



DRAFT – to be finalised following Scrutiny Committee

“We are pleased to present to you Oxford City Council’s Safeguarding Annual Report for the year 2023.

The report details the roles and responsibilities the Council has in working with partners across Oxfordshire to safeguard children and adults with care and support needs. These responsibilities are governed by Oxfordshire’s Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, our collective response to the statutory requirements placed upon us by the Care Act 2014, the Children’s Act 2004, other acts of parliament and statutory guidance.

The report includes examples of where the Council meets these responsibilities in the services we provide, as we recognise the important role the Council plays in safeguarding our tenants, young people, and the citizens of Oxford.

We commend this comprehensive overview of our activities, initiatives, and safeguarding responses during 2023-24.

Signature

Signature

Peter Matthew

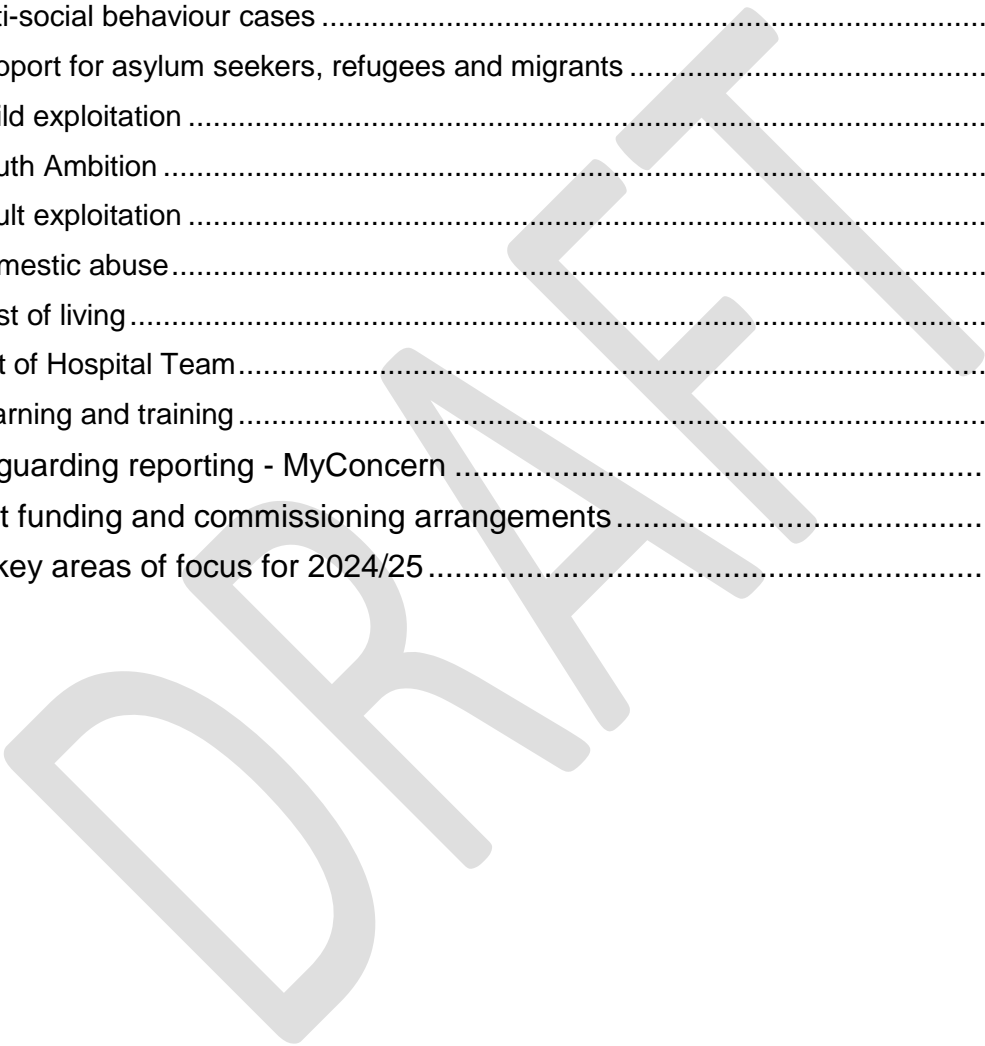
Cllr Lubna Arshad

Executive Director for Communities and People

Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford

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The Council's safeguarding responsibilities

1. Oxford City Council has a legal duty to ensure children and adults with care and support needs are safeguarded when using the Council's facilities, services, and activities. The Children Act 2004 and the Care Act 2014 require us to:
 - promote the welfare and development needs of children and adults with care and support needs
 - 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.
 - provide or arrange for the provision of services, facilities or resources which will reduce the needs for care and support of adults, in turn preventing the requirement for a statutory safeguarding referral.
2. The Council's Safeguarding Policy, available on our website, sets out how the Council fulfils these obligations and supports staff, Members, and volunteers in all aspects of safeguarding. The policy is reviewed annually, the latest review being May 2024.
3. In support of our policy, we have staff Safeguarding Procedures that set out how staff and contractors should respond to safeguarding incidents. These procedures are reviewed alongside our Safeguarding Policy. The Safeguarding allegations against staff policy was also reviewed and updated in early 2024.
4. An internal safeguarding audit was undertaken in December 2023 which sought to confirm:
 - Policies and procedures are accessible, understood and adhered to
 - Safeguarding training is up to date
 - Monitoring of recorded concerns in relation to teams' cases
 - Safeguarding supervision is undertaken
 - Pastoral support is available
 - Safeguarding response to individual casesFindings from the audit have been shared with managers of the teams audited. Actions identified in the audit are included in the annual Safeguarding Action Plan.
5. Within the Council, Executive Director for Communities and People is the accountable officer for safeguarding, with the Community Safety Service Manager responsible for embedding these safeguarding duties within Oxford City Council. This role is known as a Designated Safeguarding Lead of which there are three in the Council.
6. Council staff are supported in their safeguarding duties through mandatory training, line management support, a Safeguarding Champions network, Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and the Safeguarding Coordinator.
7. The Safeguarding Champions are volunteers from across the organisation who help to identify training needs in their service areas, review trends in safeguarding reports, and support the implementation of new safeguarding activities.

8. The Council records all safeguarding concerns on a central database. These reports are reviewed within 24 hours to ensure the appropriate actions have been taken. Reports are published in Safeguarding newsletters and in our Corporate Dashboard to identify and respond to safeguarding themes and trends.

Oxfordshire's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)

9. Since the introduction of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, Oxfordshire County Council, the Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Board and Thames Valley Police have had statutory responsibility for 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. Responsible for the development, delivery and quality monitoring of safeguarding service provision in Oxfordshire are two Boards and their working groups: the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB).
11. Oxford City Council are represented on both Boards and OSCB's Child Exploitation Sub-group. Cherwell District Council represent the district and city Councils on all other working sub-groups.
12. Details of the Boards' work can be found on the websites below:
 - <https://www.oscb.org.uk/>
 - <https://www.osab.co.uk/>

Oxford City Council safeguarding activities in 2023/2024

Safeguarding Audit 2023

13. Section 11, Children Act 2004 requires Oxford City Council to complete an annual self-assessment of its safeguarding activities. This has been developed into a joint self-assessment audit between the OSCB and OSAB.
14. In 2023, the Council was required to evidence its Standards in the following areas:
 - Leadership, Strategy and Working Together
 - Commissioning Arrangements
 - People's Experiences of Safeguarding
15. To inform the self-assessment Oxford City Council staff complete an annual safeguarding questionnaire. In October 2023, 384 responses were completed.
16. The evidence for each Standard was 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

17. Oxford City Council were rated Green against all Standards, and this was upheld at a Peer Review event in February 2024.
18. The review recognised Oxford City Council's high levels of staff engagement.

Homeless Prevention Team

19. Tenancy Sustainment Officers and Homeless Prevention Officers work directly with vulnerable families to maintain their tenancies and work closely with families by supporting them at multi-agency meetings as well as attendance at case conferences.
20. The Homeless Prevention Team manage homeless prevention duty cases which provides a legal offer of support to help the tenant or family avoid eviction, where a tenant or family is at risk of eviction and a warrant is to be authorised.
21. Tenants at Risk, a multiagency meeting for adults, successfully prevents homelessness of children and adults. Additionally, the Council are members of the Housing Safeguarding Network where safeguarding concerns are discussed.
22. Tenancy Sustainment Officers and Homeless Prevention officers arrange and attend multi-agency Tenants At Risk (single persons), FAROH (Families at Risk of Homelessness) and MARAC meetings for families. Agencies include Social Care, AMHT, the Police, Elmore, Connections, and advice centres.

Single Homeless and Rough Sleeping Team

23. OxSPOT, St Mungo's outreach team is commissioned to assesses people experiencing homelessness and help them access accommodation and support to prevent them from returning to the streets.
24. Homeless Oxfordshire has 56 beds at O'Hanlon House and there are 22 beds at Matilda House, run by A2Dominion and was opened in September 2019.
25. As people progress towards independent living, they move into supported accommodation, usually provided in shared housing around the city. The Council fund accommodation provided by A2Dominion, Connection Support, Homeless Oxfordshire, Aspire and Response Housing.
26. The Council also fund day services for people experiencing homelessness, provided by The Gatehouse and The Porch Day Centre. These services are available to all and include hot food, showers, laundry and activities to support people into work and training. We also fund Aspire Oxford to provide employment and training opportunities for homeless and vulnerably housed people.

Adult homeless support in adverse weather

27. During winter extra emergency beds are provided every night the Met Office forecasts freezing overnight temperatures. From 1 January until the end of March, a group of Oxford churches also offers beds for verified rough sleepers in the Oxford Winter Night Shelter.
28. This winter saw the successful countywide approach to Severe Weather Emergency Protocol that provided emergency accommodation to rough sleepers on 24 nights where the temperature was forecast to be below freezing.
29. During the long hot spells of summer 2024, the Council coordinated activities to ensure people who were rough sleeping were protected from extreme heat.

Anti-social behaviour cases

30. The Council's Community Response Team and Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team work with Thames Valley police, mental health teams, social services and other partners to prevent and respond to anti-social behaviour, often involving safeguarding concerns.
31. Cases include noise nuisance, cuckooing, substance misuse and hoarding which, upon identification, is referred to the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. All staff dealing with ASB are trained in all relevant legislation including equality, diversity, mental health including capacity, and safeguarding.
32. Prior to formal enforcement action, the case officer will ensure all reasonable steps have been taken to identify any vulnerabilities and safeguarding needs, and that all appropriate supportive actions have been considered.
33. During an investigation, an officer may come across a person whose welfare may raise concerns. Whether or not the subject has a direct connection to the case under investigation, it remains the duty of officers to ensure that these concerns are properly logged on the Council's safeguarding reporting system and passed to social services through the Council's safeguarding procedures.

Support for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants

34. 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.
35. Oxford City Council supported increasing access to interpreting services to ensure that residents from all nationalities can access appropriate services safely and the Council have a designated contract to offer translation services where required. The Council has now commenced its third phase of resettlement, the first family arrived in April 2024.
36. The Council has been given approval to apply for City of Sanctuary accreditation as an "Authority of Sanctuary". This project has now commenced and will be seeking lived experience and collaboration with stakeholders and partners to inform and deliver the associated action plan and to achieve accreditation. The project will focus on the whole Council, creating a more welcoming environment for all in the community and will also look to work with its partners as to how the city can become more accessible.

Child exploitation

37. The Community Safety Service Manager attends the OSCB Child Exploitation Subgroup that leads on policy development in Oxfordshire. The Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team Officers attend the police Tactical Tasking and Coordination Group (TTCG) meetings that identifies and support young people at risk, and coordinates activities to tackle their exploiters.
38. Sexual Violence and Exploitation Network meetings were relaunched in early 2024, which the Safeguarding Coordinator attends on behalf of Oxford City Council.

39. The Council is a Responsible Authority for the Oxford Community Safety Partnership, chairs and facilitates partnership meetings and coordinates plans to address the community safety priorities in the city. The current priorities include violence against women and girls, serious and organised crime, anti-social behaviour, alcohol-related violence and modern slavery. All priorities have an important safeguarding element running through them, with Council and partner staff trained, planning for, and responding to child safeguarding issues.
40. Toolkits provided by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board are used by colleagues, specifically the Strengths and Needs tool by Homeless Prevention officers to ensure Early Help support is offered at the right time.

Youth Ambition

41. The City Council's Youth Ambition Team provide engagement and diversion activities for young people in the city. The team work with local Youth Partnerships and communities to deliver a range of activities for young people aged 12 – 17.
42. Youth Ambition ensure staff have a range of skills and knowledge to support young people with care and support needs. Current staff roles include:
 - Education, Employment and Training Youth Worker
 - Mental Health Youth Worker
 - Female Participation Lead Youth Worker
 - Mentoring Youth Worker

Adult exploitation

43. Oxford City Council's Anti-Slavery Coordinator developed new Oxfordshire Adult Exploitation Guidance and Pathways for partners across Oxfordshire. Since the launch of this new pathway, there has been a significant increase in adult exploitation alerts 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.
44. In 2023, Oxford City Council continued its work with partners, including Thames Valley Police, University of Oxford and Brookes University on the Violence Against Women and Girls: Safe Journey, Safe Destination project. The project increased safety in the night-time economy and complemented the police's Project Vigilant and NightSafe policing operation.
45. The project continued to support the Oxford City Angels who help vulnerable people during the evening period, expanded the network of Safe Places as respite locations for people in need and continued taxi marshals in Park End Street.

Domestic abuse

46. Oxford City Council's ASBIT Manager and domestic abuse lead works on the development and delivery of the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy, the Safe Accommodation Strategy, and the DRIVE Perpetrator programme which provides interventions for high risk/high harm perpetrators of domestic abuse.

47. Domestic Homicide Reviews are a responsibility of the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership, with the Council leading on the commissioning of the reviews. There was one review in 2023.
48. The Council continued its work on achieving the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation. A group of Domestic Abuse (DA) Champions has been identified with all champions attending or enrolled on accredited DA Champions training, accessing a learning channel which provides up-to-date resources, and created an ethos of mutual support and advice.
49. The Council has developed and delivered bespoke DA training. This included DA Awareness, and Lunch-and-Learn sessions for all staff, and training for managers to support clients and staff who are DA victims or survivors. 85 staff members including managers, attended these courses in 2023.
50. Internal policies and procedures continue to undergo review to ensure all are in line with DAHA recommendations. Attendance at internal steering groups including Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, has ensured heightened awareness of Domestic Abuse.
51. Multiple forums are utilised, including building robust partnerships with colleagues in our district councils, specialist DA services, sharing information and best practice. Communications have been released via the internal intranet to raise awareness and air podcasts.

Cost of living

52. Through the dissemination by Localities of the Household Support Fund to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, the Council has provided a variety of support to vulnerable people across the City. Financial support has been provided to the city's advice centres to enable them to work with residents in financial crisis.
53. The food network which distributes food to the city food banks and larders has also been supported by the Council. Supermarket vouchers are provided by front line staff to residents who may be most in need to support them with food and fuel costs.
54. Locality Managers provide financial support to groups and organisations who work with vulnerable residents, including Asylum Welcome to support Asylum Seekers with white goods and food whilst they await their Universal Credit Claims, Support to Youth Organisations for non HAF funded young people supporting families who are in need but not in receipt of benefits and cooking classes for migrant families.
55. The Council's Energy Advice team provide free advice on energy costs to Council tenants and Oxford City Council's Home Improvement Agency helps with home adaptations, repairs, and falls prevention for older, disabled, and vulnerable people so they can live safely in their own home.
56. The Oxford City Council website provides extensive advice and links to agencies and charities who can support customers with the cost-of-living crisis.

Out of Hospital Team

57. In February 2023, the Council employed a Make Every Adult Matter (MEAM) Coordinator, in line with the national approach to multiple disadvantaged vulnerable adults. The MEAM Coordinator works with cohort of 12 of the City's most vulnerable people, identified through the Countywide MEAM steering group.

58. Positive results have been shared via a report to the Homelessness Directors Group. Safeguarding leads and Homelessness Mortality Review colleagues are briefed on the MEAM outcomes and work in partnership with the coordinator.

Learning and training

59. Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Coordinator volunteers as an OSCB trainer and attends the Learning, Development and Training OSCB subgroup.
60. In 2023, 28 internal safeguarding briefings were delivered to 425 Oxford City Council staff. Two safeguarding briefings were delivered to Councillors in May and July, attended by 15 Councillors.
61. The safeguarding awareness briefing training evaluation form is completed by participants, in line with the Safeguarding Boards' evaluation process. Any Strongly Disagree or Disagree responses are followed up by the Safeguarding Coordinator to ensure officers understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
62. Feedback is used to inform future safeguarding training and scenario discussions. Where appropriate, comments are responded to by the Safeguarding Coordinator.
63. 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.
64. Five rapid reviews were returned to the CSPR subgroup in 2023. 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.
65. Homeless Mortality Review scoping requests are responded to by the Rough Sleeping and Single Homeless Manager. The Domestic Abuse Lead leads on Domestic Homicide Reviews for the Council.
66. The Safeguarding Policy and Procedures were reviewed and updated in May 2024, with updates shared widely via various communications. The Safeguarding Allegations Against Staff Policy was reviewed and updated in early 2024.
67. Newsletters have been released quarterly throughout the year to all staff.

Safeguarding reporting - MyConcern

68. In 2023-24, 276 safeguarding reports were recorded on MyConcern. The Council's Business Improvement Service which includes the Council's Contact Centre, raised the most concerns followed by Housing Services and the Community Safety Service. The most frequently reported concerns were:
- Child Safeguarding
 - Self-Neglect
 - Suicidal threat
 - Mental Ill Health
 - Domestic Abuse
69. Team-specific training was delivered in response to these trends. In addition, one officer has volunteered as a safeguarding trainer within the last year, bringing the

number of trainers to three. Trainers meet quarterly to review and update the training package in line with local and national updates and evaluation forms.

70. Upon recording a new MyConcern, colleagues are signposted to pastoral care via the Employee Assistance Programme and team of Mental Health First Aiders.

Grant funding and commissioning arrangements

71. Following scrutiny recommendations for the 2023 Safeguarding report, the Grant Fund application was updated to include two questions in relation to organisations' safeguarding arrangements.
72. Organisations who did not meet the additional safeguarding requirements were contacted by the Safeguarding Coordinator for support and advice.
73. In response to the additional safeguarding requirements in the grant application, organisations have created or updated safeguarding policies, arranged safeguarding training and have a better awareness and understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities.
74. Oxford City Council's response to section three of the safeguarding self-assessment lays out our commissioning arrangements. The self-assessment is a background paper to this report.

The key areas of focus for 2024/25

75. Operational areas of focus for 2024-2025 are:
 - Increase referral recording rate using MyConcern in order to monitor internal referrals in addition to external referrals, and referral outcomes.
 - Increase uptake of pastoral support for staff.
 - Identify appropriate training for individual teams and promote uptake.
 - Scope the Safeguarding Audit 2024.
76. A safeguarding referral audit commenced in April 2024, as requested by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adult Board's Performance, Information and Quality Assurance subgroup and will be presented alongside district colleagues' audits later in the year.

Background Papers:

1. [Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Policy 2023-2026](#) (reviewed May 2024)
2. [Safeguarding Self-assessment 2023](#)