commonly relating to transferable risk (41%) and physical harm (32%). The proportion of substantiated allegations remains stable at 38%, and the service continues to meet key performance indicators, including holding 96% of Initial Evaluation Meetings within required timescales.

Referrals continue to come from a wide range of sectors, with education accounting for 37% of cases. Engagement with some sectors— notably sports

and faith groups—remains lower than expected, indicating areas for targeted mapping and training. Engagement from police colleagues is strong for cases involving the child abuse investigation teams or other offences against children specialist teams but requires improvement for allegations linked to transferable-risk offences. Foster carer allegations have reduced slightly, with robust joint work between LADO and fostering services ensuring appropriate learning and oversight.

The service has delivered a significant programme of multi-agency training, including tailored sessions to providers with repeated or complex safeguarding concerns. Key practice development includes enhanced collaboration with safeguarding advisors, strengthened regional LADO networks, and improved joint working with Ofsted for providers that Ofsted registers.

Priorities for 2025–2026 focus on continued workforce development, improving practice consistency, embedding audit and quality assurance processes, streamlining evaluation meetings, and continuing to strengthen multi-agency participation, particularly from police colleagues. Demand for LADO oversight continues to increase, and the service remains a critical statutory safeguarding function in ensuring that children in Dorset are protected from harm by those in positions of trust.

**2. Recommendation(s)**

2.1 No recommendations for cabinet.

**3. Reason for the recommendation(s)**

3.1 N/A.

### 3. The report

3.1 Please see appendix.

### 4. Alternative options considered

4.1 Not applicable.

### 5. Legal considerations

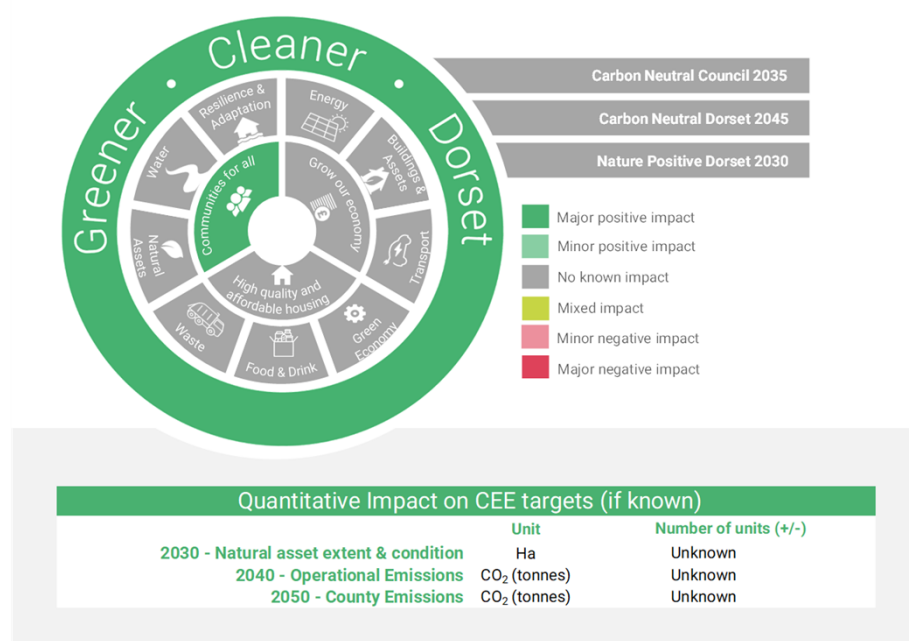
5.1 This is a statutory report. Work involving allegations against professionals and how we manage this can carry reputational risk. Any legal advice needed is sought from children's legal team as and when.

### 6. Financial implications

6.1 The LADO services is embedded within the children services budget.

### 7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

7.1



### 8. Well-being and health implications

8.1 The well-being and health of all children in Dorset is at the centre of the work undertaken by the Designated Officer, the child's voice and understanding of the impact of the staff and volunteers behaviour of said organisation is considered at every meeting. There is always consideration of the well-being of staff or volunteer being considered by the designated officer, and the support available to them is a standard consideration as part of the meeting

agenda. The wellbeing of the LADO's dealing with what can be complex allegations is managed via regular supervision and support from their service manager and head of service. Staff also have access to Dorset Council's wellbeing offer.

## 9. **Other implications**

9.1 None

## 10. **Risk implications**

10.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: None

Residual Risk: None

## 11. **Equalities**

11.1 The LADO service plays an essential role in promoting equality by ensuring safeguarding concerns are managed consistently across all sectors and professional groups working with children. Through its commitment to fair and proportionate investigation processes, the service helps protect both children and professionals, ensuring that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their background, role, or sector.

## 12. **Appendices**

12.1 Appendix 1: LADO Annual Report

## 13. **Background papers**

13.1 None

## 7 **Report sign-off**

11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)