

Divisions Affected -

EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20th September 2024

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) Annual Report 2023-24

Report by Executive Director of People and Transformation

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED** to note the annual report of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board strategic safeguarding partners and to consider the key messages.

Executive Summary

2. This paper highlights findings from the Board's annual report on the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Oxfordshire.

Background

3. Local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are the collective responsibility of chief officers in the county council, the Integrated Care Board and Thames Valley Police.
4. These three senior safeguarding partners agree ways to co-ordinate their safeguarding services for children; act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others; and implement local and national learning including from serious child safeguarding incidents. Under current arrangements they work with relevant partners through the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, under the leadership of an Independent Chair. The arrangement is referred to as the "Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB)".
5. The report can be accessed in full on the [OSCB website](#).

Key Issues

6. The OSCB Annual Report sets out the safeguarding challenges in Oxfordshire. The report shows the need to improve practice with respect to the themes of: (1) Neglect (2) Child exploitation and (3) Keeping children safe in education.
7. There are key messages for system leaders to bring a collective focus to:

“Ensuring early help is led and resourced at a senior level in line with the Children and Young People’s plan”

“Ensuring organisations are doing everything they can to support safeguarding priorities of neglect, child exploitation and keeping children safe in school. This needs whole system change and should be everyone’s business”

“Making sure capacity and demand issues in organisations are known across the partnership so we can tackle them together as a whole system. This includes issues of recruitment and retention of our highly valued workforce”
8. Over the last year there were no Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews commissioned and one Rapid Reviews completed. Practical learning from these reviews informed the OSCB training and development programme for the multi-agency partners and volunteers. It also informed learning summaries, workshops and an online conference.
9. The follow repeated safeguarding themes have been identified in reviews last year and still current and continue to be a priority for the partnership this year
 - The impact of trauma and cumulative harm is having for children and their families
 - Family engagement and the important of consistent support to children and families
 - Information sharing across the partnership has been a reoccurring theme
 - Children with complex mental health/emotional needs has been on ongoing and current theme of learning
 - Parental mental health and parental capacity
 - Children not in school
10. **Our current priorities for system change are agreed to be correct – as a partnership we need evidence that the work being completed is having the desired outcome for our children and families.** This means helping practitioners learn how to identify early and deal with neglect; bringing together educational leaders to work on issues regarding exclusions and alternative provision to keep children safe in education; ensuring earlier and timely access to mental health and well-being services.
11. **We need to work better as one system.** We all need to think about how we work together based on what we have learnt. For example, reminding practitioners to use multi-agency chronologies, share information.

Strategic Policies and Priorities

12. The report outlines the Safeguarding Children Board's priorities, the learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, the outcomes of quality assurance work and the summarised findings with respect to the unexpected child deaths in Oxfordshire. The report supports the vision, values, objectives and strategic priorities in the Council's Strategic Plan (see [Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#)).

Financial Implications

13. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. There is no requirement for the council to commit any further financial resources towards the Board beyond what is currently committed.

Comments checked by: Jane Billington. Strategic Finance Business Partner – Children's Services, 10/09/2024, jane.billington@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

14. There are no legal implications for the Local Authority

Comments checked by: Amy Kogel. Head of Law and Legal Business Partner, Children and Families Team, 9.9.24, amy.kogel@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

15. There are no additional staff resources being requested by way of this report for the work outlined in the Annual Report.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

18. There are no additional equality & inclusion implications.

Sustainability Implications

16. The Board have moved much of its work to a virtual environment, reducing travel congestion, and no longer prints any materials for Board meetings or training sessions, instead making these available electronically. It has also reduced printing & design costs by making more things, such as this annual report, plain text on the OSCB website.

Risk Management

17. The Board is made up of the partners who attend the meetings, supported by a small team in the Board Business Unit. If organisations do not continue to provide the level of engagement with the work of the Board it is likely it would fail to meet its duties laid out in statute and its accompanying guidance. As the Local Authority is one of the safeguarding partners to work together under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017), and Working Together 2018, to ensure the Board is established and running well, this would represent a reputational risk. It is also likely any such failings would be highlighted under the Ofsted framework and in any resulting published report.

Lisa Lyons
Director of Children Services

Annexes:

Annex 1: OSCB Annual Report

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