

## PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 September 2016

### SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN: THREE ANNUAL REPORTS

**Report by Hannah Farncombe Deputy Director Safeguarding, Tan Lea, Safeguarding Partnerships Manager, Children Education and Families Directorate**

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Hannah Farncombe (Deputy Director, Safeguarding, Children, Education and Families) and Tan Lea (Strategic Safeguarding Partnerships Manager, Children, Education and Families) will present a paper on **three** annual reports from the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board. The reports concern an overview of safeguarding work; serious case reviews and quality assurance.
2. The Performance Scrutiny Committee is requested to note these annual reports and provide any comments.

#### BACKGROUND

3. 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.
4. The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) is led by an independent chair and includes representation from all six local authorities in Oxfordshire, as well as the National Probation service, the Community Rehabilitation Company, Police, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, schools and Further Education colleges, the military, the voluntary sector and lay members.
5. The Board is funded through a partnership arrangement and meets 4 times per year. The Board is supported by a Business Unit located within Oxfordshire County Council.
6. The Board is required to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Oxfordshire.
7. The Board has a series of multi-agency subgroups, each of which produce an annual report. This paper also includes annual reports produced by two the subgroups working on learning and improvement in safeguarding practice: the the Case Review and Governance subgroup and The Performance, Audit and Quality Assurance subgroup.

8. The OSCB annual report will be considered at Cabinet, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the full Council.

## **PERFORMANCE ISSUES**

### **The OSCB Annual Report**

9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. 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'.
14. The annual report directs the OSCB towards the following aims for 2016/17:
  - a. 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.
  - b. Protecting younger children from the harm of neglect and parental risk factors.
  - c. 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.

- d. Testing if learning is embedded across the child protection partnership.

### **The Performance Audit and Quality Assurance Annual Report**

15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. 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.
19. 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 bi-sexual and transgender young people in particular in terms of identity, information and bullying.

### **The Case Review and Governance subgroup Annual Report**

20. The purpose of the group is to support the OSCB in fulfilling its statutory duty to undertake reviews of cases both where the criteria<sup>1</sup> 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

---

<sup>1</sup> Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015

Police, the County Council's children's services and legal services, the OCCG Designated Doctor and Designated Nurse and a Head teacher representative.

21. 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.
22. 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*"

### **NEXT STEPS**

23. Learning and recommendations from these three annual reports is reflected in the OSCB Business Plan 2016/17, which is delivered through partnership work and monitored by the OSCB on a regular basis.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

24. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note these annual reports and provide any comments.**

### **LEAD / CONTACT OFFICER**

Any queries should be forwarded to Tan Lea, Strategic Safeguarding Partnerships Manager, Children, Education and Families.

[Tan.Lea@Oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Tan.Lea@Oxfordshire.gov.uk)

07867 923 287

## **Extract from OCC Constitution**

### **Part 2, Article 7 Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

#### **Section 6. Performance Scrutiny Committee**

The Performance Scrutiny Committee will have 10 members. Its terms of reference will be:

(i) To review and scrutinise the performance of the Council and to provide a focused review of:

(a) Corporate performance and directorate performance and financial reporting

(b) Budget scrutiny

(ii) To monitor the performance of the Council by means of effective key performance indicators, review of key action plans and obligations and through direct access to service managers, Cabinet Members and partners;

(iii) To exercise the statutory right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by or on behalf of the Cabinet;

(iv) To address any queries or issues of concern that may occur over decisions being taken in relation to adult social care;

(v) To fulfil the Council's scrutiny responsibilities under the Crime and Justice Act 2006.