

## CABINET – 21 OCTOBER 2014

### ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OXFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD 2013-14

#### Report by Director for Children Education & Families

#### Introduction

1. Cabinet, at its meeting on 13 May 2014, agreed the recommendations of the Cabinet Advisory Group on the Strategic Assurance Framework for safeguarding children and young people. One of those recommendations was that the Director for Children's Services should provide a report to Cabinet on relevant issues for the County Council arising from the Annual Report of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB). This is the first such report.
2. This report follows the Annual Report of the OSCB for 2013- 2014 which was approved by the Board on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2014. The OSCB report is the first by its new independent Chair, Maggie Blyth.
3. This report outlines the progress achieved in relation to the objectives of the 2013-15 OSCB Business Plan and looks ahead to future challenges

#### Progress against objectives

4. Objective: *To be assured that there is effective, co-ordinated safeguarding practice, provision and outcomes across the child's journey from universal, through early help, child protection and children in care provision.*

Notable progress: 48.2% of under 5s in Oxfordshire have been involved in at least one activity in a children's centre; 104 families have had intensive support from Thriving Families; the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub opened in Sept 2014.

5. Objective: *To improve the quality assurance work and challenge role of the OSCB*

Notable progress: 400+ cases reviewed in the last year leading to new guidance for agencies and learning for practitioners.

The Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children in May 2014 commended the Board's 'learning from serious case reviews, the comprehensive auditing programme and findings from the routine consideration of an extensive suite of performance information'.

6. Objective: *To improve how we capture the engagement of children and young people and frontline practitioners.*

Notable progress: The presentation of the children and young people's own film on risk at the annual OSCB conference in March 2014. The Children in Care Council, Oxfordshire's youth parliament and sounding boards have debated safeguarding topics and are having a direct impact on service developments. For example, ex-drug users give talks to young people in schools which, they tell us, have a positive effect on their behaviours. Frontline practitioners are consulted to improve practice guidance, training and risk assessment tools produced by the Board.

7. Objective: *To maintain an inter-agency focus on safeguarding risk groups and themes in the local context.*

Notable progress: Looked after children now receive a high priority within child and adolescent mental health services. Findings from OSCB audits of children with complex needs underpinned the placement strategy to keep our most risky children 'in county' and closer to home. Children at risk of sexual exploitation continue to receive specialist multi-agency protection through the Kingfisher Team.

### **Future challenges**

8. Managing the consequences of increased activity in both child protection and child in care systems. Nationally there has been a rise and this is now pronounced in Oxfordshire.
9. Adolescents are vulnerable, as reflected in the OSCB report. So, for example, child sexual exploitation continues to be reported and the police and children's services are working hard to tackle it; referrals to child and adolescent mental health services have risen; a small but significant group of young people present a high risk of harm to the public; childhood neglect and domestic abuse all have a negative impact on young people's resilience. These are key issues for the OSCB to address in the coming year.
10. At the time of writing we are aware that two Serious Case Reviews are due to be published in 2015. Statutory guidance requires the OSCB to publish these reports which will, naturally, attract public interest and scrutiny.

### **Role of Members**

11. As the Chair of the OSCB has said '*You can be the eyes and ears of vulnerable children and families in your ward making sure their voices are heard by OSCB*' see p.49 of the report.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

12. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to note the annual report of the OSCB and the progress made in relation to its objectives.**

**Jim Leivers**

Director for Children Education & Families

Background paper: OSCB annual report for 2013/14

Contact Officer: Hannah Farncombe, Safeguarding Manager

01865 01865 815273

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