

**To:** City Executive Board

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> March 2013

**Report of:** Head of Policy, Communication and Culture

**Title of Report:** INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF OXFORD CITY COUNCIL'S  
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN – SECTION 11 SELF-  
ASSESSMENT

## **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To note the findings of the Independent Review of Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Children-Section 11 Self-Assessment and to agree the proposed Action Plan.

**Key decision:** No

**Executive lead member:** Cllr Pat Kennedy, Executive Board member for Education  
Crime and Community Safety

**Approved by:**

Finance: Emma Burson, Business Partner  
Legal: Emma Griffiths, Supervising Lawyer

**Policy Framework:** The Corporate Plan and the Oxford Strategic Partnership Plan.

**Recommendation(s):**

To note the findings of the Independent Review of Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Children-Section 11 Self-Assessment.

To agree the proposed Action Plan as set out in Annex 1.

Appendices 1: Draft Action Plan

### **Background**

1. Oxford City Council commissioned SMH Associates Ltd to undertake an independent review of Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Children - Section 11 Self-Assessment.
2. Oxford City assessed itself in December 2012 as meeting all the standards fully; a subsequent Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) peer

review in March 2013 had confirmed this, and did not identify any further actions as being needed.

3. In the expectation of an Ofsted inspection of Oxfordshire County Council's arrangements for Looked-After Children and Child Protection, which include an inspection of multi-agency work and partnership working, the City Council wished to test that its Safeguarding Section 11 Self-Assessment was in order and robust, to ensure that it could demonstrate that this informed good practice for front line staff and service development, and to identify any potential areas of weakness and to develop action plans to address them.
4. The team consisted of two consultants with considerable strategic and operational experience of safeguarding in the context of local authorities, one of whom is independent chair of two local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs), both of whom have significant experience in assisting councils and partners to improve services.
5. A variety of methods was used to gather information and opinions, which included: a review of relevant documentation and a number of semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups from the City Council, the County Council and the LSCB.
6. Following the initial desktop review, four broad areas of focus were identified within which the twelve section 11 standards could be grouped. The four areas of focus are:
  - Leadership and accountability
  - Partnership working
  - Safe workforce
  - Policies and procedures
7. A Four Level Impact Model was used as a Framework for evaluating the different stages of development in safeguarding arrangements in Oxford City Council.

### **A summary of the findings**

8. Oxford City shows very good evidence of changes at the first two levels, with some examples of work that is directly changing outcomes for children.
9. A full copy of the report is available in a link in the Background Paper Section of this report.
10. The Key Recommendations are as follows:

#### ***Leadership***

- a) In order to strengthen leadership and accountability, the City Council should establish a single line of accountability, supported by regular and systematic reporting, at Executive Director level.

- b) Develop the leadership role of the designated officers group, to include terms of reference and a workplan which supports relevant corporate safeguarding priorities.
- c) Develop engagement of members in leadership of the safeguarding agenda.
- d) Establish a system of regular 'safeguarding assurance' reporting throughout the organisation, including at member and executive director level.

### ***Partnership Working***

11. In order to strengthen partnership working, the City Council should:

- e) Initiate discussion with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and the County Council about alignment of its services with the EI hubs across the City;
- f) Review referral processes to ensure that all staff are aware of current procedures and thresholds for services;
- g) Establish clear expectations regarding the initiation and completion of common assessments;
- h) Use the Safe Network core safeguarding standards as the basis for work with OCVA and OAYP in further supporting voluntary sector partners to develop their safeguarding arrangements.

### ***Strengthening the workforce***

12. In order to strengthen the safety of its workforce, the City Council should:

- i) Build on established good practice to integrate safeguarding fully into HR processes such as induction, appraisal and supervision, across the council;
- j) Develop, with the assistance of OSCB, a range of methods for assessing and demonstrating the impact of training on safeguarding practice;
- k) With the assistance of the County Council LADO, review and strengthen the current policy, procedures and approach to raising concerns and managing allegations against staff and volunteers.
- l) In order to improve the effectiveness and impact of its *Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adult Policy*, the City Council should:
- m) Review its approach to recording concerns and making referrals, with a view to using a single, streamlined system;

- n) Develop and promote a reliable, well understood system for collating referrals to the County, which is regularly reviewed and reported on;
- o) Refresh the information sharing protocols within the City Council itself, and with the County Council and OSCB;
- p) Develop a range of methods for monitoring the impact of its policy, procedures and safeguarding activity across its own services and those it commissions.

### **Taking the recommendations forward**

- 13. Following consultation with Oxford City Council staff and discussions with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board officers an Action Plan was developed to take forward these recommendations. The proposed Action Plan is set out in Appendix 1.
- 14. These are the same actions as identified in the City Council Section 11 Submission to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board 2013 (with an overall green rating).

### **Managing and monitoring the Action Plan**

- 15. To oversee the implementation of the Action Plan there is a Named Safeguarding Lead Officer within each service area (for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults).
- 16. Named Safeguarding Officers listen to any concerns raised by members of staff, provide them with reassurance and advice and to help make a referral if required. This group also acts as a sounding board for the Section 11 Self-Assessment and the development of relevant policies and procedures.
- 17. The Designated Officers Group is in the process of reviewing its terms of reference to strengthen its oversight of the development and implementation of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults policy and procedures.
- 18. It is proposed that CEB and Council receive an annual report on the outcome of the Section 11 Self-Assessment and an annually revised Action Plan.

### **Financial implications**

- 19. There are no immediate financial implications related to the proposals set out in the Children's Plan 2014-17. All services set out are currently provided within existing City Council budgets.
- 20. This Review has focussed on the safeguarding of children and young people. The Executive Board may wish to consider undertaking a similar detailed review in relation to safeguarding vulnerable adults. This will have financial and resources implications.
- 21. There are no immediate financial implications related to the proposed Action Plan. These will be resourced from within existing budgets, with the exception

of a budget proposal for an additional 0.5 FTE post. This post would support work around the implementation of the Action Plan for safeguarding children and young people and to the development and improvement of the policy and procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

### **Legal Implications**

22. Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The City Council is one of the organisations to which the requirements in Section 11 apply.

23. Working Together 2013 (the statutory guidance) elaborates further.

*‘Organisations should have in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including:*

- *A clear line of accountability for the commissioning and/or provision of services.*
- *Senior board level lead to take leadership responsibility for the organisation’s safeguarding arrangements;*
- *A culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services;*
- *Arrangements which set out clearly the processes for sharing information, with other professionals and with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB);*
- *A designated professional lead for safeguarding’*
- *Safe recruitment practices for individuals whom the organisation will permit to work regularly with children,*
- *Policies on when to obtain a criminal record check;*
- *Appropriate supervision and support for staff, including undertaking safeguarding training;*
- *Clear policies in line with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures.*

24. The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board is responsible for evaluating the degree to which each partner organisation fulfils its responsibilities under Section 11.

### **Risks**

25. A risk assessment is contained within the CEB report elsewhere on this agenda; Children and Young People’s Plan 2014-17 (as the overarching Children’s Plan for the Council). There are risks if the Council does not comply with the Section 11 Guidance, to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and for the reputation and financial potential costs to the Council.

### **Climate Change/environmental impact**

26. There is no significant climate-change or environmental impact issues related to this report.

### **Equalities Impact Screening**

27. An Equalities Impact Screening assessment is contained within the CEB report elsewhere on this agenda; Children and Young People's Plan 2014-17 (as the overarching Children's Plan for the Council).

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## Draft Action Plan

### 1. To strengthen leadership and accountability

*Those actions highlighted in italics still need to be discussed and agreed with relevant officers.*

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>
Establish a single line of accountability, supported by regular and systematic reporting, at Executive Director level.	To name the Executive Director of Community services as the lead Director for Safeguarding within the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.  Annual report to City Executive Board (CEB) and Council	March 2014 then annually	TS/VJ
Develop the leadership role of the designated officers group, to include terms of reference and a work plan which supports relevant corporate safeguarding priorities.	To review the current terms of reference within the Policy and Procedures.  To publish the Work Plan (previously known as our Section 11 Review Action Plan) with the report to CEB and Council	March 2014 the annually	TS/VJ
Develop engagement of members in leadership of the safeguarding agenda	To implement mandatory safeguarding training for all members (course materials currently being finalised).	TBC	JT/TS
Establish a system of regular 'safeguarding assurance' reporting throughout the organisation, including at member and executive director level.	Annual report to CEB and Council.	March 2014 the annually	TS/VJ

### 2. To strengthen partnership working

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>

Initiate discussion with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and the County Council about alignment of its services with the EI hubs across the City.	The Partnership Manager to attend the Operational Steering Group on the development of the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs.  Discussions at a senior management level on EIH and alignment of services.	In place and on-going	VJ/TS
Review referral processes to ensure that all staff are aware of current procedures and thresholds for services.	Review of referral processes to be undertaken in the light of discussions above.	By October 2014	VJ/TS
Establish clear expectations regarding the initiation and completion of common assessments.	Review following discussions above.	October 2014	VJ/TS
Use the Safe Network core safeguarding standards as the basis for work with OCVA and OAYP in further supporting voluntary sector partners to develop their safeguarding arrangements.	To review contracts with OCVA and OAYP to ensure compliance with the Safe Networking standards.	April 2014	AC/TS

### 3. To strengthen the safety of its workforce

Recommendation	Action	Timescale	Person responsible
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Build on established good practice to integrate safeguarding fully into HR processes across the council.	To fully implement safeguarding checking and training requirements on ITrent?	December 2014	SH
Develop, with the assistance of OSCB, a range of methods for assessing and demonstrating the impact of training on safeguarding practice	Discussions have taken place with the OSC Team to develop a standard method for assessing the impact on training on safeguarding practice.  Aim to roll out new process by June	June 2014	SH
With the assistance of the County Council LADO, review and strengthen the current policy, procedures and approach to raising concerns and managing allegations against staff and volunteers.	Discussions with County Council LADO, develop and implement actions as required	Oct 2014	SH

**4. To improve the effectiveness and impact of its *Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adult Policy***

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>
Review the approach to recording concerns and making referrals, with a view to using a single, streamlined system	To be reviewed following discussions on the development of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs.	October 2014	VJ/TS

<p>Develop and promote a reliable, well understood system for collating referrals to the County, which is regularly reviewed and reported on</p>	<p>To be reviewed following discussions on the development of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs.</p>	<p>October 2014</p>	<p>VJ/TS</p>
<p>Refresh the information sharing protocols within the City Council itself, and with the County Council and OSCB.</p>	<p>This issue has been raised with the OSCB Team and it has been agreed to undertake a review.</p>	<p>April 2014</p>	<p>VJ/TS</p>
<p>Develop a range of methods for monitoring the impact of its policy, procedures and safeguarding activity across Oxford City Council Services and those it commissions.</p>	<p>Discussions have been held with the OSCB Team and it has been agreed to develop a standard quality assurance system, including the review of files and information sharing with other agencies,</p> <p>To include any required actions within the Work Plan reported to CEB in February 2014</p>	<p>June 2014</p>	<p>VJ/TS</p>