

To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 14 October 2025
Report of: Community Safety Service Manager
Title of Report: Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report 2024/25

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	Note the key achievements of the Safeguarding work delivered through Oxford City Council during 2024/25
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Thriving Communities Well-run Council
Policy Framework:	Corporate Plan. Safeguarding Policy
Recommendation(s): That the Scrutiny Committee:	
1.	Note the key achievements of the Safeguarding work delivered through Oxford City Council during 2024/25

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Oxford City Council Safeguarding Policy 2023-26

Introduction

1. We are pleased to present to you Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Annual Report for the year 2024-25.
2. The report details the Council's roles and responsibilities when 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.
3. 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.
4. We commend this comprehensive overview of our activities, initiatives, and safeguarding responses during 2024-25.

The Council's safeguarding responsibilities

5. 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, councillors, and volunteers in all aspects of safeguarding. The policy is reviewed annually, the latest review being May 2025.
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. Within the Council, the Deputy Chief Executive for Citizen and City Services 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.
5. 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.

6. 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.
7. 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 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)

8. Since the introduction of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, Oxfordshire County Council, the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire 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.
9. In December 2024, the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP), formerly the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, published [Oxfordshire's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements \(MASA\)](#), as required by the statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#). The MASA sets out how we will work together, coordinate, and deliver our functions to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and is an appendix to this report.
10. Under these arrangements, the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB), and their sub-groups are responsible for the development, delivery and quality monitoring of safeguarding service provision in Oxfordshire.
11. Oxford City Council are represented on both the OSCP and OSAB and all sub-groups.
12. Details of the OSCP and OSAB work can be found on the websites below:
 - <https://www.oscp.org.uk/>
 - <https://www.osab.co.uk/>

Oxford City Council safeguarding activities in 2024/2025

Safeguarding Audit 2024

13. The annual Section 11, Children Act 2004 audit which requires Oxford City Council to complete an annual self-assessment of its safeguarding activities, was postponed for one year following all agency agreement to focus on the theme of Professional Curiosity.
14. OSCP and OSAB developed a frontline practitioner questionnaire and a line manager questionnaire, with each asking specific professional curiosity questions. Responses have not yet been shared at the time of writing this report.
15. Oxford City Council expressed their wishes to continue with the self-assessment to ensure quality assurance. The self-assessment will return in 2025.

16. To inform the self-assessment Oxford City Council staff complete an annual safeguarding questionnaire. Despite the annual self-assessment postponement, the questionnaire went ahead in October 2024 and 321 responses were received.
17. Feedback from the questionnaire as presented by the Safeguarding Coordinator at an internal Leadership Conversation meeting in November 2024. Responses are used to update internal training and annual safeguarding action plan.

Homeless Prevention Team

18. 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 and case conferences.
19. The Homeless Prevention Team manage homeless prevention duty cases which provide 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.
20. The Council are members of the Housing Safeguarding Network where safeguarding concerns are discussed.
21. Tenancy Sustainment Officers and Homeless Prevention officers arrange and attend multi-agency Tenants at Risk (single persons at risk of eviction from their landlord), 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

22. OxSPOT, St Mungo's outreach team is commissioned to assesses people experiencing homelessness and help them access accommodation and support to prevent them returning to the streets.
23. As people progress towards independent living, the Move-On Team support them to move in to supported accommodation, usually provided in shared housing. The Council financially support accommodation provided by A2Dominion, Connection Support, Homeless Oxfordshire, Aspire and Response Housing.
24. The Council 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

25. 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.
26. This winter saw the successful countywide approach to Severe Weather Emergency Protocol that provided emergency accommodation to rough sleepers on 33 nights where the temperature was forecast to be below freezing.
27. During the long hot spells of summer 2025, the Council coordinated activities to ensure people who were rough sleeping were protected from extreme heat, in

line with the Heat Health Alerts issued by the Health Security Agency.

Anti-social behaviour cases

28. 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.
29. 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.
30. 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.
31. 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

32. Oxford City Council continue to support people seeking sanctuary who settle in Oxford, this includes new refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants. The dedicated Refugee and Resettlement Team supports housing, health and integration projects and the on-going resettlement of households through government backed resettlement schemes which is in its third phase.
33. The Council supports interpreting services to ensure that residents from all nationalities can access appropriate services safely through a designated contract and have recently included a translation icon on all Council's web pages so customers can translate web content more easily.
34. In November 2024, the Council received the Local Authority of Sanctuary Award. The purpose of this accreditation is to formally recognise local authorities that actively demonstrate a commitment to creating a culture of safety, inclusion, and support for all vulnerable groups. The Council of Sanctuary framework was developed collaboratively with residents and key stakeholders, drawing on real-life experiences and valuable insights from this commissioned research, as well as additional analyses conducted by the council and includes a 3-year action plan 2025-2028. Further information can be found by clicking: [Local Authority of Sanctuary | Oxford City Council](#)
35. The Localities Team provided funding for a summer cooking programme for refugee men at Kassam to equip them with skills to cook on a budget for when they move onto independent living.

Child exploitation

36. The Community Safety Service Manager attends the OSCP Child Exploitation Subgroup that leads on the multi-agency response to child exploitation in

Oxfordshire. The Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team Officers attend the police Tactical Tasking and Coordination Group (TTCCG) meetings that identifies and support young people at risk, and coordinates activities to tackle their exploiters.

37. 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 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.
38. Toolkits provided by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership 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

39. 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.
40. 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
41. An audit of Youth Ambition's safeguarding activities is included in the 2025-2026 safeguarding action plan. The audit aims to support the new management team in safeguarding compliance and identify areas of best practice and learning opportunities.
42. The audit findings will be shared with OSCP's Performance and Quality Assurance (PAQA) subgroup.

Adult exploitation

43. Oxfordshire's Modern Slavery and Exploitation Coordinator (formerly Anti-Slavery Coordinator) received additional funding support from the Police and Crime Commissioner in April 2025.
44. Between July 2024 and July 2025, a total of 128 referrals from Oxford, compared to 201 referrals across the whole of Oxfordshire were received by the Modern Slavery and Exploitation Coordinator. The 128 Oxford referrals resulted in a total of 161 potential victims being identified.
45. Types of Exploitation reported:

Exploitation Type	Total
Criminal Exploitation	51

Labour Exploitation	34
Sexual Exploitation	29
Financial Exploitation	11
Domestic Servitude	2
Cultural Exploitation	1

46. Referral Pathways:

Concern Type	Total
Individual	107
Premises	16
Business	5

47. 51 of the 128 referrals made came from within Oxford City Council:

Team/Service	Total
Safeguarding Coordinator	28
RRT	10
ASBIT/Safer Oxford	6
Customer Service	5
Housing Services	2

48. Over the reporting period, significant progress has been made in addressing exploitation across Oxfordshire, with continued strong multi-agency partnership work, ensuring all forms of exploitation are more effectively identified, referred and disrupted. Key risks remain in the care, hospitality, and homelessness sectors, including the exploitation of vulnerable young people, asylum seekers, and food couriers.

49. Outcomes include the identification and support of victims through hospital and social care partnerships, successful disruption of a large care provider following multi-agency action, and the successful conviction and prosecution of an individual for modern slavery and trafficking offences. Public awareness and professional training have been strengthened through campaigns, events, and media engagement. Oxfordshire's approach continues to receive national recognition and contributed to research and national policy discussions with multiple government bodies.

Domestic abuse

50. Domestic Homicide Reviews are a responsibility of the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership, with the Council leading on the commissioning of the reviews. Two reviews are currently ongoing.

51. The Council continued its work on achieving the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation.

52. Domestic Abuse was the most recorded MyConcern category in between July 2024 and July 2025.
53. In February 2025 the identification of Domestic Abuse Victims/Survivors via the Triage Housing Assessment was launched. Since its introduction, our dedicated Domestic Abuse (DA) team has completed 62 DASH risk assessments. Of these, 30% were classified as high risk, requiring a coordinated multi-agency response.
54. Between January and July 2025, 51 referrals to the Sanctuary Scheme were received. 16 cases (31%) of these were assessed as high risk.
55. In July 2025, following an extensive consultation process, the Domestic Abuse Service Users Policy was introduced. The launch was supported by promotional videos and shared across social media platforms.
56. Over the past year, the Domestic Abuse Team has developed and delivered 16 specialist training sessions, attended by 176 frontline workers. These sessions were facilitated by specialist internal and external providers to ensure high-quality learning experiences. The DAHA Project Manager additionally delivered a learning session to the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Champions on Supporting staff who are experiencing Domestic Abuse
57. February 2025 marked the launch of the Domestic Abuse Exceptional Circumstances Panel (DA ECP). For the first time, victims/survivors of domestic abuse are represented within a dedicated panel, ensuring their voices are heard and promoting a consistent, collaborative approach to decision-making.

Cost of living

58. 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 selected advice centres to enable them to work with residents in financial crisis.
59. The food network which distributes food to the city food banks and larders are 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.
60. The Localities Team have supported the Youth Ambition Team to secure funding from Oxfordshire County Council to support food provision in all youth sessions across the city.
61. The Oxford Academy have been supported in gaining funding to support the Break Time Snack Initiative aimed at reducing student hunger and improving concentration.
62. As part of the free school meals campaign, The Locality Team collaborated with the Benefits Team to send letters to residents with children in the city who may be eligible to claim free school meals. This included information on free or low-cost activities the families can access.
63. Residents are referred to Better Housing Better Health for Energy support 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.

64. The Oxford City Council website provides extensive advice and links to agencies and charities who can support customers with the cost-of-living crisis.

Health and Homelessness Inclusion Team

65. The Making Every Adult Matter approach is part of the Health and Homelessness Inclusion Team (formerly Out of Hospital Care Team).

66. Making Every Adult Matter is a national learning approach being used in 51 local authorities nationwide. The initiative aims to improve services for people dealing with multiple deprivation. The programme in Oxford is now in its third year and has focussed on people 'stuck or stranded' in the system.

67. The last 12 months focuses have been:

- Writing up the MEAM learnings based on the initial cohort of 12 people. These have been shared widely, including with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board, Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance, Oxfordshire ICB Place Based Partnership, City Council Housing Needs Team, Scrutiny Committee, Systems Integration Group Meetings, and the Countywide Steering Group.
- Presentations of our work in Oxfordshire have also been invited by the National MEAM Conference and the Homeless Link Conference.
- Formulating and preparing to present recommendations to the Prevention of Homelessness Directors Group in October.

68. In the coming year, a new cohort of five people will join the MEAM programme.

69. From October 2025, a series of workshops will be run through the OSAB training programme entitled 'MEAM: Learning from Complexity and Homelessness'.

Learning and training

70. Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Coordinator volunteers as an OSCP trainer and attends the Learning, Development and Training subgroups for both OSCP and OSAB.

71. For the period 01/07/2024 to 30/06/2025, 26 internal safeguarding briefings were delivered to 405 Oxford City Council staff.

72. Oxford City Council staff by a pool of three internal trainers. A safeguarding briefing is scheduled to be delivered to Councillors in September 2025.

73. The Safeguarding Introduction training evaluation form is completed by participants, in line with the OSCP and OSAB evaluation process. Any Strongly Disagree or Disagree responses are followed up by the Safeguarding Coordinator to ensure officers understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

74. Feedback is used to inform future safeguarding training and scenario discussions. Where appropriate, comments are responded to by the Safeguarding Coordinator. The internal training team meet quarterly to review the training package and evaluation forms.

75. Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs), and their national and local recommendations, are included in the Safeguarding Introductions which are mandatory for all staff.

76. Two rapid reviews, which inform Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, were returned to the CSPR subgroup in 2024-25. One return from Oxford City Council was a 'nil' return as the Council had no contact with the child or family members,

and one informed a Partnership Learning Review. Learning identified by Oxford City Council resulted in additional training for relevant teams.

77. 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.
78. The Safeguarding Policy and Procedures were reviewed and updated in May 2025, with updates shared widely via various communications. The Safeguarding Allegations Against Staff Policy was reviewed and updated in early 2024.
79. Newsletters have been released quarterly throughout the year to all staff, articles include learning from reviews, training available through the OSCP and OSAB websites, MyConcern reports, updates from internal teams such as the Modern Slavery and Exploitation Coordinator and DA Lead, updates on external agencies' activities such as the recruitment and contact details of a new Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) officer, and a 'you said, we did' following the all staff safeguarding questionnaire.

Safeguarding reporting - MyConcern

80. Between July 2024 and July 2025, 678 safeguarding reports were recorded on MyConcern. In the same period for 2023-2024, 339 concerns were recorded. Housing Services, raised the most concerns (300) followed by the Contact Centre and the Community Safety Service. The most frequently reported concerns were:

- Child Safeguarding
- Domestic Abuse
- Suicidal thoughts
- Mental Ill Health
- Suicide threat

81. Team-specific training was delivered in response to these trends.

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

83. Oxford City Council's Corporate Leadership Team have recognised the potential impact on staff welfare when managing safeguarding concerns. The People Team are developing training and a package of varying support tools in response to this.

Grant funding and commissioning arrangements

84. Organisations continue to receive support in meeting safeguarding requirements following the addition of safeguarding specific questions for Grant Fund applications in 2024.
85. Procurement tender templates have been updated to include confirmation of safeguarding arrangements relating to Care Act 2014, Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023, and the Children Act 2004.

The key areas of focus for 2025/26

86. Operational areas of focus for 2025-2026 are:

- Develop corporate procedure for internal safeguarding learning reviews.
- Identify appropriate training for individual teams and promote uptake.
- Completion of Youth Ambition audit
- Support the countywide plan for promotion of the National Safeguarding Week.
- Support Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adult Board priorities, focusing on sextortion, scams, and mental capacity.

Financial implications

87. Oxford City Council contributes an annual contribution towards the running costs of OSCP and OSAB of £5,000 each. The Council has one member of staff who is a member of the OSCP and OSAB training pool.

88. The safeguarding system annual licence fee is budgeted at £4,500.

Legal implications

89. Oxford City Council's legal responsibilities are set out in the Children Act 1989/2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, 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.

90. 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.

Report author	Laura Jones
Job title	Safeguarding Coordinator
Service area or department	Community Safety Service
Email contact	ljones@oxford.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank