

To: City Executive Board

Date: 14 May 2015

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Safeguarding Children Action Plan 2014-2015

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the Safeguarding Children Action Plan 2014-2015

Key decision? No

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Simmons, Chair of Scrutiny Committee

Executive lead member: Councillor Pat Kennedy, Executive Member for Educational Attainment and Youth Ambition

Policy Framework: The Corporate Plan 2015-19 and the Oxford Strategic Partnership Plan

Recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

We endorse the general approach taken and recommend that the City Council:

1. Strengthens engagement and protocols with Housing Associations in relation to vulnerable groups that they house
2. Prioritises the following in the next budget round:
 - a) Continuing to fund the Safeguarding Coordinator post,
 - b) Supporting the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.
3. Ensures that feedback from frontline staff is sought more widely when monitoring the effectiveness of training and policy.
4. Monitors feedback from children to test the effectiveness of Safeguarding policies and plans on the ground and to identify any blockages.
5. Ensures that training for City Councillors includes a focus on their role as being the eyes and ears of their communities.

6. Raises the following with the County Council:
- a) The need for schools to be issued with guidance on safeguarding policies, including the role of elected Councillors in safeguarding,
 - b) Concern that some School Counsellors have been cut and that some pupils have to wait a long time to be able to access this provision.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Executive response to recommendations

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Safeguarding Children Action Plan 2014-2015 report at its public meeting on 27 April 2015. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Pat Kennedy and Val Johnson for presenting this report and answering questions.

Summary of recommendations

2. The Committee noted that housing associations were not listed as key people in the Equality Impact Assessment, and questioned how closely the City Council works with housing providers given that they house vulnerable groups such as adults with mental health conditions. It was felt that there was scope for strengthening this area.

Recommendation 1 – We recommend that the City Council strengthens engagement and protocols with Housing Associations in relation to vulnerable groups that they house.

3. The Committee asked how the City Council's safeguarding work is currently resourced. Members heard that the City Council has a dedicated safeguarding co-ordination whose post is funded until April 2016. Support to the MASH has been provided within existing resources, including a lot of management time. Proposals will come forward once this resource requirement has been identified.

Recommendation 2 – We recommend that the City Council prioritises the following in the next budget round:
a) Continuing to fund the Safeguarding Coordinator post,
b) Supporting the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

4. The Committee noted that only 29 frontline staff had completed a questionnaire to provide a snapshot of the effectiveness of training and policy (paragraph 12 of the report). Members heard that this feedback had been supported by focus groups and that there would be an extra effort next year to monitor the effectiveness of training and policy.

Recommendation 3 – We recommend that the City Council ensures that feedback from frontline staff is sought more widely when monitoring the effectiveness of training and policy.

5. The Committee suggested that while a lot of good work was being undertaken that was intended to safeguard children, there was a lack of outreach and communication to children themselves. Schools had communicated directly to parents but the knowledge of children was also important and should be monitored.

Recommendation 4 – We recommend that the City Council monitors feedback from children to test the effectiveness of Safeguarding policies and plans on the ground and to identify any blockages.

6. The Committee noted that Safeguarding training will be mandatory for City Councillors from May 2015 (paragraph 15 of the report). The Committee ask that this includes a focus on the particular role that City Councillors have in being the eyes and ears of their communities.

Recommendation 5 – We recommend that the City Council ensures that training for City Councillors includes a focus on their role as being the eyes and ears of their communities.

7. The Committee noted that City Councillors should be able to work with schools in their roles as advocates for residents and vigilant community leaders. However, one school had not been welcoming of a City Councillor performing this role. It was suggested that guidance should be issued to schools.
8. The Committee noted that School Counsellors are one of the first people pupils may turn to if they have concerns. The Committee expressed concern that some School Counsellors positions had been cut and that their availability and accessibility varies greatly across different schools in the city.

Recommendation 6 – We recommend that the City Council raises the following with the County Council:

- a) ***The need for schools to be issued with guidance on safeguarding policies, including the role of elected Councillors in safeguarding,***
- b) ***Concern that some School counsellors have been cut and that some pupils have to wait a long time to be able to access this provision.***

Further consideration

9. The Committee noted that there is no national licensing regime for guest houses and agreed to add this issue to its preliminary work programme for 2015-16.

Name and contact details of author:-

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Officer
Law and Governance
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None

Appendix 1 - Executive response to recommendations

Recommendation	Agreed? (Y / N / In part)	Comment	Board Member / Lead Officer
1. We recommend that the City Council strengthens engagement and protocols with Housing Associations in relation to vulnerable groups that they house.	Y	Yes we do want to strengthen our engagement and protocols with Mental Health. For Clarification We do not have such protocols with Housing Associations. We are, however, working with Housing associations and other housing providers to develop information sharing and an interface with the MASH	Cllr Pat Kennedy / Val Johnson
2. We recommend that the City Council prioritises the following in the next budget round: a) Continuing to fund the Safeguarding Coordinator post, b) Supporting the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.	Y		Cllr Pat Kennedy / Val Johnson
3. We recommend that the City Council ensures that feedback from frontline staff is sought more widely when monitoring the effectiveness of training and policy.	Y		Cllr Pat Kennedy / Val Johnson
4. We recommend that the City Council monitors feedback from children to test the effectiveness of Safeguarding policies and plans on the ground and to identify any blockages.	Y	Yes we can do some engagement with young people around safeguarding issues through the youth Ambition Programme and Young Engagement Officer. For clarification.	Cllr Pat Kennedy / Val Johnson

		We would not monitor feedback directly from children involved in safeguarding cases. This would be done through OSCB Case File Reviews.	
5. We recommend that the City Council ensures that training for City Councillors includes a focus on their role as being the eyes and ears of their communities.	Y		Cllr Pat Kennedy / Val Johnson
6. We recommend that the City Council raises the following with the County Council: a) The need for schools to be issued with guidance on safeguarding policies, including the role of elected Councillors in safeguarding, b) Concern that some School Counsellors have been cut and that some pupils have to wait a long time to be able to access this provision.	Y	Yes we could pass on members' concerns to the County Council.	Cllr Pat Kennedy / Val Johnson

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