

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 9 November 2023 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.15 pm

Present:

Members: Councillor Nigel Simpson – in the Chair

Councillor Ian Corkin
Councillor Trish Elphinstone
Councillor Andy Graham
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Nick Leverton
Councillor Michael Waine

By Invitation: Cllr Tim Bearder, Cabinet member for Adult Social Care

Officers:

Whole of meeting Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

Part of meeting Anne Coyle,
Interim Corporate Director for Children's Services;
Karen Fuller, Corporate Director for Adult Social Care;
Laura Gadjus, OSCB Business Manager;
Lorraine Henry; Service Manager: Safeguarding;
Anne Lankester, Head of Adult Safeguarding:Oxon Place;
Steven Turner, OSAB Strategic Partnerships Manager.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting [, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting/the following additional documents:] and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

29/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were tendered by Cllr Povolotsky and by Cllr Edosomwan.

Cllr Povolotsky, at the discretion of the Chair, attended remotely as a guest of the Committee.

30/23 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

There were none.

31/23 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 4)

There were none.

32/23 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting on 14 September 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record. The Committee **NOTED** that the data requested on recruitment and retention was not yet available but that the Corporate Director for Adult Social Care would provide it.

The minutes of the meeting on 02 October 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record. The Committee **AGREED** that it should take the opportunity to scrutinise the Priority Action Plan as soon as it was available.

33/23 OXFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

(Agenda No. 5)

Cllr Tim Bearder, Cabinet member for Adult Social Care, attended to present the annual report of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board 2022-23 and was accompanied by Karen Fuller, Corporate Director for Adult Social Care; Anne Lankester, Head of Adult Safeguarding (Oxon Place) – Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and West Berkshire (BOB) Integrated Care Board (ICB); Lorraine Henry, Service Manager - Safeguarding, DoLS & Mental Health. Apologies were received from the Independent Chair of the Board who had an unavoidable prior engagement and regretted that she was unable to attend.

Cllr Bearder explained that the Council took a lead role with a statutory duty to conduct safeguarding enquiries.

The Corporate Director set out the six key messages of the Board as follows:

1. Organisations had continued to see safeguarding as everybody's business and as a priority through many challenges (e.g., funding, recruitment, retention, sickness, reorganisations, industrial action);
2. Safeguarding concerns had continued to rise (14% increase on 2021-22) as they had since 2018-19 (a 39% increase between these periods). This trend was in line with national and regional increases in concerns;
3. Safeguarding enquiries (Those incidents deemed to meet the Care Act 2014 criteria for safeguarding) had also risen at a similar rate to last year and again in line with regional and national trends;

4. A person's own home remained the most likely place for them to experience abuse, with neglect remaining the most common type;
5. Only 1% of people were unsatisfied with the outcome of the safeguarding work done to protect them;
6. 80% of people deemed to lack capacity had an advocate (family, friend or impartial advocate).

There was an element of positivity in upwards trends regarding safeguarding concerns being raised. There had been a reduction during the pandemic with people going out less.

The Corporate Director explained that the 1% dissatisfaction should be viewed in the context of adults with capacity being permitted to make unwise decisions.

The Head of Adult Safeguarding (Oxon Place) explained that the Multi Agency Risk Management (MARM) framework had come out of a thematic review following a series of nine deaths of homeless people in Oxfordshire. It was designed to support anyone working with an adult where there was a high level of risk and where the circumstances sat outside the statutory adult safeguarding framework but, nonetheless, where a multi-agency approach would be beneficial. MARM meetings were held with the client's permission and engagement and, whilst it was early days, primary care practitioners were actively encouraged to use the process where support had reached an impasse.

The Safeguarding Manager explained that whilst numbers of referrals had risen there were fewer than there had been in 2016-17. The number of enquiries received had been steady and were most often received from friends and family. There had been an increase in use of impartial advocacy to support service users without capacity.

Deaths amongst the homeless continued to be a priority and the Council was working with other councils and with the Home Office. A lead on housing had been appointed by the Council.

In discussion with the Committee, the following was raised.

There was a recognition that, regrettably, not all those who needed referral were referred and members asked what could be done to improve that. It was explained that one of the sub-groups of the Board was the engagement group which included all partners, including Help the Aged and Healthwatch, and that group focused on how to spread the word about accessing safeguarding. One of the Communications members of the BOB ICB had been co-opted to that group.

There was online training through the Board and there was usually some contact with agencies for most people. The enquiries line managed by the Safeguarding Manager's team sought to provide an easy access to professionals and others supporting people. There had been a lot of work over the past year auditing to ensure that services were aware of people's needs. It was emphasised that safeguarding was everyone's concern and work was continuing to highlight awareness of that.

There was an informal Homelessness Mortality Review group with Rapid Time Reviews conducted across the system where health, ambulance, and social care partners met to challenge each other robustly to ensure appropriate support and learning.

The Luther Street Medical Centre was an award-winning GP surgery providing healthcare to people experiencing homelessness in Oxford with a wide range of support and provision. Members were encouraged to visit the practice.

An Independent Chair offered an impartial element of scrutiny across the system. There were regular audits of training and understanding and there were Safeguarding Adults Reviews which identified necessary learning and challenge offered by the Board.

Right Care, Right Person was a national directive from the police which ensured that call handlers were able to provide appropriate signposting when it came to emergency mental health or social care for adults. This appeared to be being implemented satisfactorily with close working across the system, including with Thames Valley Police, with no detrimental impact identified despite careful monitoring.

None of the Homeless Mortality Reviews related to people who had no prior engagement with health services. The importance of effective data-sharing was highlighted and there were strong data-sharing protocols with a joint data-set being developed to enable a single point of contact.

The importance of whole system scrutiny was emphasised and members suggested that it would be helpful to draw up a governance/scrutiny map which would show how and where areas of the system received scrutiny. There were very well-established partnership arrangements with a sense of ownership across the system with external scrutiny and peer review as well. Members suggested that this external scrutiny should be highlighted.

The importance of clear language which made technical jargon accessible to the public was noted.

Whilst people were living for longer, it was not always the case that they were living healthy lives for longer. There was a growing recognition of neglect as a concept. Early intervention was very important and the MARM process assisted in that.

The importance of compassion and sensitivity when it came to language regarding the homeless community and deaths within it was highlighted. Officers would welcome member engagement on how to improve that.

The Committee **AGREED** the following actions:

- A scrutiny map to be provided to the Committee, making clear that there are levels of external scrutiny;
- The Board to consider how to make some technical language clearer in future reports;

- The Learning from the deaths of those with a learning disability (LeDeR process) report referenced within the full report should be circulated to members of the Committee.

34/23 OXFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILD BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

(Agenda No. 6)

Cllr John Howson, Cabinet member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services, had sent apologies that he had another meeting at the same time which meant he was unable to attend to present the report. The Interim Corporate Director for Children's Services, Anne Coyle, attended to present the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (OSCB) annual report 2022-23 accompanied by Laura Gadjus, OSCB Business Manager.

The Interim Corporate Director reminded the Committee that a great deal of work had been undertaken across the directorate. The Committee was reminded of the multi-agency arrangements in place. The partnership had three safeguarding issues which continued to be reviewed: neglect of children in the family home; minimising risks to children outside the home; children are often safer in school.

There was a system-wide view on safeguarding work with a subgroup looking at how partners were managing children's safeguarding. There were assessments and audits and views were sought from practitioners, families, and children. Data was regularly reviewed against local targets.

An overview of safeguarding audits conducted during the year was provided, including on Domestic Abuse, on Education, Front line teams, and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Audits and assessments of Health services, Police, and Children's Services had also been undertaken in a variety of core areas. In addition, case review work had emphasised the importance of early help for families being needed as well as the need for the recognition and impact of neglect on children. Awareness of the exploitation of children outside the home had also been highlighted as had the idea that a child in school was a safer child.

There had been a significant increase in the number of practitioners trained with 11.8k trained in 2022-23 compared to 8.8k in 2021-22.

The Business Manager explained to the Committee in summary that the intention moving forward was to consider where there might be opportunities to work closer with the adults safeguarding board. Continual improvement of the quality assurance of the arrangements were key. Recruitment was currently being undertaken to the independent chair. A key focus for the Board was the learning and development framework and the impact of arrangements.

In discussion with the Committee, a number of areas were raised.

Members noted that there was no mention of training for parents. It was explained that the statutory requirement for the annual report was reporting on local arrangements including training for practitioners. Looking to the future, there was an aspiration to include training and support for parents in a multi-agency context. It was anticipated that the report for the next year would also include a greater focus on the voice of the child.

Family Group Conferencing was being used to support a lowering in the numbers of Children We Care For. There was a partnership-wide early help strategy. The number of strengths and needs assessments had been increased which was positive. The importance of working with health visitors and school staff was emphasised.

There was a distinction between those families who had consciously opted for Elective Home Education and those children who were missing from school, particularly those subject to Child Protection Planning. Members suggested that distinction would have benefited from being made clearer in the report.

Members noted the absence of Family Safeguarding Plus in the report which had been an ambitious locality-based scheme and asked if it was still in place, albeit potentially under a different name. The Committee was assured that it was.

Work with schools, including academies, to reduce the number of exclusions and to work to ensure children remain in school was ongoing. Information about the Zero Exclusion ambition from Bristol which was referenced was requested by the Committee. The importance of well-planned and well-supported placements after exclusion was raised and members highlighted that, whilst permanent exclusions were reducing, suspensions were increasing. There was a wide-ranging discussion on the pressures on schools.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) was of great concern nationally. Work in schools and in communities with young boys and with fathers would be key. Positive representation would be very important.

The importance of a sense of belonging for children in schools was raised and it was recognised that safeguarding work took up considerable time within school but was also vital.

The Committee **AGREED** the following actions:

- The Committee requested an update on Family Safeguarding Plus

- The Committee requested information on Bristol City Council's Zero Exclusions ambition

35/23 UPDATE ON WORKING GROUPS
(Agenda No. 7)

Cllr Waine explained that he and Cllr Elphinstone had met with Cllr Howson, the Cabinet member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services, and with officers from the School Improvement Teams to discuss a number of threads relating to pupil data that it would be valuable for the Committee to scrutinise in more detail. He would hope to provide further detail at the January 2024 meeting of the Committee.

Cllr Simpson explained that the group of members which had been gathering information relating to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) was collating information and would seek to report to the Committee as soon as practicable.

36/23 COMMITTEE ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER
(Agenda No. 9)

The Committee **NOTED** that the recommendation tracker was being updated.

37/23 WORK PROGRAMME AND CABINET FORWARD PLAN
(Agenda No. 8)

The Committee **NOTED** the Cabinet Forward Plan and **AGREED** its work programme subject to the following items being added:

- Update on Family Safeguarding Plus;
- Update on Family Hubs;
- Full consideration of the verified exams date at the Committee in March.

The Committee also **AGREED** the following actions:

- That an all-member briefing should be arranged when the verified exams data is published at the end of January;
- That a meeting should be arranged to concentrate principally on work planning for the remainder of the municipal year and looking ahead provisionally to the next.

38/23 CABINET RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS
(Agenda No. 10)

The Committee resolved to **NOTE** Cabinet's response.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

