

To: City Executive Board

Date: 16 June 2016

Report of: Executive Director, Community Services

Title of Report: OXFORD CITY COUNCIL, SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2015-2016

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To report the progress made on the Council's Safeguarding Action Plan and to recommend the Action Plan for approval for 2016-2017.
Key decision:	Yes
Executive Board Member:	Cllr Dee Sinclair, Executive Board Member for Crime, Community Safety and Licensing
Corporate Priority:	Strong and Active Communities
Policy Framework:	Corporate Plan.
Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
1.	To note the progress and development of the Council's safeguarding work 2015-2016;
2.	To agree the Action Plan' as set out in Appendix 1;

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Action Plan 2016-17
Appendix 2	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 3	Risk Register

Background

1. Safeguarding children is the role of Oxfordshire County Council and it is overseen by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (OSCB). Oxford City Council is a key partner in ensuring safeguarding and in promoting the health and wellbeing of children and it strives for best practice in the services and support that it offers.

2. The Council must demonstrate that it complies with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board's policies and procedures and an annual safeguarding review is undertaken to ensure that this happens. This year the review looked in depth at:
 - Senior management commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.
 - A clear statement of the agency's responsibility towards children is available to all staff.
 - A clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting welfare.
 - Service development takes into account the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children & families.
 - Training on safeguarding & promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or, depending on the agency's primary functions, in contact with children & families.
 - Safer recruitment procedures including vetting procedures and those for managing allegations are in place.
 - Effective inter-agency working to safeguard & promote the welfare of children.
 - Effective information sharing.
 - Safe transportation of children.
3. The Council has also extended this review to included safeguarding of adults at risk as well as children.
4. A full copy of the safeguarding review is available on the Oxford City Council Web site:
https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20101/community_safety/348/keeping_people_safe
5. As a result of the safeguarding review, a Draft Action Plan 2016-17 has been developed for the City Council. This is provided in Appendix 1.

Safeguarding Action Plan 2015-16: Areas of best practice and achievements

6. The Council's 2014 -15 Safeguarding Review was considered as part of a peer review exercise in April 2016. The Council was awarded blue ratings in 5 of 7 areas. Blue ratings are awarded as evidence of best practice. In the remaining 2 areas, the Council received green ratings. There were no amber or red ratings. (Although we are waiting to receive this information in writing). Some examples of best practice are set out below.

Clear accountability

7. The Council has clear and effective lines of accountability in place. It has a Safeguarding Officers Group which meets every three months to review progress and development of the Council's safeguarding work. This group includes representatives across all service areas. There are also quarterly review meetings with the City's portfolio holder and the Chief Executive.

Services which support safeguarding and the promotion of health and well being

8. The Council provides a wide range of services which help to safeguard children and promote their health and wellbeing. City Council officers take a lead on the Oxford Community Safety Partnership's action plans for human trafficking, CSE, sex working, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, Preventing extremism, FGM and honour-based violence.
9. Some services directly contribute both to care plans for children and to early help and intervention work, such as the:
 - Housing Sustainability Team
 - Domestic Abuse, Drug, Human Trafficking and Child Sexual Exploitation work
 - Positive Futures Programme
10. The Council also works with the County Council's Occupational Therapists to help children and adults at risk to access disabled facilities grants. There are also other funding streams available such as the affordable warmth programme, flexible home loan and essential repairs grants.

Working within communities

11. The Council, along with the Thames Valley Police, is having discussions with the City's various language schools around the schools' safeguarding responsibilities.
12. The Council has a number of teams which have a role in identifying, preventing, and disrupting various types of exploitation: Community Safety, Customer Services, Direct Services, Environmental Health, Housing, Licensing (taxis, HMOs), Parks & Leisure, Waste & Recycling. Front line staff in all these teams have been trained to be aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and are supported when either raising concerns or making referrals.
13. The Council is working jointly with the Thames Valley Police in running a version of the 'Say Something If You See Something' scheme for hotels and guesthouses.
14. Working with communities will remain a priority in the action plan for 2016- 17.

Working with the other Oxfordshire District Councils

15. The Council is keen to develop and share best practice in safeguarding with other district councils in Oxfordshire. The Council attends and participates in a number of meetings on behalf of the other Oxfordshire district councils including the quarterly Performance and Quality Assurance meetings run by the OSCB and OSAB and the training sub groups.
16. The Council has been leading on the development of a Single Framework for Taxi Licencing, which includes all the district councils and the county council. The Framework includes standard training for all taxi drivers in the county and better training information sharing across authorities. The Framework has been agreed and is now being implemented. The Council will be monitoring the impact of improved information sharing.

Extensive and comprehensive training programme

17. The City Council has developed a comprehensive range of training. This includes safeguarding awareness training being provided as a part of the compulsory Conduct training for all new councillors.
18. Every member of staff has been assessed for the safeguarding training required for their particular role. An annual programme of training is developed to address any identified training needs. The completion of this training is tracked by HR using the City Council's internal IT system ('iTrent').
19. Training is also provided to particular teams including anti-social behaviour, community safety and housing. Examples of this include: sexual exploitation, domestic violence, human trafficking, mental health. There has also been Prevent (i.e. anti-radicalisation) training for Council officers and councillors. Further training needs have recently been identified relating to safeguarding offenders/perpetrators and the emerging issue of young carers.

Measuring the impact of training

20. As part of its annual safeguarding review, an online questionnaire was circulated to all staff who had been identified as requiring safeguarding training as part of their role. There were over 150 responses to this questionnaire. The results indicate that 100% of staff know how to report safeguarding concerns to either a line manager, safeguarding officer or the MASH, and 97% are aware of the procedures to use when raising a safeguarding concern. 85% of staff are either quite confident or very confident in raising a safeguarding concern. 70% know the name of at least one of the Council's four Designated Safeguarding Officers.
21. Of those responding, 93% had completed training in the past 3 years, with 50% having completed training in the past 12 months. Of the 7% who have not completed training, 4% were booked in to complete their first safeguarding training at the time the questionnaire was administered.

Information sharing

22. The Council chairs the Oxford Community Safety Partnership and is represented on the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Boards and the Children's Trust Board. The Council is also represented on the OSCB and OSAB Executive Boards. This ensures that there are clear links and information sharing across the boards
23. The Council fully cooperates with all OSCB serious case reviews, providing information where relevant and attending review meetings when required. The Council has also participated and led on Domestic Homicide Reviews.
24. The Council continues to review the types of prevalence of exploitation across the City through the Oxford Community Safety Partnership which meets quarterly. The Oxford Community Safety Partnership has a multi-agency risk assessment and action plan for each area of identified significant risk in the city.

Receiving feedback and escalating concerns

25. A going issue has been the need to ensure that there are clear processes for escalating concerns and receiving feedback on actions that have been taken. As a result the Council now keep a central record of all concerns raised. There is a review every three months of where feedback has been received and where escalation has been required. However, this is still a relatively new process and requires to be further embedded. As a result this remains a priority for improvement and action in 2016-17.

Priorities to focus on in 2016-17

26. There is a need for ongoing vigilance and to further develop and embed safeguarding services. The Action Plan for 2016-17 recognises the need to:
 - Regularly review safeguarding policy and procedures, training requirements and materials.
 - Continually improve our response to new and emerging priorities.
 - Remain vigilant to reports of CSE and other forms of exploitation.
 - Recognise the importance of all service areas in preventing and disrupting CSE and other forms of exploitation.
 - Ensure proactive and routine information and intelligence sharing and joint operations to combat CSE and other forms of exploitation
 - Ensure that there are effective escalation processes in place
 - Engage with communities to raise awareness, change perceptions and challenge behaviours

Financial Implications

27. There are no immediate financial implications related to the Safeguarding Action Plan 2016-17.

28. In its 2016/17 budget process, the Council agreed to invest in a part time Safeguarding Policy Officer position to support the Council's work around safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and support the safeguarding review process. This work was initially being carried out by the Safeguarding Coordinator on a fixed contract which comes to an end in May 2016. The Council has agreed that this role will continue as a permanent post on 3 days per week.

29. The Council makes a £20,000 annual contribution to the joint running costs of the OSCB and OSAB.

Legal implications

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 2015 (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
- Clear whistleblowing procedures and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed
- 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.

33. With regard to adults at risk, the Care Act 2014 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 County 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 are 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. The County Council restructure of Social Care and Early intervention is likely to significantly impact on services available to children and families and adults at risk. The City Council is working with the County Council and other agencies to see how this risk can be mitigated.

41. A risk register is set out at Appendix 3.

Equalities Impact Assessment

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

Report author	Val Johnson
Job title	Policy and Partnerships Team Leader
Service area or department	Assistant Chief Executive
Telephone	01865 252209
e-mail	vjohnson@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers:	
1	Oxford City Council Section 11 Self Assessment Audit 2015
2	Oxford City Council Safeguarding Action Plan 2016

Please note in the table below the version number of your report that was finally cleared at each stage