

Divisions Affected - All

Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board

5th December 2024

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

Report by Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

Health and Wellbeing Board is **RECOMMENDED** to note the annual report of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board senior safeguarding partners and to consider the key messages.

Executive Summary

1. 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

2. Local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are the collective responsibility of chief officers in the County Council, the Integrated Care Board and Thames Valley Police.
3. 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. 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)".
4. The report can be accessed in full on the [OSCB website](#).

Key Issues

5. 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.
6. There are key messages for system leaders to bring a collective focus to:

Tackling Neglect of children in the family home by supporting those families who are not yet meeting all the needs of their children.

Minimising risks to children outside the home to ensure we have a system wide approach to keeping children safe from exploitation

Ensure that we keep children safe in schools and settings by making sure local arrangements are properly understood and better used to keep children in full time education

7. In the last year there were no Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews commissioned and one Rapid Review was completed. A thematic review on intrafamilial sexual abuse was published. Practical learning from these reviews informed the OSCB training programme for local workers and volunteers. It also informed learning summaries, workshops and an OSCB Safeguarding conference.
8. The strategic messages for system leaders from these reviews, are:
9. The Performance Audit and Quality Assurance Annual report sets out what is understood about the effectiveness of safeguarding practice. The report has evidence of high standards of partnership working and acknowledges the complex challenges and pressures faced by workers over the pandemic. It summarises the common themes for learning and improvement to support vulnerable children. It concludes that:
 - The impact of trauma and cumulative harm
 - Family engagement and consistent support
 - Information sharing across the partnership
 - Children with complex mental health/ emotional needs
 - Parental mental health and parenting capacity
 - Children not in school
10. **Our current priorities for system change are right – we just need more traction on making change happen.** 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.

Checked by: Jane Billington, Strategic Finance Business Partner
(Jane.Billington@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Legal Implications

14. It is clear in the report that the changes to the statutory guidance Working Together 2023 have been identified and form part of next year's activity. There are therefore no legal implications in adopting this as the annual report for OSCB.

Checked by: Craig Cochrane, Head of Law & Legal Business Partner,
(Craig.Cochrane@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

16. There are no additional equality & inclusion implications.

Sustainability Implications

17. 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

18. 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's Services

Annex 1: OSCB Annual Report

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