



**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 16 June 2021  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report 2020/21

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations concerning the Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report 2020/21
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Liz Wade, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for a Healthier, Safer Oxford
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Supporting Flourishing Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation in the body of this report.</b>	

<b>Appendices</b>
None

## Introduction and overview

1. At its meeting on 08 June 2021, the Scrutiny Committee considered a report to Cabinet concerning the Council Safeguarding Report 2020/21.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for a Healthier, Safer Oxford for presenting the report, Dani Granito, Policy and Partnerships Manager, Corporate Policy, for authoring the report and answering questions and Laura Jones also for supporting the meeting.

## Summary and recommendation

3. Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for a Safer Healthy Oxford, introduced the report. As a Council which, through its many and various ways of working, comes into contact with a significant number of vulnerable people, it has a statutory duty to keep them as safe as possible. In order to do that, its safeguarding processes are reviewed annually and that audit is made public. All Councillors will have the opportunity to undertake safeguarding training which makes clear the responsibility of everyone to be an active participant in safeguarding our community and which draws attention to the “My Concern” reporting mechanism. The latest audit draws attention to the particular safeguarding issues and challenges resulting from the pandemic. Safeguarding was a matter in which the Council worked in close partnership with other agencies, notably the County Council, the Police and Health Service, all of which are represented on the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) and the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB). The safeguarding duty should extend beyond just ensuring the basic welfare of our citizens and from beyond their surviving to their thriving.
4. Dani Granito, Policy & Partnerships Team Manager, noted that overall responsibility for safeguarding in OCC now lay with the Head of Corporate Strategy. The report drew attention to the safeguarding work delivered via the 5 locality hubs during the pandemic. This included, for example, the provision of 210 laptops to pupils who could not otherwise access remote learning. A continuing national and local concern was that of neglect; the majority of local children on a child protection plan were experiencing neglect in some form. A considerable effort (via external peer review among other things) was being made to see how best to support those young people and prevent them experiencing neglect. All members of the partnership were now required to produce a Neglect Action Plan and a three monthly account of progress with it.
5. The OSCB and OSAB required the Council to conduct an annual safeguarding assessment. It was pleasing to note that the most recent assessment had, for the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, concluded that the Council demonstrated best practice in all 5 subject areas.
6. Issues raised by the Committee in response to the report and presentation included more information about the Jacob serious case review and the outcomes of the report on the number of deaths of homeless people in temporary accommodation in Oxford, the support for the voluntary sector in safeguarding and member training.
7. The Committee makes two recommendations relating to i) Oxford’s status as a City of Sanctuary, and ii) the contextualisation of data in its public report.

## City of Sanctuary

8. The Committee noted a comment made in s. 6.3 of the Council’s safeguarding policy, which says that the Council has a duty ‘to report any suspected victims of exploitation (slavery or human trafficking) to the Secretary of State’.

9. The Committee recognises that the primary purpose of this duty is a positive one, which contributes towards reducing slavery and human trafficking. It also recognises that it is under an obligation to do so. However, whilst ostensibly any such reporting should be of benefit to a relevant individual the Committee is concerned that such information sharing could be used for the purposes of immigration enforcement, which would run counter to the City's commitment to being a City of Sanctuary. The Committee wishes to support the aim of this duty, but asks that the Council is mindful of the potential that the information shared to be used in ways which are less clearly supportive of victims, such as immigration enforcement. It recommends that the Council is cognisant of this risk and seeks to minimise it in the way that it fulfils its duties around slavery and human trafficking.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council ensures that the information it shares with the Secretary of State in relation to slavery and human trafficking is consistent with the City's status as a City of Sanctuary and is not used for immigration enforcement.***

### **Data Contextualisation**

10. The Committee is welcoming of the results of the safeguarding assessment. A return of a full complement of green ratings provides a high-level endorsement of the way the Council approaches and implements its safeguarding duties. The safeguarding report published, however, is a public document which delves into greater depth to give a fuller picture of what, specifically, the Council has been doing to ensure the safety of the vulnerable children and adults it engages with.
11. In the main, reports of activity are clear and the outcome is understood. For example, 'Oxford City Council trained 100% of all locality HUB staff within the first 4 weeks of the first lock down' on safeguarding. However, in the section entitled 'Outcomes for, and experiences of, people who use statutory services' the Committee suggests that the same level of clarity and precision is not present. In paragraph 41 of the report, for example, the following positive outcomes are stated: '27 are now engaging with services within the OMHP, 13 of these tenants avoided Mental Health Act assessment/hospital admission/section, and 5 tenants avoiding re admissions to hospital.' Whilst these are clearly positive outcomes and are celebrated, the Committee indicated that if greater context were provided a greater understanding of the effectiveness of the Council could be gleaned, rather than simply the volume of positive outcomes. Specifically, it would be helpful to know how many people the Council sought to work with through mental health worker support, and the number who engaged with mental health workers but still experienced negative outcomes.
12. A similar pattern is repeated throughout the section. From discussion with officers it is understood that a lot of the data on effectiveness is monitored. The Committee recommends that the publicly available version of this report is amended to provide the data required to contextualise the positive outcomes experienced by those engaging with its services. This will not only support the Council's transparency, but given its success around safeguarding will provide additional proof of the effectiveness of its work.

***Recommendation 2: That the Council amends for its publicly available version of the Annual Safeguarding Report the section on outcomes for those who use statutory services to provide the contextual data needed to judge the effectiveness of these service interventions rather than the quantity of positive outcomes.***

### **Further Consideration**

13. The Committee expressed an interest in how the Council's safeguarding activity would interact with the responses to the recommendations of the Domestic Abuse Review Group and looks forward to receiving those from Cabinet in due course. However, no further direct consideration of safeguarding is anticipated until the 2021/22 report is considered by Cabinet.

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**Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 08/06/2021 concerning the Council Safeguarding Report 2020/21**

**Response provided by Cabinet Member for a Healthier, Safer Oxford, Louise Upton**

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<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<p><b>1) That the Council ensures that the information it shares with the Secretary of State in relation to slavery and human trafficking is consistent with the City's status as a City of Sanctuary and is not used for immigration enforcement.</b></p>	<p>Partially agreed</p>	<p>Oxford City Council have said we are a <u>city of sanctuary</u> and will not link with the Government's hostile environment programme – and have identified a number of services – eg. <u>homelessness</u>, where we don't report details through to the Immigration service.</p> <p>This issue has been looked into in depth and there are few instances where this could happen possibly; only where the NRM process has been concluded and the negative suggested no evidence of modern slavery it could possibly lead on to other processes. However, no evidence has been found to support this occurring.</p> <p>It should be stressed, however, that as part of its aims around being a City of Sanctuary Oxford City Council should of course be sharing information in cases of modern day slavery and where we are working to safeguard and prevent crime.</p>
<p><b>2) That the Council amends for its publicly available version of the Annual Safeguarding Report the section on outcomes for those who use statutory services to provide the contextual data needed to judge the effectiveness of these service interventions rather than the quantity of positive outcomes.</b></p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p><i>We can provide further information to balance a view with regard to the overall data and outcomes. This must however be in context around the group of people the project aims to support.</i></p>

