



OSCP

Oxfordshire
Safeguarding
Children Partnership

Annual Report 2024/2025

Foreword by the Senior Safeguarding Partners

We are pleased to present the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) Yearly Report for the period from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. We want to thank our front-line practitioners and managers for their dedication to championing positive outcomes and well-being for children in Oxfordshire. Their daily commitment, dedication, and care are what keep children safe.

Over the past year, we have taken the time to review and refresh our safeguarding arrangements. This work will continue into 2025-26, with further information to be published on our website in accordance with the requirements of Working Together 2023. During this period of review, several subgroups have met in person to advance the development of the groups, and we wanted to thank those colleagues for their time in coming together. This Yearly Report for 2024/2025 sets out the work, progress, and complex issues the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership is proactively addressing, in line with the requirements of the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023).

This year has also seen changes in the Chair's role within the partnership. In January 2025, Lisa Lyons, Director of Children Services, Education and Families (DCS), assumed the role of Chair, with Ian Sutherland transitioning from Chair to the Independent Scrutineer role. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ian for his contributions in supporting the partnership to strengthen our safeguarding arrangements and look forward to leveraging his expertise in Scrutiny in the coming year.

This year marked the formal publication and the beginning of the implementation of Oxfordshire's updated Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) framework. Our priorities—neglect, exploitation/ harm outside the home, and safety in education—remain unchanged to ensure embedding and long-term impact. This report outlines our progress, areas of challenge, key data trends, learning from reviews, and our forward-looking priorities.

Work has continued throughout the year on our safeguarding priorities, and this report highlights the developments that have taken place and the opportunities for further work in the coming year.

The report highlights how local safeguarding arrangements have evolved in response to national reforms, with particular emphasis on the implementation of the revised Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA). These changes mark a significant shift towards more transparent, child-centred, and system-wide approaches to safeguarding children and young people in Oxfordshire.

This annual report was approved by The Executive Group on 2nd July 2025. In line with statutory requirements and best practice, this annual report will be shared with:

- Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel
- The What Works Centre for Children's Social Care
- The Police and Crime Commissioner
- The Health and Wellbeing Board
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board



Martin Reeves,
Chief Executive of
Oxfordshire County Council



Dr Nick Broughton,
Interim Chief Executive,
Integrated Care Board
Buckingham, Oxfordshire
and Berkshire West



Jason Hogg,
Chief Constable,
Thames Valley Police

Independent Scrutineer Statement

I wanted to start by saying that the multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding children in Oxfordshire remain robust and have been strengthened through its effective implementation of the revised Working Together guidance. There is evidence of a strong commitment to safeguarding children at senior levels across all agencies. The statutory partners and other agencies demonstrate both the ability and willingness to collaboratively address complex safeguarding issues with determination and shared purpose to improve the lives of our children and families.

I was appointed as the Independent Chair/Scrutineer in February 2024 under the previous arrangements of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB). Since January 2025, I have transitioned into the role of Independent Scrutineer for the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP). The focus of the Scrutineer in 2024-25 was to assist, support, and advise the OSCB on its review of structures, considering local needs and the requirements of new Government guidance.

The Scrutineer fulfils a leadership role within the partnership and works alongside the Designated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) and Local Safeguarding Partners (LSPs). The Independent Scrutineer plays a key role in ensuring that the partnership continues to drive for continuous improvement in the delivery of services to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families. Essentially, the Scrutineer operates as a 'critical friend' by offering challenge and support, based on an understanding and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data available to partners, and by accessing the lived experience of children, young people, and professionals to test and validate how well our system is working for them. The functions of the Independent Scrutineer are outlined in section 89 of "Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023."

The Independent Scrutineer plan in Oxfordshire has been set out and agreed upon by the Executive Group for 2025-26 based on national guidance. The scrutiny plan will focus on developing a comprehensive appraisal of the performance of the partnership in the following areas:

- Leadership and Governance
- Learning from Reviews – local and national
- Performance Analysis and Quality Assurance
- Learning and Development of Practice
- Participation and Engagement

The priorities include:

- Neglect
- Child Exploitation/Harm outside the home
- MASA Operational Effectiveness
- Children in Detained Settings
- Voice of Children and Young People

I have supported and challenged the discussions of the Child Safeguarding Practice sub-group about cases where children have suffered serious harm due to child abuse or neglect. I participated in high-quality analytical discussions about these cases, where managers from different agencies came together to discuss openly how to overcome challenges. The partnership in Oxfordshire faces similar key practice challenges to those experienced by other local safeguarding partnerships, such as balancing the commitment to empowering parents and carers while ensuring children's safety.

It is very positive that the OSCP has set itself some highly challenging questions to answer about seeking to resolve a range of safeguarding issues that can be intractable across the country. It is encouraging that agencies in Oxfordshire can build on their strengths to focus on these questions while continuing to ensure that the current systems are working effectively. The leaders in the partnership have used the self-assessment to identify key areas for improvement, particularly the collection and analysis of the data relating to the safety and well-being of children in a more integrated, and planned action is being progressed to address this important partnership function.

Independent Scrutineer Statement

There is also clear leadership and priority given to safeguarding in each of the statutory agencies (local authority, NHS, and police), as well as in schools and the voluntary and community sector groups working in Oxfordshire. The senior leaders of the statutory agencies meet every two months and often more frequently, demonstrating both an ability to work well together and to challenge one another and resolve disagreements with or without the need for the Independent Scrutineer's involvement. Whilst the senior leaders are clearly engaged there is still scope to strengthen communication, as these strategic relationships develop further.

There are and will continue to be challenges in a large county with some areas made up of people living in poverty. Furthermore, Oxfordshire is also host to regional and national services such as paediatric services at local hospitals and other specialised facilities.

In summary, the multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding children in Oxfordshire are strong, and this strength will enhance the ability to meet future challenges in terms of safeguarding children. The introduction of the dedicated role of independent scrutiny, replacing the independent chair function, will further strengthen the OSCP's resilience in the future.



Ian Sutherland

Ian Sutherland
Independent Scrutineer



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About Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership

Oxfordshire is renowned for its picturesque villages, centuries-old structures and numerous heritage sites. The county is home to approximately 150,000 children and young people under the age of 18. According to the 2021 Census, the largest ethnic group in Oxfordshire is White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, or British (76.8%), while 23.2% of residents come from non-white British backgrounds.

This year, safeguarding systems in Oxfordshire have continued to strengthen through the rigorous review of the arrangements throughout this year. In December 2023, the revised Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance outlined updated legislative safeguarding requirements for individuals, organisations, and agencies. It established a framework for the three local safeguarding partners—the local authority, Integrated Care Board, and local police force—to collaborate in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs.

In preparation for the new guidance and in response to its publication, the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) and Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) in Oxfordshire dedicated this year to ensuring that the safeguarding arrangements in the county are as robust as possible. A three-year strategic plan (2024-2027) was developed to ensure readiness for the updated guidance. This plan was updated in January 2024 following the publication of the guidance and was further enhanced by a development plan overseen by the LSPs. This plan will ensure the implementation of the new Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance and enable the partnership to monitor progress.

The new arrangements are published on our website and can be found [here](#), in line with the requirements of Working Together 2023, and the current arrangements are described in this report.



OSCP Executive

The [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) statutory guidance sets out the multi-agency responsibilities for delivering effective help, support, and protection to children and their families. This guidance is applicable to all organisations and professionals working directly with children and families. As part of the government's Children's Social Care: [Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy](#), a series of reforms have been introduced to transform the children's social care system. Additionally, the [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) represents a significant step towards achieving the government's Opportunity Mission—aimed at breaking the link between a young person's background and their future outcomes. The revised Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance, published in December 2023, marks the initial phase of these reforms, with a strong emphasis on:

- Strengthening multi-agency collaboration across the entire system of help, support, and protection for children and their families.
- Promoting a child-centred approach within a whole family focus.
- Ensuring strong, effective, and consistent child protection practices.

The guidance also emphasises the role and accountability of the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) for the effectiveness and outcomes of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) in their local areas. The government has directed safeguarding partners in every local area to comply with a number of area's which are laid out in the

Implementing the Requirements of Working Together 2023 - Local Response

The implementation of the Working Together 2023 requirements in Oxfordshire was coordinated through the leadership structure of the MASA Executive Group in partnership with the Chair/Scrutineer of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB). The revised statutory guidance was introduced to the group agenda, initiating early discussions in compliance with the requirements in January 2024. A detailed action plan was developed, outlining the activities undertaken in preparation for publishing revised multi-agency arrangements in December 2024. This plan included a series of workshops, development events, and meetings. Partners worked with national facilitators to understand how best to review and strengthen multi-agency working across the entire system of help, support, and protection for children and their families at a local level, using a 'Health Check' self-assessment tool to identify necessary reforms to comply with the statutory guidance.

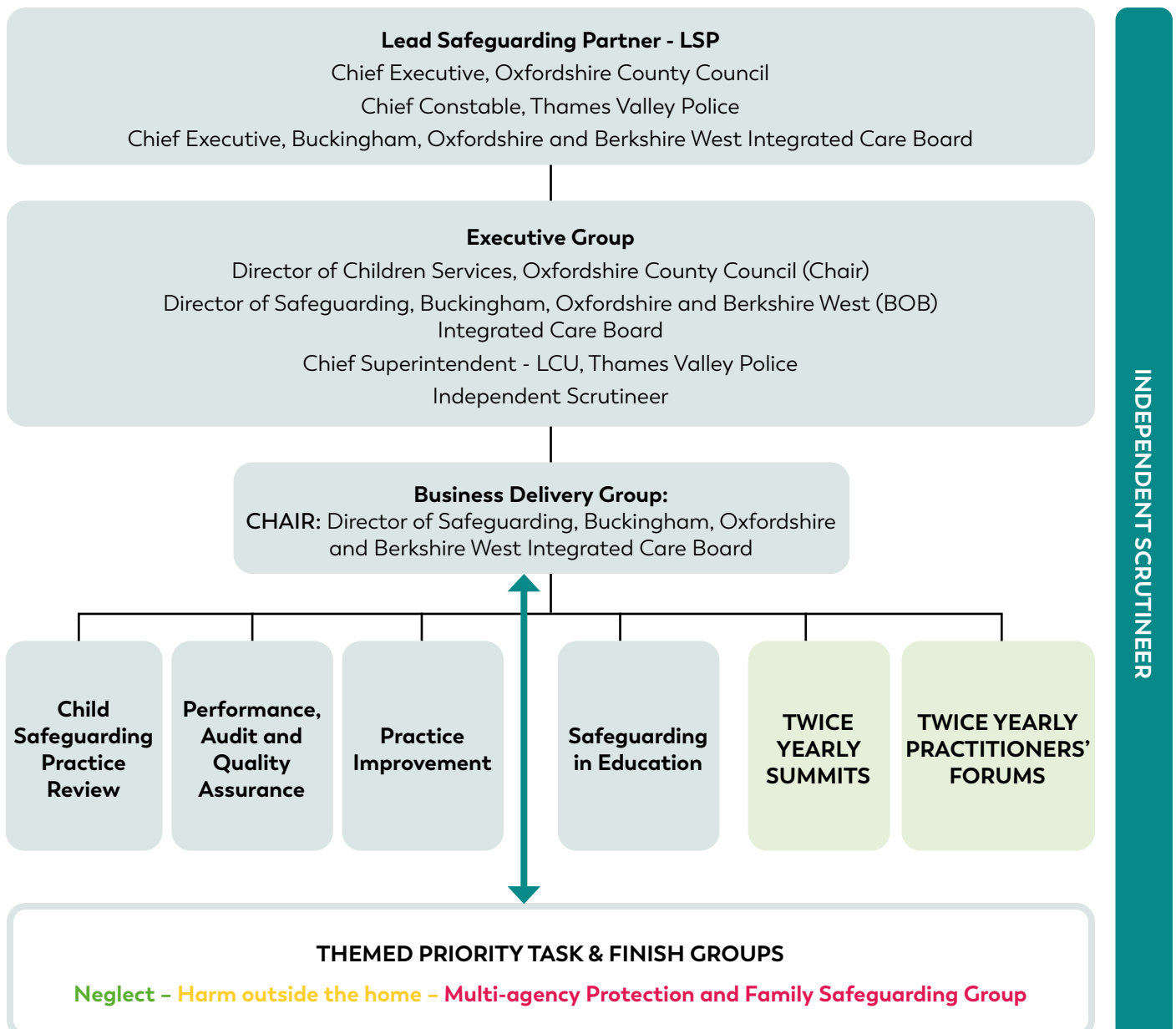
The significant changes made ahead of publishing new safeguarding arrangements governing Oxfordshire's borders includes:

- Naming Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs).
- Naming Delegate Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) with a scheme of delegation setting out the responsibilities for delivering multi-agency safeguarding functions and processes.
- Appointing an Independent Scrutineer to have full oversight of the arrangements to review and reform the MASA in response to the Working Together 2023 requirements.
- Rebranding from the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP).
- Restructuring the position and direction of groups retained from the former OSCB deemed necessary to support the delivery of the MASA across the county.
- The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership published the MASA for the local area on 11th December 2024, establishing the framework endorsed and committed to by the LSPs.

OSCP Executive

The structure diagram below was agreed upon and came into effect from 1st January 2025 following the publication of the new arrangement document in December 2024.

OSCP Structure: 1st January 2025



OSCP Priority areas – What has been achieved this year?

The priority groups below is the work completed in the previous arrangements of the board.

Child Exploitation

The Child Exploitation (CE) Sub Group has been actively working on several key areas to enhance the safety and well-being of children in Oxfordshire. Below is a summary of the significant initiatives and observations discussed during this reporting year.

Multi-Agency Exploitation Procedures

Work is ongoing through the Business Unit to update the multi-agency exploitation procedures available to practitioners in Oxfordshire. This update will include local guidance relating to various forms of child exploitation, such as:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Children from Abroad, including Victims of Modern Slavery
- Child Criminal Exploitation
- Gang Activity, Youth Violence, and Criminal Exploitation

Harm Outside the Home

The group is reviewing Oxfordshire's response to child exploitation and harm outside the home by examining national good practices. Children Services are developing a new process for addressing harm outside the home. The existing Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Process (MARAMP) is also being reviewed for potential improvements. Partners, including Community Safety Partnerships (CSP), Health, Police, and schools, will be consulted for their involvement in these processes.

School Attendance and Criminal Exploitation

Observations from the Missing and Exploitation panel have identified a clear link between school attendance and children at risk of criminal exploitation. The Institute of Public Policy estimated that 63% of the prison population had been excluded during their time at school. The group is mapping schools where children have been excluded or are on reduced timetables with data around child exploitation to identify areas of concern and where to deploy resources.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Pilot and Modern Slavery

The NRM pilot has identified several children from Africa, coming via Libya into the UK, who report being victims of modern slavery in Libya. The exploitation includes drug trafficking, domestic servitude, and slavery. Further work will be undertaken with this group to address their needs and provide support.

These initiatives reflect the CE Sub Group's commitment to safeguarding children and addressing the complex issues surrounding child exploitation in Oxfordshire. The collaborative efforts of various partners and stakeholders are crucial in ensuring the effectiveness of these strategies.

OSCP Priority areas – What has been achieved this year?

Neglect

Neglect Subgroup Key Areas

The Neglect Subgroup has continued to be well-attended by all agencies, with regular submissions of service and agency action plans and progress reports. Recognising the importance of regular sessions for leaders in neglect to exchange information and support partnership activities, the subgroup will remain active for another year into 2025 to consolidate the aims of the strategy.

Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) Health Visitor Training and Joint Working with Children Social Care

The subgroup has been working on GCP2 health visitor training and joint working with Children's Social Care (CSC). Additionally, a reviewed tool for screening, which mirrors GCP2, will replace the THRIVE tool, as it was not being utilised by the partnership and was considered too lengthy. The new tool is expected to be endorsed in 2025.

Impact and Outcomes

The subgroup has seen several positive impacts and outcomes:

The number of Strength and Needs Assessments (S&NA) for neglect in 0-5 year olds has continued to improve, increasing from 42 per quarter in 2022/23 to 74 in 2023/24.

- A higher proportion of children starting a Child in Need plan for neglect have previously had an S&NA completed, with about half in Q3 and Q4.
- The number of children starting a Child Protection (CP) plan for neglect is decreasing, both as a raw number and as a percentage of all new CP plans.

These initiatives and outcomes reflect the Neglect Subgroup's commitment to improving practice and supporting children affected by neglect through collaborative efforts and strategic planning

Safeguarding in Education (SiE)

At the July 2024 meeting, the Safeguarding in Education group received several important updates and information on various initiatives and progress. Here is a summary of the key areas discussed:

Operation Encompass

Thames Valley Police (TVP) shared an update regarding concerns previously raised about information sharing through [Operation Encompass](#). This initiative is designed to mitigate the long-term effects of domestic abuse by enabling early intervention and support. When police attend incidents involving domestic violence or abuse where children are present—either directly or indirectly—they notify the designated safeguarding lead at the child's school before the start of the next school day. This ensures the child receives timely and appropriate support. In addition, school staff are offered training to help them recognise and support children affected by domestic abuse. Operation Encompass is active across all police forces in the UK and is available to every school. Where capacity allows, it also extends to registered nurseries, pre-schools, and childminders.

Alternative Provision (AP)

An update was provided on the numbers of children attending alternative provision and the emerging needs and opportunities for targeted support. The largest group of children accessing AP are those requiring behaviour support. The number of approved AP providers is increasing, and there is a focus on supporting further school-based AP. An AP strategy has been developed, and SiE will continue to champion and support the implementation.

Impact and Outcomes

- Operation Encompass: the group is assured that robust and effective plans are in place to address the identified issues with Operation Encompass and will continue to monitor progress against the implementation of these improvements.
- Alternative Provision: the group is assured that there is greater clarity on the numbers of children accessing AP and will continue to monitor the implementation of the AP strategy.

These updates reflect the ongoing efforts and commitment of the group to improve safeguarding practices and support the well-being of children in education.

OSCP Priority areas – What has been achieved this year?

Implementing the MASA

The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) has an active implementation plan detailing the activities to be undertaken following the publication of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) and during the transitional stages. This plan includes clarifying and refining the agreed structures and groups to deliver the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local safeguarding arrangements, as well as the strategic priorities required to deliver effective MASA.

The implementation plan provides a brief account of the progress made to date, showing attention in all areas within scope, albeit with some variation in the pace of change. Key details include:

Review of Subgroups: Chairs and groups have reviewed the direction outlined in the MASA, prompting a reconsideration of roles and expectations. They have agreed on Terms of Reference (TORs) and developed workplans to translate these TORs into a structured plan. This plan will guide their efforts and measure success, ensuring everything stays on track. Additionally, the structure and functions of the groups will inform each other's work, leading to increased collaboration and triangulation of key elements. For example, learnings from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews will impact training, procedures, and auditing work for the partnership.

Review of Strategic Priority Groups: The OSCP has mainly retained the same priorities (Neglect and Child Exploitation) from the former arrangements of OSCB, these were framed across the whole system of help, support, and multi-agency protection. The third strategic priority is the introduction of a whole systems approach to family safeguarding.

1. CHILD NEGLECT

- Enabling partners to work together to act early to protect those at risk of abuse or neglect
- Exploring the right help is given to children at the right time along specific themes (i.e. Neglect, Domestic Abuse, Children with Disabilities.)

2. CHILD EXPLOITATION & CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

- Ensuring Targeted multi agency support, intervention and effective multi-agency practice to protect those at risk of harm outside the home, and exploitation, in all its forms
- Improving our Contextual Safeguarding approach to Exploitation.

3. MULTI-AGENCY PROTECTION:

- Understanding the partnership approach to risks across processes
- Examining the application and impact of the threshold to support, including the reviewing of multi-agency meetings

Summit and Practitioners Events: The formation of these events is currently being put into place. The Business Delivery Group (BDG) and the Practice Improvement subgroup are in the early stages of considering their roles, expectations, TORs, and work activities. The arrangements for these events will be reflected in their planning.

Strategic Safeguarding Boards Protocol: One of the key activity from the 2024 review of the safeguarding board arrangements was a strengthened focus and clearer understanding of the safeguarding activities being carried out across various boards and partnerships. These bodies share responsibilities and accountabilities for safeguarding within the county. As a result, the recommendation to establish Oxfordshire's Joint Statutory, Strategic Partnership & Boards was implemented. Group members have been identified, and the first meeting—initiated by the OSCP Business Manager—was held on 10 March 2025. The intention is for the chairing of strategic partnership groups to rotate, with a highlight report from each meeting shared with the Business Unit (for onward sharing at the Business Delivery Group), following the agreed meeting frequency.

Business Unit: The necessity and dependency on strong business support to coordinate all requirements to demonstrate effective safeguarding arrangements is a priority for the business unit. Work is currently underway to align the OSCP business team to the new arrangements, aiming to have the right positions to better coordinate and assist the partnership in evidencing effective safeguarding arrangements.



Funding arrangements

The Working Together 2023 guidance states that the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) should agree on the level of funding required to deliver multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This includes consideration of business and analytical support, independent scrutiny, infrastructure, and core functions such as local children safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency training, and learning events. It is the responsibility of the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) to ensure that adequate funding is allocated and spent in line with agreed priorities.

Funding contributions from the statutory safeguarding partners should be equitable and agreed upon by the LSPs. The funding for these arrangements should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they can meet the financial needs of the arrangements. The funding partners have continued their commitment to supporting the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Most of the budget is allocated to staffing the business unit, with professional services, including the undertaking of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) which require an independent commissioned author, being the next largest area of expenditure. This year has seen an underspend, primarily due to vacancies in staffing within the business unit. The underspend will be allocated to a reserve budget, which the partnership will utilise in the coming year to address identified gaps in response to learning from reviews, OSCP priorities, and the findings of any relevant inspections.



What do we know – Data

Performance, Audit, and Quality Assurance (PAQA) Subgroup

The Performance, Audit, and Quality Assurance (PAQA) subgroup is responsible for monitoring, overseeing, and scrutinising data. For the coming year, the audit plan will be responsive to data analysis, with a workplan that includes broader data analysis from across the partnership. The local authority performance team has been providing a rich source of data for this subgroup to consider and analyse. This openness reflects the local authority's commitment to identifying challenges and seeking opportunities. Plans are in place to review the data dashboard in line with the OSCP priorities and to include data from wider partners. Data has always come from health and police but has always been collated by the local authority.

Child Protection Systems

Child protection data is routinely examined by children's services, with findings shared and analysed as required across the partnership via subgroups. As of April 2024, the number of children subject to a child protection plan is 17% below that of our statistical neighbours and is decreasing—6% lower than this time last year and 30% lower than two years ago (196 fewer children). This reduction aligns with the reinvigoration of the Family Safeguarding Approach. Fewer children are starting a plan, 17% less than our statistical neighbours, and children are on a plan for slightly less time than elsewhere. At the end of December 2024, 19% of children had been on a plan for more than a year compared with 20% elsewhere. The timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) is in line with similar authorities, and in the last two months, all ICPCs were on time. All children who were on a plan at the end of the quarter had been reviewed on time.

A July 2024 analysis of children on a child protection plan shows that children from a mixed ethnic background are over-represented compared to the current reception to Year 11 school population (10.3% compared to 7.5%). Children from an Asian background are under-represented (7.0% compared to 12.1%), while children from a black ethnic background on a child protection plan are slightly above the school population (10.2% compared to 9.2%).

Children We Care For

167 children became children we care for between April and December 2024. 28 of the 167 are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) (17%). At the end of January 2025 785 children (including 87 UASC) were cared for. Consistent with authorities across England, Oxfordshire is seeing growth in the child-in-care population. The proportion of our care leavers in education, employment, and training is in the top quartile nationally, with 95.6% of 16–17-year-olds in education, employment, or training. The rates of permanent exclusion and suspension are significantly lower than national averages and compared to statistical neighbours. The Partnership also has plans to bring children who are placed outside of Oxfordshire closer to home in the forth coming year.

What do we know – Data

Support for Children and Families

Early Help in Oxfordshire: The refreshed Early Help & Prevention strategy is dedication to championing positive outcomes and well-being for children across the partnership to address unmet needs at the earliest stage. We aim to see the impact of this strategy with evidence of an increase in Strength & Needs forms as a result of this shared endeavour.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) contacts have steadily increased year on year. To address this, efforts are underway to encourage partner agencies to enhance their quality assurance processes for referrals before they are submitted to MASH, thereby reducing referrals where thresholds are not met and other avenues of support are available. It is also recognised that many referrers include MASH as part of their pathways and may feel unable to provide support themselves or are not commissioned to offer specific support. One of the priorities for the upcoming year will be revising the threshold of need document. This revision aims to align the partnership's efforts in supporting and identifying children and their families more effectively and based on identified needs achieving a timely response. In 2023/24 **29,770** contacts were received, (82 per day). This led to **5203 referrals** (331 per 10,000 children). 21% of our referrals were families that had been re-referred within 12 months. In the six months to March 2025 this has reduced to 15%.

In 2023/24, MASH completed 95% of red enquiries and 66% of non-red enquiries within the required timescales, against targets of 90% and 75% respectively. To improve performance, revised duty and allocation arrangements were introduced, supported by a new Operating Protocol. As a result, between July 2024 and January 2025, 97% of red enquiries and 73% of non-red enquiries were completed within timescales.

The MASH Steering Group and operational group has been working hard to collectively monitor and review multi-agency activities.

We have conducted multi-agency audits to enhance the understanding of MASH thresholds and outcomes across the partnership. The key themes identified include:

- Checks and Decisions: Additional checks are necessary to support evidence-based decision-making.
- Police Checks: Revisiting police checks to improve decision-making when new intelligence arises between enquiries.
- Referral Quality: Emphasising the importance of communicating with referrers to improve the quality and accuracy of referrals.
- Timeliness: Making timely decisions can lead to better outcomes, while delays may risk reducing engagement or exacerbating concerns.
- Partner Agencies: to ensure the quality of referrals

These efforts are aimed at ensuring a more effective and cohesive approach to safeguarding within our community.

*red enquiry - information indicates child has suffered or at risk of suffering significant harm and immediate action may be required to safeguard the child; to be completed within 24 hours of receipt of contact.

Children's Health

We continue to see a reduction in A&E attendances for self-harm among Oxfordshire children, with a 9% reduction in the last 12 months (57 fewer children aged 10-19) attending A&E for self-harm and a 24% reduction in hospital admissions (32 fewer children aged 15-19). However, we are seeing an increase in both A&E attendances and hospital admissions for drug-related issues.

Safe at School

119,713 pupils attending 362 schools in June 2024. 84.3% attending state funded school (primary, secondary, special). 15.3% attend independent schools – more than double the national average (6.5%).

The provisional absence rates for terms 1-2 were 6.4%, in line with the national rate of 6.2% and an improvement on the same time last year (6.9%). A total of 1,915 pupils (2.3%) were severely absent, missing 50% of their school sessions, and 13,852 pupils (17.0%) were persistently absent, missing 10% of their sessions. This figure improved from 19% for the corresponding terms last year.



Findings from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Serious Incident Notifications and Reviews

During this reporting year, two serious incident notifications were submitted to the National Panel, resulting in Rapid Reviews. One of these reviews did not lead to a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) and this was agreed with National Panel on the basis that all key learning had been identified as part of the Rapid Review process.

At present, one CSPR remains active, with the Partnership currently finalising arrangements with the national panel. Eight key recommendations, along with priority areas for partnership-wide reflection and learning, are actively being advanced across the partnership.

Learning summaries have been produced to ensure key findings and lessons arising from the rapid reviews conducted by the partnership. These summaries are available on the OSCP website to facilitate the dissemination of learning and ensure accessibility for all partners.

Common Themes with National Reviews

- Children with complex mental health/emotional needs
- Limited access to universal mental and physical support for children not in school (electively home educated)
- Assessing risks and providing support for the whole family
- Recognising and responding to the vulnerabilities of babies and adolescents
- Understanding the roles of fathers/male carers and extended family members
- Best practices identified and implemented

Key Actions from the Partnership

Throughout the year, safeguarding partners have demonstrated a commitment to improving multi-agency arrangements and safeguarding practices. One of the most frequently reported actions is the implementation of recommendations from local and national child safeguarding practice reviews. Safeguarding partners respond to review findings by:

- **Updating Policies, Procedures, and Guidance Documents:** The procedures subgroup met six times between April 1st, 2024, and March 31st, 2025. The group reviewed and approved twenty-one updates to TRIX chapters, including updates to procedures linked to key themes from reviews and priority areas such as online safety, information sharing, assessments, and child criminal exploitation, including Domestic Abuse. You can register for updates [\[here\]](#).
- **Collaborative Policy Development:** The group worked with the Adults Board to develop a joint Transitional Safeguarding Policy for Oxfordshire. In response to learning from reviews, members of the group developed Pre-Birth Guidance to improve practice in relation to pre-birth assessments, revised Bruising Guidance for Mobile Children, and updated the Resolving Professional Concerns and Disagreement Policy.
- **Improving Accessibility of Procedures and Guidance:** Following feedback regarding the accessibility of procedures, protocols, and local guidance, and a change to the TRIX manual template, the business unit developed a new Safeguarding Procedures, Guidance, and Resources webpage. The new page includes a link to the TRIX manual and an A-Z of all local guidance and protocols previously held in the TRIX resource library and across other webpages.

Multi-agency Training and Annual Conference

Organisations must ensure that all staff and volunteers receive appropriate safeguarding training. Agencies in Oxfordshire are expected to meet the standards set out in the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Safeguarding Introductory Training, Minimum Content Requirements. The Lead Safeguarding Partners are responsible for providing multi-agency safeguarding professional development and training through a blended approach, including online self-directed learning, taught online sessions, and other opportunities available via the OSCP webpage.

The Business Unit supports the Practice Improvement subgroup to develop and promote safeguarding learning opportunities, particularly in areas of joint responsibility like domestic abuse. The OSCP 'Practice Improvement Framework' uses an outcomes-based accountability methodology to measure:

- **How much did we do?**
- **How well did we do it?**
- **What difference did it make to outcomes for children and young people?**

Training Delivery and Impact

Courses are delivered by volunteer trainers from the OSCP 'Training Pool,' consisting of over 80 practitioners in Oxfordshire. In the past year, the following courses were offered and attended:

Course Type	Number of Courses	Offered Places	Attended
Core courses	103	2700	2481
EY core courses	51	1260	1103
Themed courses	123	3121	1844
Total	277	7081	5428
Conference	1	152	117
eLearning	-	-	11,586

Impact on Practice

Participants reported increased confidence in incorporating safeguarding knowledge into their practice. For instance, the Child Exploitation course showed a learning gain from 3.87 to 4.57.

This comprehensive approach ensures that safeguarding training is effective, impactful, and continuously improving to meet the needs of children and young people.

Multi-agency Training and Annual Conference

Post course Feedback:

“ ‘TVP COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP INTELLIGENCE - brilliant initiative for contextual safeguarding!’ ”

“ ‘... this has been very helpful, and my toolbox has expanded’ ”

“ ‘Genograms are a useful tool I hadn't come across before’ ”

“ ‘I want to look at rolling out area experts as we grow our student and staff body, and start training people up early to own their areas’ ”

“ ‘Safeguarding on agenda needs to be more robust - not just pupil updates but bringing information to the meeting about latest updates, quizzes, on the spot questioning etc.’ ”

Figure 5.

The figure below provides a breakdown of agencies across the partnership attending multi-agency training.

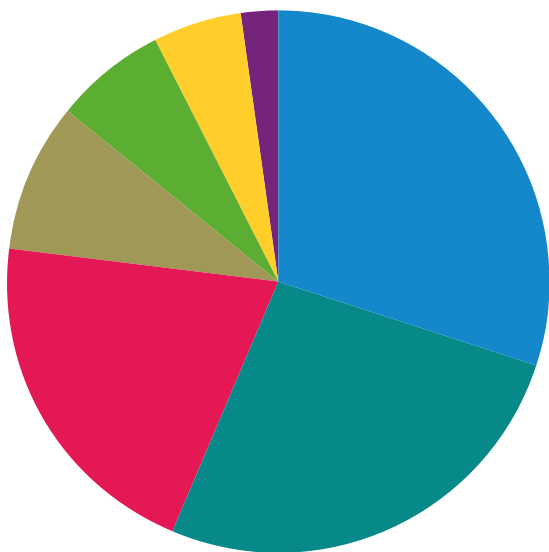
Overall multi-agency training across the year has evaluated positively as outlined in Figure four, increasing knowledge and confidence, which is consistent with previous years. In the coming year the Practice Improvement subgroup will consider how the impact on practice and outcomes of multiagency learning and development opportunities, which includes training, can be further evidenced.

Category	Count
Police	32
District Councils	133
Childminders	227
Nurseries	1041
Early Years Other	99
Foster Carers	21
Children Social Care	381
GPs	42
Health	194
Oxfordshire County Council Other	192
Private, Community + Voluntary Sector	430
Housing	48
Adult Social Care	42
Schools	2065
Other	598

OSCB Annual Conference 2024

The OSCB Annual Conference took place on Wednesday, 10th July 2024, at Unipart, focusing on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). The event was highly anticipated and fully booked within two weeks of going live on the OSCB booking system. A total of 136 delegates and 7 speakers attended in person, with an additional 2 speakers presenting online. Members of the training pool and some board members assisted with facilitating tables and helping the OSCB business unit with setup and sign-in on the day.

Delegate Attendance and Sector Representation



Sector	Delegate Numbers
Education	41
Children's Social Care	36
Health	28
Voluntary and Community Sector	12
Other	9
Thames Valley Police	7
District Councils	3
Housing	0

Keynote and Speaker Highlights

The conference featured a mix of local and national speakers, with a keynote presentation by Jane Wiffin from the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. Additionally, survivors May Baxter-Thornton, and Elysia and Katie from the REIGN Collective C.I.C., shared their personal experiences of working with professionals to help improve practices when working with CSA survivors.

Delegate Feedback and Evaluation

Out of those who attended, 109 delegates completed an evaluation form. The majority rated the conference as excellent or good. Delegates were asked to rate their understanding of CSA at the start of the day and again in the post-event evaluation:

Rating	Pre-event	Post-event
Excellent	14	61
Good	63	46
Adequate	31	1
Inadequate	1	0

The OSCB Annual Conference 2024 was a resounding success, providing valuable insights and learning opportunities for all attendees.

The feedback from the day was overwhelmingly positive:

“First time attending OSCB conference, learnt a lot. The survivors were fantastic, so powerful.”

“Excellent speakers, a good balance of experience, guidance and impact.”

Voice of Children, Families, and Communities

In Oxfordshire, one of the four key outcomes within the [Children and Young People's Plan](#) is to ensure that the views of a diverse range of children and young people shape the strategic plans of the council and its partnerships. During its review of arrangements this year, the partnership has committed to strengthen the voice of children and families. Our ambition is to develop a comprehensive voice and influence strategy that empowers children to participate actively, feel empowered, and engage meaningfully to achieve better outcomes and resilience.

The strategy aims to operate at individual, family, service, and strategic levels, helping to identify the best ways to support and engage children and young people at all levels. The partnership is committed to embedding the voice and influence of children and young people within the culture, discussions, decisions, and actions of the council. Hearing and responding to their voices are paramount to the work of the safeguarding partnership in Oxfordshire.

The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) is dedicated to fostering a culture where the voices of young people are heard and responded to across all its work. The Partnership recognises that more work is needed to hear the voices of children and young people who have experienced the safeguarding system through Early Help, Child in Need, and Child Protection. The Executive group has agreed to fund some recourse within the business unit to advance these efforts. Additionally, there is acknowledgment of the significant work being done within the third sector and educational establishments, which is valuable insights from these efforts are being increasingly recognised and integrated.



Priorities for 2025-2026

In conclusion as you have read the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) has undergone a year of meaningful transition and development. The formal publication of revised multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) in December 2024 marks a significant step forward in our commitment to strengthening how we safeguard children, support families, and work together as a partnership. While navigating structural and capacity shifts with resilience, the partnership has demonstrated resilience, cohesion, and purpose. However, this report also identifies several challenges that will require continued attention. These include the pace of change in subgroup alignment, the impact of rising mental health needs, gaps in education engagement, and the need to embed consistent family and child participation across all aspects of partnership activity.

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Strategic Plan 2024-2027

This Strategic Business Plan outlines the strategic Priorities for Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership – (OSCP) spanning the period 2024-27.

It is intentionally brief to focus on the long-term strategic priorities of the new leadership and governance structure outlined in the published MASA

The Strategic Plan sets out our shared vision and actions that will help keep children, young people and families in Oxfordshire safe and protected from abuse and neglect.

This Strategic Plan sets out our strategic priority areas of focus for 2024-2027 and will be reviewed annually

Our Responsibility

To support and enable local agencies to work together in a system where:

- Excellent practice is the norm
- Partners work collaboratively to achieve the same end goals
- Partner agencies hold one another to account effectively
- There is early identification of 'new' safeguarding issues
- Learning is promoted and embedded
- Information is shared effectively; and
- The public can feel confident that children are protected from harm

Our Core Functions

As a safeguarding children partnership, there will always be a range of business-as-usual issues and actions that we must pay particular attention to if children are to remain safe and their welfare is to be promoted. These represent on-going safeguarding activities that must be continuously coordinated and evaluated if the OSCP is to fulfil its statutory responsibilities under the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and statutory guidance Working Together 2023.

The OSCP will continue to give conspicuous oversight of progressive and continuing improvement activities as well as on the core business functions for multi-agency safeguarding practice.

Our Learning Journey ...

We will use information gathered through our assurance activities to:

- Celebrate and share good safeguarding practices
- Inform changes in Policy, Procedures and Practice Guidance
- Drive continuous improvement in safeguarding practice
- Promote learning from reviews work Create multi-agency training opportunities

Themed Priorities

1. CHILD NEGLECT - i.e.

- Enabling partners to work together to act early to protect those at risk of abuse or neglect
- Exploring the right help is given to children at the right time along specific themes (i.e. Neglect, Domestic Abuse, Children with Disabilities).

2. CHILD EXPLOITATION & CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING i.e.

- Ensuring Targeted multi agency support, intervention and effective multi-agency practice to protect those at risk of harm outside the home, and exploitation, in all its forms
- Improving our Contextual Safeguarding approach to Exploitation.

3. MULTI-AGENCY PROTECTION: i.e.

- Understanding the partnership approach to risks across s17 & s47 processes
- Examining the application and impact of the threshold to support, including
- The reviewing of multi-agency meetings for the purposes of s17 and s47 processes.



How do we deliver:

The OSCP will continuously monitor to gain assurance of the effectiveness of the local multi-agency working to help, support and protect the welfare of children in Oxfordshire.

Evidence of the difference being made will be sought in the following ways:

- **SELF-EVALUATIONS**

Section 11 self-assessments and Section 175/157 audit - to understand how well partners understand their respective roles and responsibilities towards safeguarding children, young people, and families

- **MULTI-AGENCY AUDITS**

Linked to OSCP functions, priorities, or areas of focus arising from local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, to assess the compliance of case files and quality of safeguarding outcomes for children, young people, and families.

- **CONVERSATION, SURVEYS and PRACTITIONERS FORUMS**

To consult with the workforce to gain knowledge to assess thoughts, opinions and insight to safeguarding practice from professionals working directly with children, young people, and families.

- **SERVICE USER ENGAGEMENT:**

Proactive approaches to engage directly with children, young people, and families to understand their experience of safeguarding practice.

- **DATA, INTELLIGENCE & ANALYSIS:**

To identify patterns and trends and measure safeguarding performance.

- **SCRUTINY ACTIVITIES:**

Forensic delve in to specific programmed areas across the safeguarding arrangements, including, leadership, compliance, practice performance, learning and improvement.

Priorities for 2025-2026

As we move into 2025/2026, OSCP is clear on its direction. The partnership will:

- Consolidate and embed the new MASA arrangements.
- Strengthen the voice of children and families within planning, scrutiny, and delivery.
- Improve our data infrastructure to inform targeted safeguarding interventions.
- Focus on high-impact issues—neglect, exploitation, and education—as ongoing priorities.
- Build a culture of learning and challenge that supports continuous improvement.

It was agreed that the priorities for 2025-26 should be:

- Child Neglect.
- Child Exploitation/Harm outside the home.
- Mult-agency protection & Family Safeguarding Approach.

These priorities will allow the partnership to continue the work established in 2024-25 and proactively respond to emerging themes and opportunities for growth. The Executive will seek assurance regarding the response of the current safeguarding system to these areas and identify opportunities to develop practice and improve the outcomes for children in Oxfordshire. The outcomes related to these priorities and the impact of any development work will be outlined in the 2025-26 annual report.

Future focus

To ensure continuous improvement in safeguarding practice and to ensure momentum is maintained, the partnership have already committed to some areas of identified work for 2025-26:

- Undertaking a revision of the S11 Self-Assessment.
- Fully embedding the new arrangements set out and agreed in December 2024.
- Development of a robust and responsive audit and review programme.
- Further develop systems to demonstrate impact and levels of assurance.
- Develop the voice and influence of children, young people, parents, carers and families, in particular those with experience of the safeguarding system.
- Embed Education as part of the Executive and strengthening their voice at strategic level.
- Further strengthen the voice of the third sector at all levels.
- Revise the Neglect Strategy and further develop the tools that support best practice.
- Revise the Harm Outside the Home/Child Exploitation Strategy for the partnership
- Embedding the twice-yearly summits and front-line practitioner forums to enhance the linkage with and voice of front-line staff.
- Undertake a training needs analysis for the partnership to ensure it is aligned with the Priorities of the partnership.
- Continue to develop the Strategic partnership protocol to all relevant Boards and Partnerships.
- Establish a chairs and deputy chairs meeting to ensure joint working across subgroups.





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