

## Oxford City Council Safeguarding Policy 2023-26



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| <b>Document</b>      | Oxford City Council Safeguarding Policy |
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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy sets out the Council's approach to fulfilling its safeguarding duties and responsibilities as a local authority and landlord.
- 1.2 The policy includes the Council's duties to its tenants, citizens, employees, councillors and volunteers working for or on behalf of the Council in relation to its role in promoting well-being and preventing, responding, and supporting our citizens in safeguarding matters, in particular safeguarding children, young people, and adults with care and support needs.
- 1.3 This policy applies to all City Council employees, which include contractors and agency staff, all elected councillors, and any person volunteering for Oxford City Council.
- 1.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Procedures.
- 1.5 Safeguarding procedures, advice and contact details can be found on the Oxford City Council [intranet page](#) or [website](#).

## **2. Legal Framework**

- 2.1 Under the legal framework of the Children Act 1989 and 2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, and the Care Act 2014, the Council has specific duties to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, and adults with care and support needs.
- 2.2 The [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#) (MCA) is designed to protect and empower people who may lack the mental capacity to make their own decisions about their care and treatment. It applies to people aged 16 and over.
- 2.3 Oxford City Council must engage as appropriate in any reviews or information sharing in relation to the death of a child or adult with care and support needs, as laid out in [Chapter 5: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) and [Section 44 and 45 of the Care Act 2014](#).
- 2.4 There are fundamental differences between the legislative framework for safeguarding for children and for adults, which recognise an adult's right to self-determination.

## **3. Oxfordshire's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements**

- 3.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 established collective responsibility and accountability for safeguarding arrangements which lies with Oxfordshire County Council, the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB), and Thames Valley Police, the three Lead Safeguarding Partners.
- 3.2 The Lead Safeguarding Partners in Oxfordshire work together as an Executive Group and delegate responsibility for the development, delivery, and quality monitoring of safeguarding service provision to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB).
- 3.3 Oxford City Council is an active member of both OSCP and OSAB, working with partners to develop and adhere to a collective approach to safeguarding in Oxfordshire.

- 3.4 Robust communication and escalation processes are in place that complements the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB) strategies.
- 3.5 An annual Performance and Quality Assurance (PAQA) audit will be completed, as required by the OSCP PAQA Subgroup.
- 3.6 The use of pathways and awareness of joint protocols will be promoted, e.g., the Hoarding Protocol and the Multi Agency Risk Management (MARM) process, we will develop toolkits and support and promote cooperation with boards, including joint funding and attending full board meetings.
- 3.7 We will ensure safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, Government guidance and complies with best practice and the Oxfordshire Safeguarding requirements.
- 3.8 The OSCP and OSAB joint annual self-assessment will be completed, as required. Standards which are reported on in the self-assessment and measured against in the annual safeguarding action plan are:
  - Leadership, Strategy and Working Together
  - Service Delivery, Development & Effective Practice
  - Commissioning Arrangements
  - Safer Recruitment, Staff Development & Effective Learning
  - People's Experiences of Safeguarding

#### **4. Oxford City Council's safeguarding role as a landlord**

- 4.1 This policy sets out how the Council fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities as a landlord to ensure the safety, wellbeing, and dignity of vulnerable tenants and families, whether in temporary housing, sheltered, or general needs housing.
- 4.2 Tenants can be ageing, experience long term conditions or are disabled, or can require safeguarding due to abuse or neglect. Housing teams and contractors operating in the Council's housing stock are often the first to spot signs of abuse, neglect, or unsuitable living conditions.
- 4.3 Council officers supporting tenants are trained to identify children and adults at risk, and how to raise and respond to their concerns as set out in this policy and supporting safeguarding procedures. These concerns can include a tenant's health and wellbeing, anti-social behaviour, disability, hate crime, domestic abuse and unfit living conditions.
- 4.4 The Council is committed to providing services by listening to residents, understanding differing needs, and providing accessible and responsive services and communications.

#### **5. Roles and responsibilities**

##### **Employees, councillors and volunteers**

- 5.1 All employees, councillors and volunteers are responsible for carrying out their duties in a way that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children, young people and adults with care and support needs. They must also act in a way that protects them from wrongful allegations of abuse. They must bring matters

of concern about safety and welfare of children, young people and adults with care and support needs to the attention of their line manager or a Safeguarding Champion.

### **Service Directors**

- 5.2 All Service Directors must ensure that their employees and volunteers are subject to appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and that employees and volunteers comply with this policy and procedures.
- 5.3 Ensure safeguarding is strategically placed across service area business plans and to ensure that strategies and plans that include safeguarding are in line with the Council Strategy 2024-2028.
- 5.4 Determine appropriate level of safeguarding training for each post.

### **Line Managers**

- 5.5 All Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that their employees and volunteers have the appropriate training.
- 5.6 All Line Managers are responsible for safer recruitment of employees and volunteers in their service area and being aware of the policy on recruiting people with a criminal record.
- 5.7 All Line Managers are also responsible for adhering to the appraisal process and for including safeguarding in one to ones and team meetings, where appropriate.

## **6. Safeguarding governance**

### **Deputy Chief Executive for City and Citizens Services**

- 6.1 The Deputy Chief Executive for City and Citizens Services has accountability for safeguarding in Oxford City Council.
- 6.2 The Deputy Chief Executive for City and Citizens Services is the first point of contact for any deaths of children, young people, or adults with care and support needs on Council premises, in order that the Council ensures there is an effective response.

### **Cabinet Board Member**

- 6.3 The Cabinet member for Inclusive and Safer Communities holds political responsibility and accountability for Safeguarding.

### **Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)**

- 6.4 All DSLs have responsibility for:
  - promoting well-being and preventing, responding, and supporting our citizens in safeguarding matters, in particular safeguarding children, young people, and adults with care and support needs.
  - Ensuring that the City Council procedures for dealing with allegations are in accordance with guidance from the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Boards
  - Resolving inter-agency issues.
  - Overseeing and reviewing the implementation of policy and procedures.

### **Community Safety Service Manager (DSL)**

- 6.5 Responsibility for embedding the Council's safeguarding policy and practice.
- 6.6 The Oxford City Council representative on the OSCP Full Board and OSAB Full Board meetings and responsible for ensuring relevant safeguarding information is provided to the Corporate Leadership Team, Councillors, and staff.
- 6.7 The lead officer for escalations to partner agencies when necessary.
- 6.8 Responsible for the implementation and promotion of effective safeguarding policy and practice within Oxford City Council.
- 6.9 Responsible for implementing safeguarding training to all staff and Councillors.

### **Head of People (DSL)**

- 6.10 Responsible for embedding safeguarding recruitment procedures for posts with direct access to children, young people or adults with care and support needs.
- 6.11 Lead for investigation of safeguarding allegations against staff.
- 6.12 Responsible for the recommendations and completion of safeguarding actions following a disciplinary hearing.

### **Director of Housing Services (DSL)**

- 6.13 Responsible for the implementation and promotion of effective safeguarding policy and practice within Housing Services.

### **Safeguarding Coordinator**

- 6.14 Ensures Oxford City Council have best practice in safeguarding children, and adults with care and support needs, across all of the City Council services and within the community.
- 6.15 Leads on the development and implementation of Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Children, and Adults with care and support needs policy and procedures.
- 6.16 Responsible for the completion of the annual safeguarding self-assessment and other reports and audits to the safeguarding boards.
- 6.17 Responsible for the coordination and dissemination of information across the authority, including that related to assessments, audits and learning from statutory case reviews.
- 6.18 Responsible for overseeing the internal safeguarding recording system, MyConcern.
- 6.19 Coordinate the delivery of internal Safeguarding Introduction.
- 6.20 Lead the Safeguarding Trainers and Safeguarding Champions.

### **Safeguarding Champions**

- 6.21 Safeguarding Champions are Council employees who have undertaken Specialist Safeguarding training and provide safeguarding advice to employees, councillors and volunteers on the appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures, and referral routes. Their responsibilities also include maintaining safeguarding as a standing agenda item at team meetings and disseminating information, as appropriate.

6.22 The Safeguarding Champion structure is promoted through regular communications and training.

## **7. Safeguarding prevention**

7.1 Oxford City Council will:

- Promote wellbeing and early help interventions in line with the OSCP Early Help strategy.
- Explore prevention opportunities prior to the requirement of statutory intervention.
- Ensure whole-Council approach to safeguarding interventions, ensuring appropriate service areas provide appropriate services at the right time.
- Promote use of early help tools available on the OSCP and OSAB websites.

## **8. Mental Capacity**

8.1 The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) places emphasis on supporting and empowering people to make decisions for themselves wherever this is possible and provides a legal framework for acting and making decisions on behalf of people who lack mental capacity to make decisions for themselves.

8.2 The MCA is an important safeguard for people who may experience difficulties in making decisions for themselves.

8.3 The Council is committed to ensuring:

- A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that they lack capacity.
- Individuals should be supported to make their own decisions where possible. A person should not be treated as unable to make their own decision unless all practicable steps have been taken to support them to make the decision for themselves.
- A person should not be treated as unable to make a decision because others regard the decision made as being 'unwise'.
- A person making decisions on behalf of someone lacking capacity must do so in their best interests.
- Decisions made on behalf of someone lacking capacity should always be the option which is least restrictive on their basic rights and freedoms.

## **9. Safeguarding practice and reviews**

9.1 Oxford City Council will contribute to all reviews and associated information sharing into serious safeguarding incidents, including:

- Rapid Reviews to inform OSCP's Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs).
- Safeguarding Adult Reviews
- Homelessness Mortality Reviews
- Domestic Homicide Reviews

- 9.2 Following a review, lessons learned will be shared and embedded across the organisation through communications and training.

## **10. Training**

- 10.1 Oxford City Council will provide effective safeguarding training in order that employees, councillors, and volunteers are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children and adults with care and support needs.
- 10.2 All employees, councillors and volunteers are required to complete the internal Safeguarding Introduction every two years.
- 10.3 Employees, councillors, and volunteers working directly with children and/or adults with care and support needs are required to complete OSCP and/or OSAB levels two and three, appropriate to their role.
- 10.4 Training information will be kept up-to-date, accessible and underpin the OSCP and OSAB training requirements.
- 10.5 Training delivered by staff will be assessed through an evaluation process to ensure it is current and effective.
- 10.6 The Safeguarding Coordinator will attend OSCP and OSAB Training Subgroups and workshops to develop training programmes and learning events that meet the safeguarding needs of Council staff, councillors, and volunteers.
- 10.7 Procedural changes will be communicated to staff through updates to the internal Safeguarding Introduction and internal communications platforms.

## **11. Volunteers**

- 11.1 Volunteers will complete the internal Safeguarding Introduction, in addition to further training appropriate to their role.
- 11.2 Volunteers will report safeguarding concerns to their volunteer line manager who will record the concern on MyConcern.
- 11.3 Volunteers are required to comply with Safer Recruitment procedures in regard to DBS checks, as appropriate to their role.
- 11.4 Volunteers will adhere to the service Code of Conduct and relevant policies and procedures.

## **12. Reporting concerns**

- 12.1 Oxford City Council employees use the Threshold of Need matrix for children and the Safeguarding Adults Consideration for adults, and report safeguarding concerns to the appropriate agencies, including:
- The police
  - Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS)
  - Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
  - Adult Safeguarding Team
  - Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- 12.2 Where the threshold for safeguarding duties is not met, concerns will be managed internally or signposted to support agencies.



- 12.3 All safeguarding incidents are recorded on an externally provided case management system.
- 12.4 New cases are reviewed and triaged by trained Designated Safeguarding Officers within one working day.
- 12.5 Guidance on reporting and recording concerns is detailed in the Oxford City Council Safeguarding Procedures document.

### **13. Supervision and pastoral support**

- 13.1 Oxford City Council will support its employees by providing access to the Mental Health First Aid team.
- 13.2 Oxford City Council will support its employees, volunteers, and councillors by providing access to the Employee Assistance Programme.
- 13.3 Line managers will provide the opportunity to staff to discuss safeguarding concerns at one-to-one meetings or debriefings.
- 13.4 Safeguarding Champions' contact details are available for staff to use for advice and support.

### **14. Commissioned services and contractors**

- 14.1 Oxford City Council require all organisations working on behalf of Oxford City Council to have their own safeguarding policies and procedures which align with MASA processes.
- 14.2 The Council will ensure the safeguarding policies of commissioned and grant funded services comply with the standards set by Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board, on application to the Council. The Safeguarding Coordinator obtains annual Commissioned Services Safeguarding Self Assessments from each service.
- 14.3 Safeguarding guidance is included in the Council's procurement and grant funding processes.
- 14.4 Where relevant to the post, all employment agencies that provide the Council with contracted staff must have procedures in place to safeguard children, young people and adults with care and support needs in accordance with the requirements of Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board.

### **15. Staff recruitment**

- 15.1 The Council uses a structured Safer Recruitment process to ensure all necessary checks and vetting are in place to minimise the risk of appointing unsuitable people to work with children or adults with care and support needs.
- 15.2 Recruiting managers are required to undertake safeguarding training, safer recruitment training, and will adhere to the Recruitment and Selection policy.
- 15.3 Oxford City Council will adhere to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (ROA 74) and ensure all necessary checks are undertaken for exempt positions.

## **16. Whistleblowing**

- 16.1 The Whistle Blowing Policy encourages employees who have serious concerns about any aspects of the Council's work to come forward and voice those concerns.
- 16.2 The Policy applies to illegal, improper, unethical, or wrong conduct, including safeguarding concerns. The policy applies to the behaviour or actions of staff, councillors, co-opted committee members, anyone representing the Council, partner organisations, contractors, consultants, or other suppliers.
- 16.3 The Whistleblowing procedure and the Council's response can be found in the Whistleblowing Policy.
- 16.4 When a safeguarding allegation is made, the Head of People must be informed and, in their absence, another Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be informed. The 'Policy and Procedure for Managing Allegations against Employees and Volunteers Working with Children and Vulnerable Adults' must be followed.

## **17. Other relevant policies and codes of practice**

- 17.1 The following documents support the aims of this policy and should be read alongside it:
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
  - Criminal Records Policy
  - Employee Code of Conduct
  - Whistle-blowing Policy
  - Safeguarding Allegations against Employees
  - Relevant risk assessments and health and safety codes of practice

## **18. Information sharing**

- 18.1 Oxford City Council encourages employees, councillors, and volunteers to share information appropriately as part of good safeguarding practise and do so confidently, whilst ensuring personal data is always treated fairly, lawfully, and appropriately, and that the rights of individuals are upheld.
- 18.2 Oxford City Council is fully committed to compliance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018.
- 18.3 To meet the statutory requirements of The Care Act 2014 and The Children Act 1989 and 2004, all employees, councillors and volunteers must comply with the following policies, guidelines, and protocols:
- [Safeguarding Information Sharing Protocol OSCPOSCP](#)
  - Oxford City Council Internet Usage Policy and E-mail Policy
  - Oxford City Council IT Security Policy
  - Oxford City Council Data protection policy
  - [Information sharing - Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#)
- 16.4 Oxford City Council recognises that all information regarding the safeguarding of children, young people, and adults with care and support needs should be kept

confidential. However, in order that children, young people, and adults with care and support needs are protected from harm, in some circumstances, usual considerations of confidentiality that might apply to other situations within Oxford City Council may be overridden.

## **19. Monitoring and Review**

- 19.1 The Council will complete an annual safeguarding self-assessment to measure the organisation's performance against standards as required by the local safeguarding boards.
- 19.2 The Council's safeguarding action plan contains actions in support of the self-assessment, safeguarding policy development, OSCPOSCP and OSAB requirements and other local and national safeguarding priorities. Progress on the action plan is reviewed monthly by the Safeguarding Coordinator.
- 19.3 Monthly safeguarding updates are provided to the Corporate Leadership Team.
- 19.4 An externally provided case management system is used to identify emerging safeguarding trends, themes, and additional training needs, and inform the safeguarding action plan.
- 19.5 This policy will be reviewed annually. All changes will be discussed with the Cabinet Member.
- 19.6 This policy is presented to Cabinet for approval every three years and more frequently if required by the Cabinet Member or Scrutiny process.
- 19.7 An annual Safeguarding report is produced, including an assessment of safeguarding activities for the previous year and planned activities.

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