

To: City Executive Board
Council

Date: 14 May 2015
20 July 2015

Report of: Head of Policy, Communications and Culture

Title of Report: Safeguarding Children Action Plan 2014-2015

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To note the progress made on Oxford City Council's Section 11(Children Act of 2004) Self-Assessment Action Plan 2014-15 and to approve the Action Plan for 2015-16. To note the Oxford City Council Action Plan for the 'Serious Case Review into the Child Sexual Exploitation in Oxfordshire: from the experiences of Children A, B, C, D, E and F', as agreed by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and which has been incorporated into the Self-Assessment Action Plan 2015-16.

Key decision: No

Executive lead member: Cllr Pat Kennedy, Executive Board Member for Educational Attainment and Youth Ambition.

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

Recommendations: That the City Executive Board

1. Note the progress and development of the Council's safeguarding function in 2014-15.
2. Agree the 'Section 11 Self-Assessment Audit Action Plan 2015-16', as set out in Appendix 1.
3. Agree that this report be reported to Council for information in order that Council may note the progress and development of the Council's safeguarding function in 2014 and the adoption by the Boards of the Action Plan 2015-16, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

Appendices to report

Appendix 1: Section 11 Self-Assessment Action Plan 2015-16.

Appendix 2: Equalities Impact Assessment

Background

1. A report setting out Oxford City Council's role in Safeguarding Children and Adults was considered by the City Executive Board at its meeting on 12 March 2014. This included a Section 11 (Children Act 2004) Self-Assessment Audit and Action Plan 2014-15.
2. It was agreed that the Action Plan should be reviewed and approved by the City Executive Board and Council on an annual basis.
3. The Section 11 Self-Assessment Audit is required annually by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) to ensure compliance with the City Council's safeguarding duties. However, the City Council has extended its Policy and Procedures to cover vulnerable adults as well. In undertaking our Self-Assessment we have therefore also included vulnerable adults as a part of the review.
4. A full copy of Oxford City Council's Section 11 Self-Assessment for 2014-15 is available on the Oxford City Council Web site:

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Library/Documents/Council/Oxford%20City%20Council%20Safeguarding%20Self-assessment%202014-15.pdf>

5. A Draft Section 11 Self- Assessment Action Plan for 2015-16 is provided in Appendix 1. The City Executive Board is recommended to approve the Draft Action Plan.
6. Many of the actions agreed in the Action Plan 2014-15 have been met, while other actions are on-going. The recent launch of the Oxfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub ('MASH') and Oxford City Council's pioneering engagement in this process will play a significant role in shaping the delivery of our safeguarding functions and meet the required actions for 2015- 16.
7. In addition there is an Oxford City Council Action Plan relating to the Serious Case Review into the Child Sexual Exploitation in Oxfordshire: from the experiences of Children A, B, C, D, E and F. The learning points and Actions for Oxford City Council are included within the Section 11 Self-Assessment Action Plan for 2015-16.
8. All of these actions are either completed or in hand.

Safeguarding Action Plan 2014-15: Update

Changes in internal systems and organisation

9. Good progress has been made in ensuring that the Council's safeguarding function is met. There is now a single line of responsibility to a Director (Director of Community Services) and a system of regular

safeguarding assurance to Executive Board level has been established. The terms of reference of the Named Safeguarding Officers Group have been agreed and a chair has been appointed (Head of Human Resources). The Group continues to meet every six months to review progress and development of the City's safeguarding function. The Director, in his capacity as Chair of the Oxford Safeguarding Partnership, now represents the City Council at the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Oxfordshire Children's Trust Board.

10. Following an independent review of the Council's children and young people safeguarding function in November 2013, a Safeguarding Coordinator was appointed in May 2014. The Safeguarding Coordinator assists the Policy and Partnership Development Manager in implementing and monitoring the Council's Safeguarding Work Programme and Action Plan for children and vulnerable adults.

Changes in HR processes

11. In relation to staff, an allegations policy has been developed, which covers how allegations against staff and volunteers will be managed. More generally, safeguarding considerations have been fully integrated into HR processes: questions on safeguarding now appear in both induction and appraisal forms and it is now possible to track staff safeguarding training on the Council's internal HR database (iTrent).

Monitoring effectiveness of training and policy

12. In the course of completing the Section 11 Self-Assessment audit for the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board, the Council distributed a questionnaire, designed by the OSCB, to assess the effectiveness of its safeguarding function. This questionnaire was completed by a sample of 29 front line staff in areas where safeguarding concerns most commonly arise (Housing, Community Safety and Leisure) and provided a snapshot of the effectiveness of training and policy. The questionnaire demonstrated that, at least among the sample:

- Council staff were either aware of safeguarding policy and procedures or knew where to find them;
- Council staff know whom to contact with safeguarding concerns, both in the Council itself and at the County Council.

Actions in progress: engagement, reporting, alignment

13. Some actions from the 2014 Action Plan are still in progress while others (such as the regular review of policy and procedures) are invariably on-going.

14. Actions still in progress from 2014 include:

- Developing the engagement of councillors in the Council's safeguarding programme;
- Establishing a regular system of reviewing case files to identify outcomes for children and vulnerable adults;
- Achieving improved alignment of services within the County Council.

Engaging councillors

15. In relation to developing the engagement of councillors in the Council's safeguarding programme:

- Members have received a number of Briefings from the Police and Oxfordshire County Council on the Bullfinch Enquiry Serious Case Review;
- Safeguarding training will also be included in the mandatory training for Oxford City Councillors as from May 2015.
- A series of 3 non- mandatory training sessions (with more extensive learning) will be provided per annum;
- There will be a presentation to Oxford City Councillors by the Chair of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board in the summer;

Safeguarding assurance reporting

16. The Named Safeguarding Officers Group is currently developing a system to review files where safeguarding concerns have been logged and referrals made. This is for quality assurance purposes but also to test outcomes for children and vulnerable adults. The MASH has also developed a case file review process which will help inform the City Council's role and practice in safeguarding and in other forms of exploitation.

Alignment of services

17. The recent launch of the MASH for Oxfordshire is improving the alignment of services between City, County, and the Districts and forms the basis of the 2015 -16 Action Plan.

Safeguarding Action Plan 2015-2016

18. The Self-Assessment Action Plan for 2015-16 was initially developed by the Designated Officers and Named Safeguarding Officers Group. It reflects the changing safeguarding environment with the implementation of the MASH and the emerging learning from Serious Case Reviews.

Information sharing

19. Information sharing is central to the operation of the MASH. The Council has signed up to the MASH information sharing/data protection protocol and is sharing information from its databases with the MASH in line with this protocol. Its implementation will be regularly monitored and reviewed.
20. A City Council pilot, interface with the MASH project for information sharing, was established on 10 February. This pilot involves Customer Services Managers, Housing and Anti-Social Behaviour staff. It is managed by the Partnership Development Manager and the Information Compliance Specialist Officer monitors the data protection requirements.
21. After a month of operation of the pilot the scheme was evaluated and an Event was held, on 19th March 2015, to share the learning from the pilot scheme with other district councils and housing providers. A Steering Group has now been set up to take this work forward and to extend the involvement of district councils and housing providers within the Oxfordshire MASH.
22. We understand that the City Council is one of the first second tier councils to participate in a MASH in the country. At the time of writing this report it is still early days, for the MASH and for the pilot scheme. The learning and outcomes of the City Council involvement are still in the process of being assessed. Anecdotally there have been a number of real benefits identified for children, we have a better understanding of our own internal communications and there has been opportunity for staff learning and development.

Data collection

23. In addition to being a central point for shared information, the MASH will also be collecting data on the number, type and source of all referrals across Oxfordshire. Bi-monthly MASH reports are analysed at the MASH Operational Steering Group, on which the City Council is represented. The data in these reports will allow Oxford City Council to measure the impact of training, policy and protocols in practice and measure the real outcomes for children and vulnerable adults.

Oxford City Council Action Plan relating to the Serious Case Review into the Child Sexual Exploitation in Oxfordshire: From the experiences of Children A, B, C, D, E and F

24. There are a number of actions for Oxford City Council arising from the recently published Serious Case Review into the Child Sexual Exploitation in Oxfordshire: From the experiences of Children A, B, C, D, E and F. Learning and actions have been identified and were agreed by the OSCB on 26th February 2015. In relation to this City Council developed its own Learning and Action Plan and these actions are now incorporated within the Self-Assessment Action plan 2015-16, in

Appendix 1 of this report. These actions are additional to improvements already completed in recent years.

Section 11 Self-Assessment Audit

25. The Council submitted its Section 11 Self- Assessment to the OSCB on 1st December 2014. At this time we assessed ourselves with a 'Green' rating: all points met and most points evidenced (75% met). There will be a Peer Review on 13th April and following this we will receive confirmation of our overall assessment.
26. The delivery of the proposed Self- Assessment Action Plan 2015 -16 will be overseen by the Executive Director, Community Services and managed by the Designated Officers with input from the Named Safeguarding Officers Group (which has representation from across all Oxford City Council Services). Progress will be reported to members as a part of the Annual Safeguarding Report to CEB and to Council.

Financial Implications

27. There are no immediate financial implications related to the Safeguarding Action Plan 2015-16.
28. The additional part time appointment of a Safeguarding Coordinator to support the Council's work around safeguarding children and vulnerable adults has supported the review of the Section 11 Self -Assessment and Action Plan. The Safeguarding Coordinator has also undertaken an in depth review of our Policy and Procedures to include a greater emphasis on vulnerable adults as well as children. This post has been budgeted for two years and will come to an end in May 2016 and future needs and funding will be considered as part of the 2016/17 budget process.
29. There may be financial implications arising from the operation of the MASH; however these will not be known until the review has been completed. In addition safeguarding concerns relating to vulnerable adults are due to be referred to the MASH (September 2015) which is likely to result in resource implications.

Legal implications

Children

30. 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. Oxford City Council is one of the organisations to which the requirements in Section 11 apply.

31. 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’

32. The OSCB is the relevant LSCB for the City Council and is responsible for evaluating the degree to which each partner organisation fulfils its responsibilities under Section 11.

Vulnerable adults

33. With regard to vulnerable adults, the Care Act 2014, which comes into force in April 2015, imposes duties on local authorities, including district councils. The over-arching duty in the 2014 Act is to promote an individual’s well-being. As a ‘relevant partner’ of the County, the City Council is under a duty to co-operate and share information when required.

34. The City Council is required (under section 7) to share information when the Adult Social Care suspects that an adult in its area:

- Has needs for care and support;
- Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and
- As a result of those needs is unable to protect himself/herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it. (section 42).

35. The City Council is also required (under section 45) to share information with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB) to enable or assist OSAB to exercise its safeguarding function in relation to vulnerable adults.

36. The duty to share information is not an unqualified one. The City Council must cooperate with any enquiries relating to adult safeguarding except when it considers that doing so:
- would be incompatible with its own duties, or
 - would otherwise have an adverse effect on the exercise of its function.
37. Oxford City Council has its own duties under the Data Protection Act 1998, which includes the principles that :
- Personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified and lawful purposes and shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes;
 - Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose or purposes for which they are processed. (Schedule 1).

Climate change/environmental impact

38. There is no climate change or environmental impact issues related to this report.

Risks

39. Oxford City Council will have to decide which of the information we hold is likely to be relevant to safeguarding and be careful not to provide anything more than what is required. This means that requests for such information should be considered carefully, balancing information sharing and data protection duties.
40. A risk assessment is contained within the Children and Young People's Plan 2014-2017. There are risks if the Council does not comply with the Section 11 guidance to:
- The safety and wellbeing of children and young people;
 - The safety and wellbeing of vulnerable adults;
 - The reputation and financial position to the Council.

Equalities Impact Assessment

41. An Equalities Impact Assessment is set out at Appendix 2. There are no negative impacts related to this report.

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Background Papers:

Oxford City Council Section 11 Self- Assessment Audit

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Library/Documents/Council/Oxford%20City%20Council%20Safeguarding%20Self-assessment%202014-15.pdf>

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