

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 12 July 2023  
**Report of:** Executive Director (Communities and People)  
**Title of Report:** Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report 2022/23 and Policy 2023-26

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To report on progress made on Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Action Plan for 2022/23 and present an updated Safeguarding Policy for 2023-26
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Supporting Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendations:</b> That Cabinet resolves to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Note</b> the key achievements of the Safeguarding work delivered through Oxford City Council during 2022/23;</li> <li>2. <b>Approve</b> the Safeguarding Policy 2023-2026;</li> <li>3. <b>Note</b> the Safeguarding Action Plan 2023/24; and</li> <li>4. <b>Delegate authority</b> to the Executive Director (Communities and People), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, to make minor changes to the approved policy in order to continue its alignment with the Oxfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.</li> </ol>	

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Oxford City Council Safeguarding Policy 2023-26
Appendix 2	Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Action Plan 2023/24
Appendix 3	Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Procedures
Appendix 4	Risk Register
Appendix 5	EIA Full Assessment

## **Introduction and background**

1. This annual report to Cabinet sets out how Oxford City Council fulfils its statutory safeguarding duties by:
  - Outlining the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in Oxfordshire.
  - Sharing the results of the safeguarding self-assessment audit 2022.
  - Highlighting the key achievements and progress made in relation to the safeguarding work delivered by Oxford City Council.
  - Updating our Action Plan through the identification of areas to strengthen in 2022/23
  - Approving Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Policy 2023-26.

## **Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Responsibilities**

2. Oxford City Council has a legal duty of care to ensure children and adults at risk are protected within the Council's facilities, services and activities. The Council has legal duties under the Children Act 2004 and the Care Act 2014 to:
  - promote the welfare and development needs of children and adults with care and support needs are met
  - protect them from harm, abuse and maltreatment
  - prevent harm to children's health or development and ensuring that they grow up with the provision of safe and effective care enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.
3. Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Policy sets out how the Council fulfils these obligations and supports staff, Members and volunteers in all aspects of safeguarding. The Safeguarding Policy can be found at Appendix 1.
4. The Safeguarding Procedures set out how staff and contractors should respond to safeguarding incidents. The Safeguarding Procedures can be found at Appendix 3.
5. As of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, Oxford City Council's safeguarding coordination function moved from the Policy and Partnership Team to the Community Safety Service, within Regulatory Services and Community Safety. The Executive Director, Communities and People, is the accountable officer, and the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety is the responsible officer, for embedding these safeguarding duties within Oxford City Council.
6. There is a four-tiered approach to supporting staff with their safeguarding responsibilities:
  - Staff training
  - Line management support
  - Safeguarding Champions network
  - Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)

7. Quarterly internal Strategic Safeguarding meetings and Safeguarding Champion meetings identify training needs, review trends in reporting, and monitor and coordinate delivery of the Safeguarding Action Plan.
8. All safeguarding incidents are recorded on MyConcern, a web-based reporting system conforming to GDPR requirements. Quarterly reports are published in Safeguarding newsletters to show staff across the organisation the current safeguarding themes and trends. Service area and trend reports are discussed at the Strategic Safeguarding Group.

### **Oxfordshire's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)**

9. Since the introduction of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, Oxfordshire County Council, the Integrated Care Board and Thames Valley Police have had statutory responsibility and accountability of safeguarding arrangements in Oxfordshire. The MASA Executive Group consists of the Chief Executive of Oxfordshire County Council, the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police and the Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board.
10. The development, delivery and quality monitoring of safeguarding service provision is the responsibility of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB). The governance framework can be found in the background papers.
11. In November 2022, Oxford City Council passed representation of the Oxfordshire district councils on OSCB and OSAB sub-groups to Cherwell District Council. Oxford City Council continue to attend the OSAB Full Board, OSCB Full Board, and OSCB Child Exploitation and Training sub-groups.
12. OSCB's priorities for 2022-2024 are:
  - Leadership and Governance
  - Direction on improving practice
  - Scrutiny and quality assurance
13. More details of the work of OSCB can be found here: <https://www.oscb.org.uk/>
14. The OSAB have developed a new strategic plan for 2023-2027 and the agreed priorities are:
  - Working in Partnership
  - Preventing harm occurring
  - Responding swiftly when harm occurs
  - Engaging effectively with people at risk
15. More details of the work of OSAB can be found here: <https://www.osab.co.uk/>

### **Oxford City Council safeguarding highlights in 2022/2023**

#### **Safeguarding Audit 2022**

16. Section 11, Children Act 2004 requires Oxford City Council to complete an annual self-assessment of its safeguarding children activities. This has been developed into a joint self-assessment audit between the OSCB and OSAB. The full self-assessment is available as a background paper to this report.
17. Oxford City Council is required to evidence its standards in the following areas:

- Service Delivery, Development & Effective Practice
  - Safer Recruitment, Staff Development & Effective Learning
  - People's Experiences of Safeguarding
18. The evidence for each standard is assessed and given a rating:
    - Green – Fully met and evidenced – Best Practice
    - Amber – the standard/compliance point is not met but work has begun or work is underway but has experienced delays in completion
    - Red – the standard/compliance point is not met, work is not underway and there are issues with commencing work
  19. To inform the self-assessment Oxford City Council staff complete an annual safeguarding questionnaire. In October 2022, 423 responses were received, an increase from previous years of 201 and 198 responses.
  20. 22 of 23 standards were rated Green with one standard rated Amber: Standard: 'How do you know that your organisation's complaints processes are effective and that children and adults with care and support needs are empowered to challenge services when expected standards/responsibilities are not met?'
  21. Although services such as Anti-Social Behaviour and Youth Ambition empower their users to challenge services and make complaints, it was recognised that formal processes for complaints reporting were under review and improvements such as reporting on specific safeguarding complaints, are underway.
  22. The Oxford City Council Safeguarding Audit 2022 can be found in the background papers to this report.

### **Support for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants**

23. The Refugee and Resettlement Team was created in 2022 and lead Oxford City Council's strategic and operational response to asylum, refugee and migrant resettlement, and hosts and administers the countywide Homes for Ukraine Re-matching Team. The teams work in partnership with community groups to improve access to services for refugee, migrant and asylum seeker groups and the relevant safeguarding teams on a case by case basis.
24. Oxford City Council actively supported increasing access to interpreting services to ensure that residents from all nationalities are able to access appropriate services safely and the Council have a designated contract to offer translation services where required.

### **Child exploitation**

25. Regular attendance at the OSCB CE Subgroup by the Community Safety Service Manager continues, sharing policy developments and delivering operational activities. ASBIT Officers attend the police Joint Tasking and Coordination meeting that identifies and support young people at risk, and coordinates activities to tackle their exploiters.
26. The relaunch of Hotel Watch is in development, working with hospitality providers to train staff, challenge and report incidents of concern regarding child and adult exploitation.

27. Oxford City Council staff have engaged with and are supporting the recommendations from the recent 'Jacob' serious case review and participate in all three work streams highlighted within the report in relation to Education, Child exploitation and System approach.
28. Oxford City Council's Youth Ambition team provide activities and groups for young people in high deprivation areas of the city. The Youth Ambition team are highly skilled in safeguarding and work in partnership with organisations across the city.

### **Adult homeless support in adverse weather**

29. This winter saw the successful countywide approach to Severe Weather Emergency Provision that provided emergency accommodation to rough sleepers on 32 nights where the temperature was forecast to be below freezing.
30. During the long hot spells of summer 2022, the Council coordinated partnership working to ensure people who were rough sleeping were protected from extreme heat.

### **Adult exploitation**

31. A New Oxfordshire Adult Exploitation Guidance and Pathways document, developed by Oxford City Council's Anti-Slavery Coordinator, was approved and adopted by partners across Oxfordshire. Since the launch of this new pathway, there has been a significant increase in adult exploitation alerts.
32. 60 cases of adult exploitation have been reported in the City since the data was recorded centrally. 43 of these were individual people, 7 were businesses of concern and 10 were premises of concern. 36 people have been removed from their exploitative situations and work continues to support other people in these situations.
33. Alerts received were from the Home Office, the Single Competent Authority responsible for the National Referral Mechanism, council departments, Adult Social Care and NGO's. Two of the alerts were identified through reports on the Council's MyConcern safeguarding database.
34. In 2022, Oxford City Council led the Violence Against Women and Girls: Safe Journey, Safe Destination partnership project to increase safety in the night-time economy. Core project group organisations included Thames Valley Police, University of Oxford, Brookes University and the City Council.
35. The project received £420k from the Home Office to develop local initiatives which centred on the development of the Oxford City NightSafe Network. This is a network of organisations operating in the night-time economy who, through sharing information and resources, have important roles to play in reducing the risk of violence and harassment to women and girls.
36. The project funded improvements in CCTV, lighting, and other situational crime reduction activities in Oxford and neighbouring towns. It introduced the Oxford City Angels who support vulnerable people during the evening period, set-up a network of Safe Places as respite locations for people in need and improved the management of Park End Street through a new taxi rank, taxi marshals and improved lighting.

## **Domestic abuse**

37. A strategic, planned approach to domestic abuse continues to be taken forward with Oxford City Council's active contribution to the development and delivery of a countywide plan and continued delivery of bespoke services for victims of domestic abuse.
38. Oxford City Council's ASBIT Manager is the Council's domestic abuse lead and represented the District Councils in the commissioning process for the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service and the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Service. They are also heavily involved in the delivery of the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy and the Safe Accommodation Strategy action plans.
39. Oxford City Council is working towards the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation which will take approximately 18 months to complete. Work continues towards the Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation which is currently in the 'Health Check Stage', identifying good practice, gaps and learning.
40. Two Domestic Abuse Housing Link workers were employed in 2022. The specialist team work closely with domestic abuse victims and survivors with complex needs to ensure that they are housed safely, and their needs are being met. Case examples form an agenda item at the quarterly safeguarding Champion meetings.

## **Learning and training**

41. Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Coordinator joined the OSCB trainer pool and attends trainer workshops.
42. The safeguarding awareness briefing training evaluation form was moved online in July 2022, in line with the Safeguarding Boards' evaluation process. 113 responses have been received, 111 are marked as 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to each of the following questions:
  - I know who we are safeguarding
  - I know why we have this responsibility
  - I know who to seek support and advice from
  - I know how and when to report a concern
  - I know where to get further information
43. Two responses which state 'neither agree/disagree' were followed up by the Safeguarding Coordinator to ensure officers understood all of the above questions.
44. Feedback is used to inform future awareness training discussions and scenario discussions. Feedback comments are responded to, where appropriate, by the Safeguarding Coordinator.
45. The OSCB Neglect Strategy 2020/23 was developed in response to data that showed neglect was a primary reason for safeguarding referrals in Oxfordshire. Training was delivered to Council staff and in October 2022, the staff survey showed twenty officers had used the self-neglect policy and eight members of staff have used the Children's Neglect Toolkit.
46. Between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, 239 MyConcern reports were recorded. Housing Services raised the most concerns followed by Business

Improvement and Regulatory Services and Community Safety. The most frequently reported concerns were:

- Domestic abuse/violence
  - Mental ill health
  - Suicidal thoughts
47. The increasing trend in suicidal threats, attempts and suicidal thoughts highlighted the need for further training and the republishing of Oxford City Council's suicide threat guidance for staff, including a section on staff welfare.
  48. Twenty-nine safeguarding awareness briefings were held in 2022/23, an increase of 20% on the previous year. Trainers meet quarterly to review and update the training package in line with local and national updates and evaluation forms.
  49. Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs), and their national and local recommendations, are included in the safeguarding awareness briefings which are mandatory for all staff.
  50. Five rapid reviews were returned to the CSPR subgroup in 2022. Rapid reviews inform Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews however, all returns from Oxford City Council were 'nil' returns as the Council had no contact with the child or family members.
  51. Oxford Direct Services (ODS) training was updated and delivered throughout 2022 in partnership with Oxford City Council. Additional MyConcern training was provided to managers. ODS' MyConcern recording rate has increased by 420% since 2020 as a direct result of Oxford City Council's engagement.
  52. Newsletters have been released quarterly throughout the year to all staff.

#### **The key areas of focus for 2023/24**

53. Operational areas of focus for the coming year can be found in the 2023-2024 Safeguarding Action Plan, Appendix 2:
  - Increase communications, ensure trainer understanding of the Service Integration Project, Early Help and Locality Community Support Service tools including Strengths and Needs.
  - Recruit additional safeguarding champions to ensure each service area has at least one representative
  - Increased communications, visual aids
  - Identify appropriate training for individual teams and promote uptake
  - Identify current whistleblowing culture and areas for improvement
  - Identify complaint management systems and data relating to safeguarding concerns
  - Scope Safeguarding Audit 2023
54. The Council's 2023-2024 Business Plan includes the following strategic activities:
  - Work with partners to continue to implement the countywide rough sleeping and single homelessness strategy to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping. Work with commissioning partners and the alliance of organisations

delivering services to evaluate the delivery of a housing-led approach – including supporting people through more flexible and responsive services to ensure that the new services are effective.

- With Oxfordshire County Council, which is now investing in youth service provision in Oxford, review our Youth Ambition programme and seek closer partnership working to achieve a more efficient and effective joint approach to support children and young people.
- Embed the new locality-based model for supporting our tenants and residents, shaped by their views and needs, and work with other landlords to improve engagement and service delivery.
- Chair the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership to tackle the city's community safety priorities - modern slavery, serious violence, and disruption of organised crime, violence against women and girls, and anti-social behaviour.
- Continue to work towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation - work started in December 2022 and may take up to two years for full accreditation.

### **Financial implications**

55. Oxford City Council makes an annual contribution towards the running costs of OSCB £10,000, and OSAB £5,000. The Council has one member of staff who is a member of the OSCB training pool.
56. The safeguarding system annual licence fee is budgeted at £4,500.
57. The Safeguarding Coordinator post annual salary cost is £37,334.
58. Oxford City Council make an annual contribution to Cherwell District Council for their attendance at safeguarding board subgroup meetings, on behalf of all four district councils, including South and Vale, and West Oxfordshire.

### **Legal issues**

59. Oxford City Council's legal responsibilities are set out in the Children Act 1989/2004, Care Act 2014, Modern Slavery Act 2015, Homelessness Reduction Act 2018, Mental Capacity Act 2005, Equality Act 2010 and Children & Social Work Act 2017. The Council has specific legal responsibilities under the Children Act 2004 and the Care Act 2014 to make sure the welfare and development needs of children are met and that children are protected from harm.
60. Failure to meet these legal responsibilities would increase the risk of harm to children and vulnerable adults, and cause significant reputational damage for the Council.

### **Level of risk**

61. The Risk Register can be found in Appendix 4.

### **Equalities impact**

62. The Council's Safeguarding Policy Equality Impact Assessment was carried out in May 2023, Appendix 5.



63. The Safeguarding Policy was developed to have a positive impact on each equality strand.
64. The monitoring arrangements for any adverse impact in future includes:
- Quarterly strategic safeguarding group meeting chaired by Head of Business Improvement
  - Quarterly Safeguarding Champion and Designated Officer meeting
  - Annual review in line with Safeguarding action plan
  - Annual self-assessment

**Carbon and Environmental Considerations**

65. No carbon or environmental impacts have been identified. It is considered that the proposal does not affect the council’s climate emergency commitments of pursuing a zero carbon Oxford.

<b>Report author</b>	Laura Jones
Job title	Safeguarding Coordinator
Service area or department	RS&CS
e-mail	<a href="mailto:ljones@oxford.gov.uk">ljones@oxford.gov.uk</a>
Telephone number	07485 325798

<b>Background Papers:</b>
1. Safeguarding Self-assessment 2022
2. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) Governance Structure

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