

**Children, Families and Cultural Services
Safeguarding, Assurance and Improvement
Service**

Managing Allegations Service End of Year Report 2023/24.

Purpose of the report

1. This is an annual report written for the Safeguarding Assurance and Information Group and the lead member for Children and Young People. It provides an outline of the progress of, and the challenges faced by the Managing Allegations Service during the year April 2023 to March 2024.
2. I am Service Manager for the Managing Allegations Service and the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO). I have line management responsibility for the LADO Allegations Officers and the Team Manager of the Managing Allegations Team of Social Workers and strategic oversight of wider safeguarding concerns related to the children's workforce in Nottinghamshire.

Our Statutory Duties

The statutory duties of the LADO and the corresponding requirements on partner agencies are set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 (WT 2023).

3. Local Authorities are required to :
have 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 :
 - have a designated officer, or team of officers to be involved in the **management and oversight of allegations against people who work with children**. Any such officer, or team of officers, should be sufficiently qualified and experienced to be able to fulfil this role effectively, for example, qualified social workers;
 - have appropriate arrangements in place to liaise effectively with the police and other organisations and agencies to **monitor the progress of cases** and ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process;
 - ensure allegations against people who work with children are not dealt with in isolation and that actions are taken to **address the corresponding welfare concerns in relation to the child** or children involved in a co-ordinated manner and without delay.
4. Partner agencies are required to **have clear policies** in place to deal with allegations against people who work with children and arrangements to ensure that any **allegations** about those who work with children **are passed to the designated officer, or team of officers, without delay**. Such policies should make clear distinctions between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice and a complaint e.g. Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 for schools.

Governance

5. The Managing Allegations Service reports annually to the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) through the Safeguarding Assurance and Improvement Group. Allegations relating to Nottinghamshire Children in Care are reported directly to a cross-party group of Elected Members.
6. The LADO and LADO Allegation Officers attend a Regional LADO Meeting to share good practice, develop effective cross border communication and maintain a level of consistency in the work undertaken.
7. The new LADO Handbook is with Ofsted and DfE and will be sent out for consultation it is published.

Managing Allegations Service (MAS)

Scope of the work

8. The MAS addresses all allegations and concerns, contemporaneous and non-recent*, made against adults who work or volunteer with children in Nottinghamshire.

*Non-recent abuse refers to an allegation of neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse made by or on behalf of someone who is now 18 years or over, relating to an incident which took place when the complainant was under 18 years old.

9. The threshold for referring an allegation/concern, contemporaneous and non-recent, to LADO is set out in WT 2023 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023
 - Behaved in way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
 - Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
 - Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he may pose a risk of harm to children; or
 - Behaved or may behave in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.
10. There are three strands to the management of allegations against adults and volunteers who work with children :
 - Protection of children
 - Criminal investigation
 - Employment/disciplinary process

How we work

11. The Managing Allegations Service offers a comprehensive service to all professionals who work with children and young people, the service is well received and valued by those who have contact with it. Over the last four years there has been a consistent increase in demand particularly for the LADO Allegations Officers but through audit work we are confident that the referrals are appropriate and the work of the LADO Allegations Officers effective. (see paragraph 22).

12. The Managing Allegations Service aims to :
 - provide a proportionate response to concerns referred;
 - gain assurance that the child(ren) linked to the adult of concern are safeguarded;
 - gain assurance that a duty of care is offered to the adult of concern;
 - offer a fair process to the linked children and the adults of concern.
13. The Service works closely with Nottinghamshire and other Local Authorities, Police colleagues and employers and aims to progress referrals in a timely manner. In some situations, lengthy police investigations have resulted in processes continuing for longer than expected, this proves difficult for the child, the adult of concern and the employer and can result in strained relationships. While case by case discussions are routinely undertaken with police colleagues, further exploration through the Partnership may be beneficial.
14. In Nottinghamshire, and nationally, the linked child(ren) and adults of concern do not attend Managing Allegations meetings. The MAS process seeks to mitigate this by allocating a Social Worker both the adult of concern and the linked child(ren) as required. The Social Worker meets with the adult of concern, conveys their views to the meetings and keeps them informed; assessments are undertaken with children and their families should this be required.
15. The Managing Allegations Service is mindful of the impact of an allegation on professionals and volunteers working with children. The Service seeks to work respectfully and sensitively with these adults ensuring they are kept informed of the progress of the process and attempting to answer questions they may have. Of particular note is the Service's awareness of the emotional impact of having an allegation made and adults are helped to identify or are signposted to support services.
16. This is a complex and challenging area of work with the outcome of the process having a significant and potential long-term impact on the adult involved particularly when the allegations are unsubstantiated or unfounded. . The service has previously received a high number of complaints some of which have been complex and protracted. As a result, we have focused on improving practice to ensure the allegations are specific and evidence-based and decision making is clearly recorded. While this area will by nature continue to attract complaints, it is pleasing to note a reduction in complaints in the current period.
17. This year we held the first Managing Allegations Practice day jointly with the Independent Chair's Service during which we looked at shared areas of practice. We plan to continue this development work.

Our achievements and challenges in 2023/24

18. The MAS completed its third full year of operation in 2023/24 and we continue to develop our practice. October 2023 saw our first Managing Allegations Service Day which we used to consider how the service has developed, receive wider children's service updates from Group Manager Claire Sampson, address current practice issues and refine our principles and values.
19. The LADO online Contact Form went live on 4 April 2023, this does not replace contact with the LADO AOs but provides the essential detail required for the LADO AOs to make decisions about LADO involvement and improve efficiency. Overall the form has been welcomed by partners and LADO AOs alike however there remain some issues with the quality of the information received.

- 20. An electronic leaflet explaining the MA service and the Employer’s responsibilities has been developed, this compliments the existing information eleaflet for the adult of concern.
- 21. At the request of the Safeguarding Children’s Partnership, we are undertaking work with partners regarding their practice around the restraint of children (under 18s) seeking assurance the role of the LADO is recognised and concerning restraints are referred appropriately.

Training and Workforce Development

- 22. MAS welcomed a third LADO Allegations Officer to the Service in February 2023, this was in response to the year on year increase in work coming into the LADO Allegations Officers. Coming with LADO experience, she has been a welcome addition to the service and in time this will address the LADO AO workloads.
- 23. The first NSCP Managing Allegations Workshop was held in March 2024 with two more planned for May and November 2024. The workshop was aimed at those partners who have responsibility for referring concerns and allegations to the LADO Allegation Officers and for attending Managing Allegations Meetings. The training was well received and positive feedback was received. This workshop will be held annually. MAS delivers training to ASYEs and Foster Carers annually and role-specific briefings and training is delivered to other Social Work Teams on request.

In July MAS was invited to deliver two training sessions to over 100 Police Officers in the Public Protection Unit and in November to participate in the Early Years Safeguarding Conference delivering a workshop to over 60 nursery managers. MAS will continue to develop our training offer.

Reflection on our commitments from 2022/23

| What we said we would do | What we did |
|---|---|
| <p>1. To address the ongoing impact of the increase of work on the LADO Allegation Officers.</p> | <p>A third LADO Allegations Officer was appointed in February 2024, incoming work and responsibilities are distributed between the three workers and plans are in place to address the backlog.</p> |
| <p>2. To continue to develop the maturity of the service and what best practice looks like through development days, reflective supervision and evidence-based research and to draw on the expertise of the wider system such as Legal Services, Human Resources and relevant colleagues across the partnership.</p> | <p>We held a joint service Managing Allegations Practice day with the Independent Chair’s service and a Managing Allegations Service day. Bot days allowed discussion on different areas of practice and ways of working. In particularly complex cases we hold reflective discussions with colleagues in Legal Services and Human Resources.</p> |
| <p>3. To work with the Independent Chair Service to improve the quality of information provided to the adult of</p> | <p>This work with the Independent Chair’s Service is ongoing.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>concern on the conclusion of the Managing Allegation Meeting process.</p> | |
| <p>4. To develop an effective method to gather the voice of the children and adults who experience the Managing Allegations process.</p> | <p>An Adult form has been developed once this is live, it will be sent to those adults who have been through the MAS process. Discussions are underway regarding the standard child and family feedback form used in Children's Services and how this can be developed for use in MAS.</p> |
| <p>5. To work with NSCP to develop a Multi-Agency Managing Allegations Briefing and to further increase the MAS training offer.</p> | <p>Two NSCP LADO Briefings have been delivered to date, they were well attended and received good feedback. A third briefing is planned for November, it is hoped this will become an annual event.</p> |

Commitments for 2024/25

- To work with the Independent Chair Service to improve the quality of information provided to the adult of concern on the conclusion of the Managing Allegation Meeting process.
- To develop an eleaflet for those children and families involved in or linked to the MA process.
- To use the responses provided through the feedback from the adults who experience the Managing Allegations process and the linked children and their families to reflect on and further develop MA practice and the service to better meet the needs of those involved, including those adults with protected characteristics.
- To continue to develop the maturity of the service and best practice through development days, reflective supervision and evidence-based research and to draw on the expertise of the wider system including Legal Services, Human Resources and relevant colleagues across the partnership.

Hazel McKibbin
 Service Manager
 Strategic Safeguarding and Independent Review
 13.08.24

APPENDICES

1. ACTION PLAN :

| Managing Allegations Service Commitments for 2023/24 | |
|--|--|
| 1. To address the ongoing impact of the increase of work on the LADO Allegation Officers. | |
| Over the next 12 months | What progress will look like |
| The LADO AOs workload will return to manageable levels | <p>The data will show :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocations per LADO AO will reduce • Tracking and monitoring numbers per LADO AO will decrease <p>Qualitative data will show</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backlogs in tracking and monitoring will reduce • LADO AOs no longer work excessive additional hours |
| A third LADO AO post will be agreed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 12mth temporary post was agreed and recruited to • A business case will be made for this post to be made permanent • Varied LADO AO responsibilities will be agreed to allow distribution of the workload |
| 2. To continue to develop the maturity of the service and what best practice looks like through development days, reflective supervision and evidence-based research and to draw on the expertise of the wider system such as Legal Services, Human Resources and relevant colleagues across the partnership. | |
| Over the next 12 months | What progress will look like |
| We will address issues arising to achieve best practice | <p>The data will show :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fewer complaints coming in • complaints received will be resolved at an early stage |
| We will ensure social work reports express clearly the allegations being considered, provide a clear analysis resulting in an evidence based views regarding harm to the child, risk posed by the adult and a recommended outcome. | <p>Quality assurance of SW reports will show an :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing ability to clearly express the allegations • increasing ability to present a clear analysis • increasing ability to present an evidence based recommendation <p>Quality assurance of MA minutes will show :</p> |

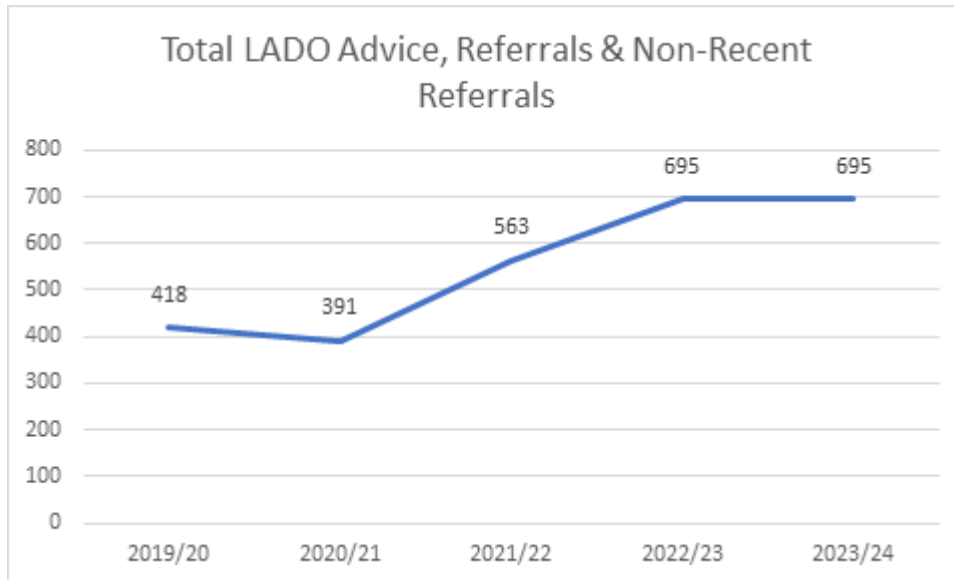
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|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing clarity in the allegations considered • increasing clarity in the analysis of and rationale for the multi-agency outcome |
| We will use Team Days and wider MA Practice days to address practice matters and will include relevant colleagues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual Team Day (October 2023) addressed matters arising and resulted in an action plan • Wider service (MAS and ICS) days will be planned to address practice matters |
| <p>3. To work with the Independent Chair Service to improve the quality of information provided to the adult of concern on the conclusion of the Managing Allegation Meeting process.</p> | |
| Over the next 12 months | What progress will look like |
| A revised method of providing information to the Adult of Concern will be agreed and piloted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A format will be developed in agreement with the ICS service • The agreed format will be trialled before being adopted. |
| <p>4. To develop an effective method to gather the voice of the children and adults who experience the Managing Allegations process.</p> | |
| Over the next 12 months | What progress will look like |
| We will gather individualised information from the children linked to the MA process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will hear the child/ren's experience and be able to identify and address any gaps |
| We will gather information from the adults who are subject of the MA process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In keeping with departmental developments, we will develop a tool to capture the experiences of the adult • We will use this information to reflect on and improve service delivery |
| <p>5. To work with NSCP to develop a Multi-Agency Managing Allegations Briefing and to further increase the MAS training offer.</p> | |
| Over the next 12 months | What progress will look like |
| We will develop and deliver training in response to service requests | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific LADO and/or MAS training will be developed and delivered |
| We will work with NSCP colleagues to build on the MAS elearning offer and develop a MAS Briefing/Workshop aimed at those colleagues in partner agencies who make referrals and attend MA meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A MAS Briefing/Workshop will be delivered this year and annually • The Briefing /Workshop will be reviewed and adjusted in response to feedback |

2. DATA

Key findings 2023/24

1. Work coming into MAS

1.1 Total Advice, Referrals – Contemporaneous and Non Recent work



The total work coming into MAS has stabilised on 2023/24.

| LADO Advice by Quarter | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | TOTAL |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 2019/20 | 70 | 69 | 66 | 95 | 300 |
| 2020/21 | 58 | 75 | 79 | 53 | 265 |
| 2021/22 | 103 | 90 | 98 | 127 | 418 |
| 2022/23 | 112 | 92 | 161 | 164 | 529 |
| 2023/24 | 135 | 128 | 128 | 148 | 539 |

LADO Advice, where the concern is reported to LADO but remains with the employer to address, has increased slightly in this financial year. Most of the Advice relates to colleagues in Education settings followed by Residential, Fostering, Sports and Health.

| Referrals (Contemporary) by Quarter | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | TOTAL |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 2019/20 | 19 | 19 | 30 | 35 | 103 |
| 2020/21 | 22 | 24 | 17 | 39 | 105 |
| 2021/22 | 39 | 27 | 31 | 37 | 134 |
| 2022/23 | 44 | 46 | 31 | 36 | 157 |
| 2023/24 | 39 | 27 | 36 | 41 | 143 |

LADO Referrals have decreased very slightly in 2023/24, the LADO AO tracks all these concerns to employment outcome with the more complex concerns progressing to Managing Allegations multi-agency meetings.

Educational settings account for most of the referrals followed by Residential, Fostering, Health and Sports.

The main reason for a referral to LADO is sexual abuse followed by physical abuse, suitability and emotional abuse. In recent years physical abuse has been the main reason.

| Referral (Non-recent) by Quarter | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | TOTAL |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 2019/20 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 15 |
| 2020/21 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 21 |
| 2021/22 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 11 |
| 2022/23 | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| 2023/24 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 13 |

Non Recent Referrals to LADO have increased slightly on 2022/23, this is the first increase in non-recent referrals since 2020/21. Most of these Non recent referrals relate to colleagues in an Educational setting followed by colleagues in the Fostering, health, Police, Faith and Sports settings.

The main reason for Non recent referrals remains sexual abuse followed by emotional abuse.

| Civil Claims | 2018 - 19 | 2019 - 20 | 2020 - 21 | 2022 - 22 | 2022 - 23 | 2023 - 24 |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| | 46 | 36 | 28 | 31 | 13 | 14 |

| Annex C | 2018 - 19 | 2019 - 20 | 2020 - 21 | 2021 - 22 | 2022 - 23 | 2023 - 24 |
|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| | | 82 | 50 | 25 | 6 | 6 |

Civil Claims and Annex Cs, linked with Non recent work, have remained consistent with 2023/24.

2. Managing Allegations meetings

2.1 S47 and LADO Strategy Discussions

The decision to convene a Managing Allegations Meeting in both non-recent and contemporaneous cases, is made at a multi-agency Strategy Discussion. In contemporaneous cases, where necessary and possible, the S47 and the LADO Strategy Discussions will be combined, for those cases where children are not open to Children's Social Care, the MAS Team Manager will chair the S47 Strategy Discussion.

In 2023/24 the MA Service chaired a total of 60 Strategy Discussions, 6 related to Non recent abuse, and attended a further 16 chaired by other Children's Services Team Managers, this shows a slight decrease on 2022/23.

The LADO AOs attend additional Strategy Discussions.

2.2 Number of MA meetings

The MA service convened a total of 153 meetings, of these, 127 contemporaneous meetings, 40 initial meetings and 87 reviews, these included cases involving foster carers where a couple is considered in one meeting.

A total of 26 non-recent meetings were convened, 6 initial meetings and 20 reviews.

The 2023/24 data shows a reduction in Contemporaneous meetings, this could be a result of decisions made to book meetings in response to when information is available rather than pre-determined time scales. There is an increase in non-recent cases going through the going through the Managing Allegations meeting process when compared to 2022/23 data.

2.2 Work with children linked to the adult of concern

MAS Social Workers are allocated to children linked with the adult of concern, the adult’s own children and the children making allegations, to undertake focused Child and Family Assessments.

Where children do not have an allocated Social Worker, the MAS Social Worker will undertake the Child and Family Assessment and in cases where the child already has an allocated SW, the MAS SW will liaise with the allocated SW to agree how best to obtain the account from and views of the child.

These assessments are focused and proportionate and where a need for ongoing work to support or protect is assessed, the children are allocated to a long term CSC SW team.

There has been a decrease in the numbers of children MAS has worked with in 2023/24.

Children allocated to MAS SWs

| Children allocated to MAS SWs | 2023/24 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| MAS contact - no assessment | 9* |
| CAFA | 36 |
| Co-allocated - LAC | 10 |
| Co-allocated - OLA | 20 |
| Co-allocated - CSC | 35 |
| Total | 110 (30) ** |

* 9 children’s families were contacted by MAS but no assessment was required

** includes 30 children linked to MAS processes that started in 2022/23

2.3 Work with Adult Complainants making Non recent allegations

During this period, MAS SWs have worked with 6 adult complainants linked to non-recent abuse disclosed in 2023/24. Work continued with a further 6 adult complainants having started in 2022/23.

Additionally, the MAS Team Manager and Social Workers maintain a low level of support for and involvement with some adults who disclosed abuse linked with IICSA. Some of these adults are funded by the local authority to receive counselling and other support services.

2.4 Case Outcomes

A total of 121 Managing Allegations processes were closed, 110 Contemporaneous and 11 Non recent. This is a slight increase in Contemporaneous case closures and a significant increase in Non-recent case closures.

The outcomes available to the Managing Allegations process are prescribed in Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working together to Safeguard Children and include Substantiated, Unsubstantiated, Unfounded, False and Malicious.

In 2023/24 the outcomes for Contemporaneous cases remain largely consistent with 45% Substantiated; 34% Unsubstantiated and 9% Unfounded. Very few cases are considered either False or Malicious.

Of the 11 Non recent cases, 4 were Substantiated, 4 Unsubstantiated, 1 was Unfounded, 1 was False; 1 had no outcome, this can occur given the passage of time and the difficulties in assessing and investigating non recent allegations.

2.5 Police outcomes

Contemporaneous work has seen a slight decrease in no police action, an increase in the police investigation resulting in no further actions and a slight decrease in the police investigations resulting in prosecutions, no cautions were issued in 2024.

The Non recent work saw no police action in 3 cases, police investigations no further action in 8 and there were no prosecutions in 2024.

2.6 Employer outcomes

The LADO AO tracks and monitors the MA process to the Employer outcome.

In Contemporaneous work, 27 colleagues were dismissed, 29 resigned as an alternative to dismissal, 15 received a sanction, 38 were offered additional support or training and 7 received no sanction.

Of those colleagues subject to Non recent allegations, 6 were not employed, 1 received a sanction, 2 received support or training and 1 received no sanction.

2.7 Referrals to DBS and Regulatory Bodies

It is the last employer's responsibility to make referrals to DBS and relevant professional regulatory bodies, this forms part of the LADO AO tracking process.

In 2024, 37 referrals were made to DBS and 6 to professional regulatory bodies related to contemporaneous work.

A further 4 DBS referrals were made and 1 to a professional regulatory body in non recent work.

2.8 Case duration

Keeping Children Safe In Education states LADO processes should be 'thorough and fair' and 'dealt with as quickly as possible' however timescales are no longer specified.

While every attempt is made to address concerns in a timely manner and to resolve cases promptly, timeliness remains a challenge. Of note is the increasing need for the forensic interrogation of electronic devices which can delay processes, additionally the tracking and monitoring of employer outcomes has been delayed as a result of the LADO AO workload .

The data available currently measures the duration of cases from the initial referral to the LADO AO through the Managing Allegations meeting process to the completion of the LADO AO tracking and monitoring of the employment process outcome.

| Duration of Closed Contemporaneous referrals | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Less than 1 month | 4 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 5 |
| 1 to 3 months | 14 | 18 | 13 | 26 | 16 |
| 3 to 6 months | 18 | 20 | 26 | 21 | 20 |
| 6 to 11 months | 20 | 30 | 26 | 36 | 39 |
| 1 year+ | 12 | 17 | 20 | 15 | 31 |

There has been a decrease in the number of Contemporaneous cases closed within 3 months, before 11 months and an increase in those cases open for more than 12 months. The increase in cases open for longer than a year is a result of the LADO AO backlog in tracking and monitoring, plans are in place to resolve this with the agreement to a third LADO AO post.

The difficulty in assessing and investigating Non recent work accounts for cases being open for longer with 5 open for up to 11 months and 6 open for more than 12 months.

2.9 Complaints

The number of complaints coming to MAS has reduced further in 2023/24 with the complaints being received being resolved at an earlier stage.

During this period, 4 complaints were received and investigated.

Of the 4 investigated, 2 were complaints about the LADO Advice process, one was not upheld and one was partially upheld, learning was identified.

The other 2 complaints were both resolved at Stage 1, one was made by a parent of linked children who felt he had not received sufficient information about the potential risk to his children, learning was identified from this; the other regarded the MA meeting process and was not upheld.