



Child Protection and Safeguarding Guidance for Early Years Providers in Halton

'Successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership work between parents/carers and the practitioners working with them. Practitioners should take a child-centred approach to meeting the needs of the whole family'.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

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Introduction

The Purpose of this document is to provide guidance on safeguarding and child protection matters for Early Years Providers.

The booklet can be made available to all staff, parents/carers and anyone else connected with your setting.

The document gives advice and guidance for:

- Childminders
- Pre-schools
- Day Nurseries
- Out of School Provision
- Breakfast and After School Clubs

All Ofsted registered childminders and day care providers must comply with Halton Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) safeguarding procedures, which are explained in this booklet. Further information can be found on the website: [Home - Halton Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. For the purpose of this document, we use the definition of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children found in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024:

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- Preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

In this document, a child is defined as 'anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.' Children therefore means 'children and young people' throughout.

The Legal Requirements

Early Years and Childcare

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage ([EYFS](#)) sets out the safeguarding and welfare requirements that all registered childcare providers **must adhere to**.

There is also further statutory guidance which providers **must have regard to or may find useful to read**:

- [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Prevent duty guidance: Guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused; Advice for practitioners 2015](#)
- [Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#)
- [Guidance for Safer Working Practice](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

Child Protection

The EYFS provides the following information, which outlines the settings responsibilities with regard to safeguarding and child protection.

The EYFS 2025 (for both childminders and group and school-based providers) states:

Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well. The requirements in this section explain what every early years provider must do:

- Safeguard children
- Ensure the adults who have contact with children are suitable
- Promote good health
- Support and understand behaviour
- Maintain records, policies and procedures

These should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant Local Safeguarding partners. The safeguarding policy and procedures must include:

- The action to be taken when there are safeguarding concerns about a child
- The action to be taken in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff
- How mobile phones, cameras and other electronic devices with imaging capabilities are used in the setting
- Procedures to follow to check the suitability of new recruits

- Details of how safeguarding training is delivered and how practitioners are supported to put this into place

Roles and Responsibilities When Protecting Children

Everyone who works with children and young people has a significant role in both the prevention of abuse and the protection of children from abuse.

Information about the signs and symptoms of abuse can be found later in this guidance but such information is rarely comprehensive and on occasions can be misleading. If you have a suspicion that a child in your care is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, you must follow Halton's child protection procedures.

All children are vulnerable, they may need you to act on their behalf, by contacting appropriate agencies and by providing relevant information towards prompting an assessment to identify the child's needs.

Everyone working with children should be alert to signs of abuse and neglect, and should know how to refer concerns or suspicions.

Everyone working in childcare settings must keep themselves updated on child protection issues and procedures by accessing appropriate advice and training.

Each early years provider has the responsibility to ensure that:

- There is a child protection procedure in place and that it is in accordance with the Halton Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures
- In group settings a senior member of staff is assigned as the 'Designated Safeguarding Lead for Child Protection' and that a deputy is available in the Designated Safeguarding Leads absence.
- Childminders are the Designated Safeguarding Lead in their setting
- A member of the management committee (where applicable) is nominated to be responsible for liaising with the Designated Safeguarding Lead over child protection matters (good practice)

The management committee (where applicable) should carry out their child protection responsibilities where:

- Allegations are made against a senior member of staff
- A disciplinary action against a member of staff is necessary following a child protection investigation
- An investigation of any complaint on noncompliance with child protection procedures is necessary
- To ensure that appropriate checks are made on all new staff and any volunteers who may have unsupervised access to children
- To ensure that the EYFS specific legal requirements under Safeguarding are followed.

Please note: the responsibility for investigating suspected cases of abuse lies with Children's Social Care and the Police. In the event of an allegation against a member of staff, the management is responsible for liaising closely with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Children's Social Care and the Police.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for liaison with statutory local children's services agencies, and with the Local Safeguarding Partners (LSPs). All staff must know who the designated safeguarding lead is and who their deputy is in their absence. In the case of childminders– they are the designated safeguarding lead. Any assistants they may work with must be made aware of this.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead must have appropriate, up to date training and attend a training course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex C of the EYFS.

The DSL must provide support, advice and guidance to all practitioners on an ongoing basis, and on any specific safeguarding issue as required.

All Staff and Volunteers must be trained in line with the criteria set out in Annex C and training renewed at least every two years. Staff must be supported and be confident to implement the setting's safeguarding policy and procedures on an ongoing basis.

What To Do If You Have a Concern About a Child

If you are worried about a child, you should talk to the Designated Safeguarding Lead within your own setting, share your concerns and discuss any differences of opinion. As Childminders are the designated lead and therefore do not have anyone in their setting to discuss their concerns with, it is possible for them to phone iCART and initially ask for advice without naming the child. Advice and Guidance may also be sought from the Early Years team. If the childminder is advised to make a full referral to iCART, it is important to have all the details to hand.

The following questions will help you and the designated lead decide what to do next:

What is your concern?

How long have you been concerned?

Does anyone else have any concerns?

What do you think could be happening to the child? - *List a range of possible things rather than jumping to one conclusion – how could you find out whether each of these possibilities is true?*

What information do you already have?

What have you already done to address your concerns?

Have you discussed your concerns with the parents and the child or young person? If yes – what did they say?

If no – why not?

What would be the possible impact on the child?

Definitions of Child Abuse

[Keeping children safe in education 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) defines abuse as:

A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

It identifies 4 main categories of abuse:

Physical Abuse – a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse – the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capacity as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse – involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education and all staff should be aware of it and their school or college's policy and procedures for dealing with it.

Neglect – the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

[‘What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused: Advice for practitioners’](#) includes information about understanding and identifying abuse and neglect for each of the categories.

Making a Referral

Where you have cause for concern, you should:

- Record the circumstances of the incident, including a description of any marks or bruising and/or what the child has said, or how the child has behaved. Make sure you record the date and time on the record
- Speak to the parent or carer to share your concern and if possible, seek an explanation. *NB: if you are concerned that a child may have been sexually abused, or you suspect fabricated illness, you must not discuss this with the parent but should make an immediate referral.*

If your concerns remain high, or are heightened by the parent’s response then you should:

- Discuss your concerns with your designated lead – please see paragraph below on obtaining parental consent for making a referral.
- If in discussion with the designated lead it is decided that the concern warrants a referral/request for help the designated lead should:
 - Follow iCART referral procedures (see the back of this booklet)
 - Inform the parents or carers as soon as possible that the information will, or has just been, passed on to iCART.

Seeking Parental Permission to Make a Referral

Early Help Assessments and Child in Need Assessments can only be carried out with the consent of the parent(s). Participation in the Assessment and in any resulting Plan is voluntary on the part of the parent. Due to this it is essential that professionals seek consent from the parent prior to making a referral into Children’s Social Care or prior to making requests for support from agencies contributing to Multi Agency Plans.

Professionals must make it clear to the parent(s) that they are giving consent for their personal information and their personal circumstances to be shared between agencies. It must be clear to parents where their information will go, for what purpose and for how long the information will be kept on agencies’ records.

Referrals into Children’s Social Care (Level 3) or requests for support from Early Help Services (Level 2) which are made without parental consent will not be accepted.

Only where there is a clear child protection concern (Level 4), and there is reason to believe that the risk may escalate by approaching the parents/carers, can enquiries can

begin without the parent's/carer's consent. Circumstances which meet this threshold may include:

- Suspicion that a child will be forced into marriage or removed from the country against their will;
- Suspicion that a child is at risk of female genital mutilation;
- A disclosure of sexual or physical abuse putting the child at immediate risk;
- Suspicion that illness is being fabricated;
- Evidence that the child is at immediate risk of harm (a child is not generally at immediate risk if they are in school or at some other venue with a professional present, as action can be taken before the child returns home)

In almost all cases, therefore, a parent should be aware that a referral into Children's Social Care is being made

Level of Need Framework can be found [here](#).

Sharing Information About Children

The document: [Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#) gives clear advice to support practitioners in the decisions they take when sharing information to reduce the risk of harm to children and young people.

The document sets out seven key points about information sharing – these are known as 'The seven golden rules to sharing information'

1. **All children have a right to be protected from abuse and neglect. Protecting a child from such harm takes priority over protecting their privacy, or the privacy rights of the person(s) failing to protect them.** The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) provide a framework to support information sharing where practitioners have reason to believe failure to share information may result in the child being at risk of harm.
2. **When you have a safeguarding concern, wherever it is practicable and safe to do so, engage with the child and/or their carer(s), and explain who you intend to share information with, what information you will be sharing and why.** You are not required to inform them, if you have reason to believe that doing so may put the child at increased risk of harm (e.g., because their carer(s) may harm the child, or react violently to anyone seeking to intervene, or because the child might withhold information or withdraw from services).
3. **You do not need consent to share personal information about a child and/or members of their family if a child is at risk or there is a perceived risk of harm.** You need a lawful basis to share information under data protection law, but when you intend to share information as part of action to safeguard a child at possible risk of harm, consent may not be an appropriate basis for sharing. It is good

practice to ensure transparency about your decisions and seek to work cooperatively with a child and their carer(s) wherever possible. This means you should consider any objection the child or their carers may have to proposed information sharing, but you should consider overriding their objections if you believe sharing the information is necessary to protect the child from harm.

4. **Seek advice promptly whenever you are uncertain or do not fully understand how the legal framework supports information sharing in a particular case.** Do not leave a child at risk of harm because you have concerns you might be criticised for sharing information. Instead, find out who in your organisation/agency can provide advice about what information to share and with whom. This may be your manager/supervisor, the designated safeguarding children professional, the data protection/information governance lead (e.g., Data Protection Officer), Caldicott Guardian, or relevant policy or legal team. If you work for a small charity or voluntary organisation, follow the NSPCC's safeguarding guidance.
5. **When sharing information, ensure you and the person or agency/organisation that receives the information take steps to protect the identities of any individuals (e.g., the child, a carer, a neighbour, or a colleague) who might suffer harm if their details became known to an abuser or one of their associates.**
6. **Only share relevant and accurate information with individuals or agencies/organisations that have a role in safeguarding the child and/or providing their family with support, and only share the information they need to support the provision of their services.** Sharing information with a third party rarely requires you to share an entire record or case-file – you must only share information that is necessary, proportionate for the intended purpose, relevant, adequate and accurate.
7. **Record the reasons for your information sharing decision, irrespective of whether or not you decide to share information.** When another practitioner or organisation requests information from you, and you decide not to share it, be prepared to explain why you chose not to do so. Be willing to reconsider your decision if the requestor shares new information that might cause you to regard information you hold in a new light. When recording any decision, clearly set out the rationale and be prepared to explain your reasons if you are asked.

How to Make a Referral

Integrated Contact and Referral Team (iCART)

iCART is the integrated front door to children and families services. The team comprises of multi-agency staff, including social care, early intervention, education, health and police. The team accept safeguarding referrals and early intervention requests.

Which children and families should be referred to iCART?

1. Children and families where there is an immediate risk of harm.
These referrals should indicate that they are for safeguarding and they will be passed to the children's social care element of iCART for immediate attention and further screening.
2. Children and families with a number of vulnerabilities that are negatively impacting on the whole family and/or community.

There will be multiple and complex issues across the family such as anti-social behaviour, attendance and behaviour, possible neglect, worklessness/financial exclusion, domestic violence and abuse. These referrals should indicate that they are for early intervention and they will be passed on to the early intervention element of iCART for further screening. Referrers should consider an early help assessment and/or calling in support from appropriate multi-agency partners prior to submitting an iCART early intervention referral. If needs sit at level 1 on Halton's Levels of Need Framework, consider what else your agency can bring and call in relevant support from other partners.

What do iCART need from you as a referrer?

- Discuss your referral with your DSL.
- Complete an online iCART referral form. If you identify safeguarding concerns which may sit at level 4 on Halton's Continuum of Need (section 47) telephone iCART in the first instance and then submit the written referral form.
- As much up to date family information as you have. This needs to include details such as the full name of family members, including other names they might be known by, the current school or early years setting the child(ren) attend, up to date contact telephone numbers.
- As much detail about the incident/concern as possible – share everything that you know.
- For you to check details carefully before you refer as incorrect information delays the process.
- Any appropriate screening or assessment tools.
- Voice of the child must be provided and should demonstrate the impact the impact of needs upon them.
- The family need to know that they are being referred and that there will be contact made.
- For you to continue with your support whilst iCART undertake their work.

What might happen with your referral?

- iCART will make a decision as to the most appropriate response based on the information you send in your referral and background checks. All referrals will have initial oversight of a social work manager or practitioner to ensure that they are screened further at the appropriate level.
- iCART may ask you for more information if required.
- iCART will explore consent with you, if you submit a referral without consent. If the level to dispense without consent is not reached, your referral will be returned without screening.
- iCART may come back to you with a recommendation that you start a MAP (multi-agency plan). If more concerns emerge as you work with them, you can re-refer.
- iCART may pass the referral on to social care for further screening/assessment.
- Advice and guidance may be provided to the family and/or you.

Contacting iCART

- The team can be contacted during the hours of 09.00 – 17.00, Monday to Thursday and 09.00 – 16.00 of Fridays: 0151 907 8305
- If you have an urgent (safeguarding) concern outside of the above hours, call the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 0345 050 0148

Professional/Practitioner Referrals

If you wish to make a referral for safeguarding or to request complex early intervention, you need to complete the multi-agency referral form. You will need to follow your safeguarding procedures and gain consent, where appropriate and possible.

[Multi-Agency Contact and Referral Form](#)

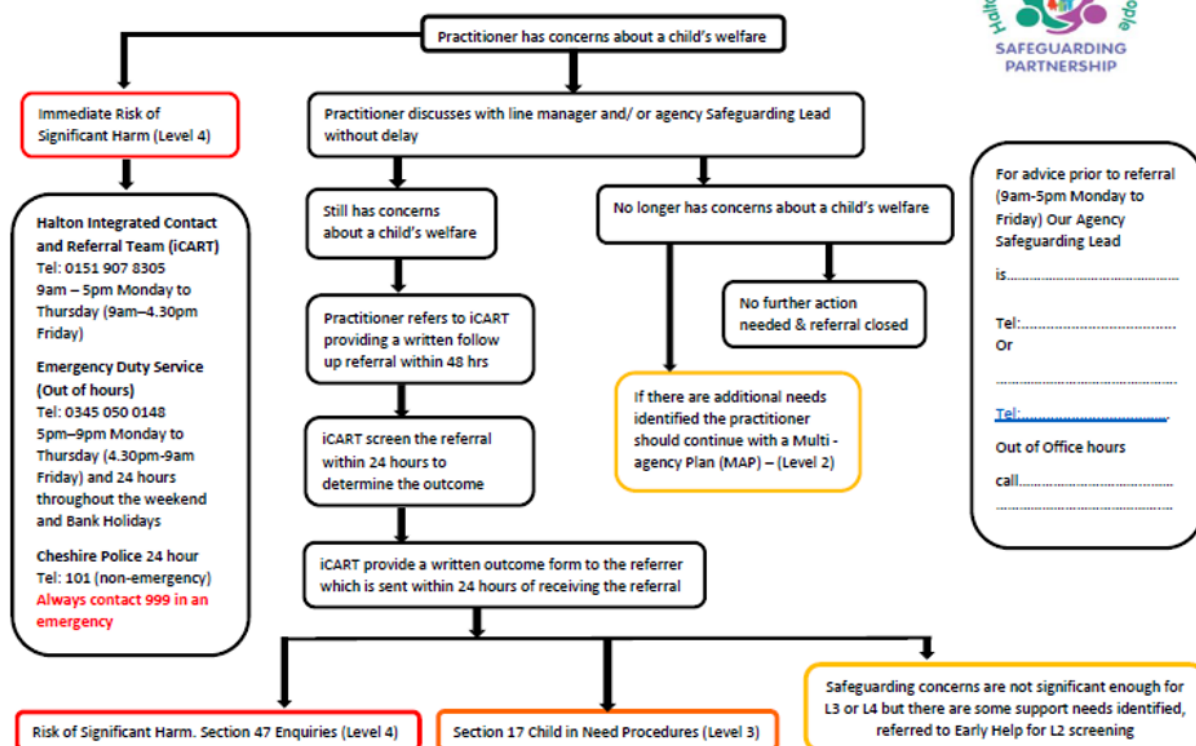
For safeguarding concerns or immediate safeguarding risks to a child, information is recorded and a same working day response provided by a social worker. For other safeguarding contacts, iCART completes enquiries within 24 hours (1 working day). Each contact with iCART to ask for support or advice is recorded. Early Intervention contacts are completed within 3 working days.

All information is considered by iCART alongside the Halton Levels of Need Framework and guidance is offered in line with the level of the Framework that the case meets.

- Level 4 – **Significant unmet needs and high risk:** Children's social care lead professional and children's social care child assessment. Section 47 Child protection (CP) and Children in Need (CIN).
- Level 3 – **Higher levels of unmet needs and medium risk:** Children's social care lead professional and children's social care child assessment. Section 17 Children in Need (CIN).
- Level 2 – **Evidence of some complex/unmet needs and low risk:** Early help lead professional and Early help assessment. An early help targeted/co-ordinated response by all agencies.
- Level 1 – **Low risk:** Needs and risks are met through universal services or simple specific agency response.

iCART Referral Flowchart

What to do if you have a concern about a child's welfare



Halton Levels of Need Framework

It is important for settings and childminders to understand the levels of need as this will determine the response to the concerns raised. Below is a diagram showing Halton's Levels of Needs Framework. Further details and information can be found here: [Levels-Of-Need-Framework.pdf \(haltonsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk\)](https://www.haltonsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/Levels-Of-Need-Framework.pdf)



Key principles of the framework

- Safeguarding runs throughout all levels.
- The shared aim of all services at every level is to provide early help and support at the first possible stage and meet needs at the lowest possible level of the continuum.
- The focus is on Halton's more vulnerable groups and directing service responses at preventing vulnerability.
- Builds on existing good multi-agency working and formalises shared responsibility for meeting all needs throughout the continuum.
- Supports work of all agencies and is equally applicable to all.
- Flexible and fluid, allowing free movement between levels as the additional needs of the child increase or reduce.
- Clear and understandable to all.
- Focus on the needs of the child and family to ensure the best outcomes for all.

Why should practitioners use this framework?

- To enable all agencies to contribute to the support of children.
- To minimise duplication, thus ensuring for families that they are not continually assessed or being expected to go to multiple meetings or have to separately meet numerous practitioners.
- To enhance communication and consultation between practitioners by helping to embed a common language and clearly prescribed processes amongst all professions working with children and families.

LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)

Managing allegations against adults who work or volunteer with children.

As outlined in [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) the LADO must be informed of all allegations against adults who work with children.

The criteria for making a report to the LADO are that a member of the Children's Workforce or volunteer may have:

- Behaved in a 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 they may pose a risk of harm to children.
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.
- 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 a child that 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.

Regardless of the nature of allegations and who received the allegation, it must be reported to the LADO. This must include situations where the worker resigns or retires. Compromise agreements are not acceptable in such circumstances and may put others at risk in the future.

The LADO is a senior member of staff who:

- Is involved in the management and oversight of individual cases which meet a certain threshold.
- Provides advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations.
- Liaises with the police and other agencies.
- Monitors the progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with as quickly as possible, following a consistent, thorough, and fair process.
- Oversees potential referrals to regulatory bodies.
- Disseminates learning from LADO enquiries throughout the children's workforce.

All referrals must be made in writing using the LADO Consultation Form. The referral form can be found on the link below:

[LADO-Consultation-Form-template.doc \(live.com\)](#)

Contacting the LADO

The LADO contact number is 0151 511 7925

To ensure that the cover arrangements for LADO are consistently responded to, all emails and or referrals should be sent to:

LADO@halton.gov.uk in addition to safeguarding.adminteam@halton.gov.uk

Pan Cheshire Procedures online – [Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers](#)

To support understanding of criteria and to offer a refresher around the Management of Allegations Procedure (LADO) there are training sessions available from HSCP on the [training calendar](#), bookable via the training portal.

Within a **setting**, any allegation of child abuse against a member of staff should be reported to the DSL. It will be clear in some cases that an immediate referral must be made to iCART or the police for investigation. A LADO consultation form must also be submitted.

For **childminders**, if an allegation is made against a childminder, a childminder's assistant or anyone in the childminder's household, the childminder should follow the child protection procedures, contacting iCART if a child appears to have been harmed or is at risk of significant harm. Additionally, a LADO consultation form needs to be submitted. Then childminder must complete the form even if the allegation is being made against themselves.

Please note the EYFS Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements state that you must notify Ofsted if there is an allegation against anyone living or working on your premises whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere. This should be done within 14 days and it is an offence not to do so.

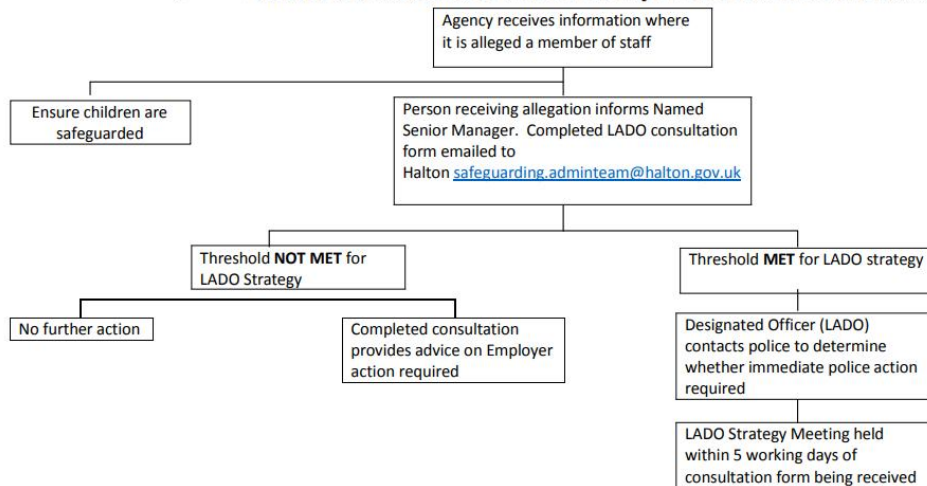
If you are unsure about whether or not a comment or complaint is an allegation, it is best to submit a consultation form to the LADO, who will confirm whether or not it meets their thresholds.

LADO Procedure Flowchart for Settings

LADO FLOW CHART HALTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD LADO PROCEDURES SHOULD BE FOLLOWED [LADO procedures](#)

Agency receives information where it is alleged a member of staff 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
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would post a risk of harm



LADO Procedure Flowchart for Childminders

What to do if an allegation is made against you or any person living, working or looking after children at the premises (whether that allegation relates to a concern about behaviour, harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere).

Make clear, written notes of the exact allegation or nature of concern, including when and where the incident is alleged to have taken place. Do this as soon as possible.



Contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) immediately by completing the online consultation form. Then contact Ofsted (this is an EYFS requirement).



The LADO will offer advice on immediate action required. If the allegation meets a certain threshold, a multi-agency meeting will be convened. If it does not meet the threshold, the LADO should record the discussion and send a copy to you for your records. In some circumstances, where you make an allegation against a person employed outside of your setting, it may not be applicable to notify you of any action taken.



- There are 5 potential outcomes from the allegation:
1. No further action after initial consideration
 2. LADO strategy meeting called
 3. Advice on action required e.g. revise policies, undertake training etc
 4. Disciplinary investigation
 5. Criminal investigation



If the allegation is of a serious nature, parents will receive a letter from Ofsted explaining that they are investigating you. This is normal practice.



All Halton childminders can receive support from the Early Years team.
early.years@halton.gov.uk

