

CABINET – 18 OCTOBER 2016

ANNUAL REPORTS FROM THE OSCB - 2015/16

Three reports submitted by Independent Chair of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board

Introduction

1. Local Safeguarding Children Boards were set up under the Children Act 2004 to co-operate with each other in order to safeguard children and promote their welfare. This paper covers three annual reports from the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board. The reports concern an overview of safeguarding work; serious case reviews and quality assurance.

The OSCB Annual Report 2015/16

2. The OSCB's remit is to co-ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each agency on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Oxfordshire.
3. The annual report summarises the partnership's key achievements in the last year and provides an overview and analysis of safeguarding arrangements. These arrangements have been found to be in a good state as confirmed by the Stocktake Report on child sexual exploitation in 2015 and the Joint Targeted Area inspection in 2016. Board members have a clear view of how well child protection work is being managed but also a clearer understanding of the pressures on the system due to the increased activity at the front door.
4. Quality assurance work highlights that partners must address long term issues of neglect and protect children in families where domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental illness are prevalent. Going forward partners need to keep a tight grip across the partnership on what is working well and where challenges are emerging and ensure organisations set clear baselines and targets for improvement.
5. OSCB delivered over 150 free safeguarding training and learning events plus online learning. In 2015/16 the training reached over 9000 members of the Oxfordshire workforce. The OSCB delivered termly newsletters to over 4000 members of the multi-agency workforce. Work has taken place on procedures relating to child death processes; information sharing; male circumcision; modern slavery; child sexual exploitation; coercive behaviour and the Mental Capacity Act amongst others.
6. Significant work has been maintained to address Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Oxfordshire. In March 2016 this was tested again through the Joint

Targeted Area Inspection. The headline judgement was that Oxfordshire now has 'a highly developed and well-functioning approach to tackling exploitation'.

7. The annual report directs the OSCB towards the following aims for 2016/17:
 - Ensuring that local partnership arrangements are understood and that the 'front door' for safeguarding concerns for children provides a swift and robust response to all children.
 - Protecting younger children from the harm of neglect and parental risk factors.
 - Protecting older children from harm by maintaining a multi-agency focus on issues such as peer on peer abuse, online and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender bullying, self-harm and suicide.
 - Testing if learning is embedded across the child protection partnership.

The Performance Audit and Quality Assurance (PAQA) Annual Report

8. The Performance Audit and Quality Assurance subgroup scrutinises the effectiveness of safeguarding practice. This annual report summarises the common themes for learning and improvement to support vulnerable children. The following sources are used: section 11 audits, school audits, single and multi-agency audits, work with children and young people, annual reports and serious case reviews. The information is viewed through a quadrant of quantitative data; qualitative data; practitioner views, child and family views.
9. The quantitative data shows that there are increasing levels of activity across the safeguarding system at a time when there is significant change in resources and agency structures. This is accompanied by an increasingly complex set of issues for vulnerable young people ranging from self-harm, to peer abuse to social media pressures.
10. Qualitative evidence highlights that the child protection partnership has been able to demonstrate effectively what it does well through the Ofsted inspection in 2014, the stocktake report on child sexual exploitation in 2015 and the Joint targeted area inspection in 2016. Areas for improvement include the challenges in dealing with inconsistent and neglectful parenting; reluctance to respectfully challenge self-reported explanations of harm to the child/ren; loss of continuity of service when families move across boundaries and the capacity of adolescents to protect themselves can be overestimated and a tendency to view teenagers as adults rather than children can mean that proactive steps to protect them are not always taken.
11. Practitioners have told the OSCB that they are concerned about the future of 'early help' services and their ability to support families, the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding hub and that they are struggling to 'keep up' with the identified increase in activity.
12. Children and families have told the OSCB that they are concerned about being heard and knowing 'who' you are speaking to; the issues that worry them e.g. bullying, dealing with social media pressures and sexting, consent, sex and

healthy relationships as well as the issues confronted by lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender young people in particular in terms of identity, information and bullying.

The Case Review and Governance (CRAG) subgroup Annual Report

13. The purpose of the group is to support the OSCB in fulfilling its statutory duty to undertake reviews of cases both where the criteria are met and where they are not met in order provide valuable information on joint working and areas for improvement. The group comprises members drawn from Thames Valley Police, the County Council's children's services and legal services, the OCCG Designated Doctor and Designated Nurse and a Head teacher representative.
14. The OSCB worked on five different serious case reviews. Three reviews were completed and published. This included a joint domestic homicide review / serious case review.
15. For each review a learning summary was produced highlighting key messages for practitioners and managers. The OSCB ran two learning events and an annual conference in 2015/2016 covering a range of themes emerging from local serious case reviews and audits such as child sexual exploitation, peer violence and domestic abuse, adolescents and risk. These have been attended by over 800 local practitioners, with a mixture of frontline staff, volunteers, management, and board members. Practitioners said, "*It has given me time to reflect on the families that I work with and think who may best support them*"

Financial and Staff Implications

16. The OSCB has a budget which is reported on page 20 of the report.

Equalities Implications

17. The OSCB considers the needs of the most vulnerable children in Oxfordshire.

RECOMMENDATION

18. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to note the reports.**

Paul Burnett, Interim Independent Chair,
Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board

Background papers: OSCB Annual Report 2015/16, CRAG Annual Report 2015/16, PAQA Annual Report 2015/16

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