

PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17TH SEPTEMBER 2026

OXFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

Report by Karen Fuller, Corporate Director of Adult Social Care

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to**
Note the findings of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB) Annual Report 2025-26. It is a requirement of statutory guidance that this report is shared with the Local Authority hosting the Safeguarding Board in their area.

Executive Summary

2. The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB) Annual Report 2025-26 sets out how the Board and its member organisations discharged their statutory safeguarding responsibilities between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. The report highlights a year of system change, including NHS reorganisation, Local Government Reorganisation proposals, and emerging national reforms to adult safeguarding. Despite these challenges, the Board delivered progress against its Strategic Plan, strengthened its governance arrangements, expanded its quality assurance framework, undertook a programme of Safeguarding Adults Reviews and Homeless Mortality Reviews, and continued to promote learning and improvement across the partnership.

Background

3. The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board is a statutory multi-agency partnership established under the Care Act 2014. Its role is to coordinate safeguarding arrangements, assure itself that local safeguarding

arrangements are effective, and protect adults in its area with care and support needs who are experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect and are, as a consequence, unable to protect themselves. The Board's core statutory partners are Oxfordshire County Council, NHS Thames Valley ICB and Thames Valley Police, supported by a wider range of public, voluntary and community sector organisations.

Key Achievements During 2025-26

4. During 2025-26 the Board approved and implemented a new Strategic Plan, established a Board-level Risk Register, strengthened governance through the creation of a Business Group, launched the MARM+ approach for adults experiencing multiple disadvantage, and enhanced mechanisms for measuring safeguarding impact. The Board also completed and published four Homeless Mortality Reviews, strengthened arrangements for learning from reviews, and developed nationally recognised work on self-neglect and professional curiosity.

Safeguarding Activity and Performance

5. Safeguarding demand continued to increase during the reporting year. The local authority recorded 10,865 safeguarding concerns, 1,584 Section 42 safeguarding enquiries and 553 other safeguarding enquiries. This represents the highest level of safeguarding concerns recorded in Oxfordshire for many years and reflects both increased awareness and increasing complexity of need. The Board has continued to strengthen its performance framework to ensure that safeguarding activity is accompanied by quality assurance and outcome-focused evaluation.

Learning from Reviews

6. A significant focus of the Board's work has been ensuring that learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) and Homeless Mortality Reviews (HMRs) is translated into practice improvement. Recurring themes identified through reviews included self-neglect, executive functioning and mental capacity, professional curiosity, advocacy, financial exploitation, homelessness and transitional safeguarding. The Board introduced new

mechanisms requiring agencies to provide commitment statements demonstrating how review findings are being implemented and monitored.

Partnership Assurance and Independent Scrutiny

7. The Board continued to benefit from independent scrutiny provided by Dr Dawne Garrett. Scrutiny activity during the year focused on self-neglect, barriers to professional curiosity, transitional safeguarding and the impact of safeguarding interventions. This work resulted in the development of a countywide principles framework for safeguarding adults experiencing self-neglect and a new partnership approach to promoting "safe curiosity" amongst practitioners.

Prevention, Engagement and Community Voice

8. The Board strengthened its engagement activity throughout the year, including delivering its most extensive Safeguarding Adults Awareness Week programme to date. The Engagement Subgroup significantly increased partner participation and expanded engagement with community organisations. The Board also continued to emphasise the importance of lived experience and has identified strengthening direct engagement with adults with care and support needs as a priority for 2026-27.

Future Priorities

9. Key priorities for 2026-27 include maintaining safeguarding assurance through Local Government Reorganisation and NHS restructuring; strengthening evidence of the impact of learning from reviews; further developing data and performance reporting; integrating Drug and Alcohol Related Death Reviews into existing review structures; recruiting a new Lay Member; and strengthening the voice of people with lived experience.

Implications for Oxfordshire County Council

10. The Annual Report demonstrates that Oxfordshire County Council continues to play a central leadership role within safeguarding arrangements and has been transparent in reporting both achievements and areas requiring

improvement. The report notes positive outcomes from the Care Quality Commission assessment of Adult Social Care and highlights improvements in safeguarding performance, whilst recognising ongoing pressures arising from increasing demand, workforce challenges and system transformation programmes.

Conclusion

11. The Annual Report provides assurance that safeguarding partners in Oxfordshire continue to work effectively together to protect adults at risk of abuse and neglect. While increasing demand and ongoing structural reforms present challenges, the Board has demonstrated strong partnership working, robust governance, a commitment to learning and improvement, and a clear focus on safeguarding outcomes. The report evidences continued compliance with the Board's statutory responsibilities under the Care Act 2014 and identifies clear priorities for further improvement during 2026-27.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

12. The report outlines the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board priorities, the learning from statutory case reviews, the outcomes of quality assurance work and the work of partner agencies in the protection of adults in Oxfordshire. The report supports the vision, values, objectives and strategic priorities in the County Council's Corporate Plan (see [Corporate Plan](#)).

Financial Implications

13. The board is currently funded by contributions from 3 organisations, £324,300 from the County Council – which is built into the Council's core budget, £40,100 from the City Council and £42,000 from the Thames Valley Police.

Comments checked by:

Stephen Rowles, Strategic Finance Business Partner

Stephen.rowles@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

14. The Care Act 2014 set out the statutory responsibilities of Safeguarding Adult Boards, one of which is to publish an annual report setting out:
- what it has done during that year to achieve its objective,
 - what it has done during that year to implement its strategy,
 - what each member has done during that year to implement the strategy,
 - the findings of the safeguarding adults reviews (SARs) arranged by it which have concluded in that year,
 - details of any SARs which are ongoing at the end of that year,
 - what it has done during that year to implement the findings of its SARs, and, - where it decides not to implement a finding of its SARs, the reasons for its decision.

That report is attached.

15. The Board is further required to provide a copy of that report to the
- Chief Executive and Leader of the Local Authority
 - local policing body for the area
 - Local Healthwatch organisation for the area, and
 - Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Comments checked by: Janice White, Principal Solicitor – ASC, SEND and Education.

Staff Implications

16. There are currently no staff implications for this report.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

17. The Safeguarding Adults Board in its planning, monitoring and evaluating of its work and the work of its partners, ensures equality and diversity issues are being appropriately considered from the outset.

Sustainability Implications

18. There are no sustainability implications.

Risk Management

19. There are no risks or opportunities for the County Council highlighted in the report.

Consultations

20. The content of the report has been shared and consulted upon with all member organisations of the Safeguarding Adults Board.

Karen Fuller

Director of Adult Social Care

Annex 1: OSAB Annual Report

Contact Officer: Steven Turner, Strategic Partnerships Manager, 01865 328993, steven.turner@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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