



OSCB

Oxfordshire
Safeguarding
Children Board

Business Plan **2019-21**



Introduction

The OSCB has the job of setting out the best possible way for services like schools, police, councils and hospitals, to work together to keep children safe from harm. This is our plan through to April 2021

Recently we have set up new ways of working together to keep children safe. We have made sure that we have the right people around the table. Senior managers from the County Council, Thames Valley Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group (the people who decide what the money for the National Health Service should be spent on locally) decide with Richard Simpson, the Independent OSCB Chair, what we should focus on. We call this the 'Executive Group'.

We have done things to make it easier to tell you what we do. Our website is easier to use, you can find us on twitter and we have done some short guides to help you work out what we think is most important to know from our reviews of cases. We make sure that Richard Simpson and the people who sit around the OSCB table, link up with Sue Ross the Chair of the Vulnerable Adults Board. We want them to work together where possible – safeguarding is not limited to children.

There is a big demand on services for children in Oxfordshire as the number of children has grown by about 7% over the last ten years. There are now about 143,000¹ children and young people under the age of 18 living in our county. This means that more families will need help and support. As we have been through a time of austerity, when less money can be spent on services, this has been hard. Our young people are energetic, diverse and valued. We believe in treating them equally and respecting their views.

We know that there are many different demands on services like schools, police, councils and hospitals. As we move into the new financial year, we have the additional challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact it has on safeguarding children. In order to do our best to keep children safe from harm we have come up with some priority areas to focus our efforts.

¹Source ONS Mid Year Estimates for Oxfordshire for people aged 0-17 2007 & 2017

Our vision

We want to keep children in Oxfordshire as safe as possible by making sure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities regarding safeguarding through training, learning and local resources.

Our aims

We want to provide Oxfordshire's safeguarding partnership with:

1. **Leadership and Governance**
2. **Direction on improving practice**
3. **Scrutiny and quality assurance**

Our priority areas of work against each aim

Our priority areas of work have been shaped by the findings of reports to our partnership and have also included the views of young people.

1. Leadership and Governance

As 'local safeguarding leaders' we have set up a new way of working together in Oxfordshire. This followed a change in the law which asked us to ensure that the police, the county council and the clinical commission group are working more closely together to keep children safe. The OSCB now has an 'Executive Group' where these organisations are represented. The group provides leadership to the OSCB which still exists as a bigger partnership of all agencies delivering services to children. We have also set up a new way of making sure that, in the sad cases where children die unexpectedly, we understand what has happened and ensure that any learning is understood to prevent similar deaths. We are working with services in Buckinghamshire to do this. We are asking Richard Simpson the Independent Chair, to check how well we are working together. He is working with people from outside of Oxfordshire to compare our way of working and see if there is anything that we can learn from others in order to be better at what we do.

We make links to other partnerships when we find areas which could benefit from joint focus. We are working more with the Adult's board to look at safeguarding risks in relation to housing and homelessness. Listening to what children have to say is always at the forefront of how we work and we know that this matters to them.

Our Independent Chair, Richard Simpson is from Barnardo's. Not only do we benefit from his chairmanship but also the expertise of Barnardo's. We intend to do work on 'contextual safeguarding' as we know that vulnerable children need to be protected from safeguarding risks outside of their home.

Finally, we are very proud of all those workers who support and deliver services to children and families in Oxfordshire – be it directly or indirectly. What they achieve together is remarkable. We have set a 'commendations system' to thank those people who make a difference to the lives of families in our community, they maybe go the extra mile, work exceptionally well together or simply do a really good job.

Our priority areas of work will be:

1. Embedding the new safeguarding arrangements including the child death review arrangements with Buckinghamshire
2. Joint work with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board on housing
3. Collaborative work with Barnardo's on contextual safeguarding
4. Commending good practice across the safeguarding partnership

2. Direction on improving practice

As 'local safeguarding leaders' we need to know what improvements to make to keep children as safe as possible. This is why we review those cases we believe we could have worked on better together and why we check day-to-day working through audits.

Providing children with good services is a high priority for us as senior leaders and we will not stop in our shared work to deal with the lasting impact of neglect for children. We know that there is more to do. The county council and local mental health services (Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust) are leading this. Training has been provided and there are a good range of resources and tools. We know that they need to be used more routinely especially the multi-agency chronology which gives a shared view of the child's life and progress made in supporting them and their family.

Neglect is recorded as the main reason for 70% of children on 'child protection plans', which are put in place when we have concerns about children. However, neglect is not being picked up to a similar extent when families first need help. Ensuring that workers from the police, health and social care are always at 'case conferences', which plan support for children, is a priority as we know it could be better. Our records also indicate that fathers are present and contributing to only 44% of case conferences and we want to change this too.

Keeping children safe in (and out of) school and colleges is something we know is important from the case reviews and audits we do. We know that children are simply safer when they are in school. Exclusion from school increases their risk of being unsafe and being harmed.

There are many schools and colleges in our county and it is important that we all agree how to best keep children in their own school or in another safe place where they can learn. We know that not everyone is clear what type of learning is available to children and what we should expect for each child so we will try and change that as every child matters.

Criminal exploitation of children is complex and damaging. Children can be drawn into situations, where they can be both victims and perpetrators. This can have severe consequences for them and for their families, friends and communities. Local practitioners are working hard to understand and respond to challenges which seem to grow and change daily as the operation of gangs and their exploitation of children become more sophisticated

We are working together to understand the nature and scale of the problem and identify children engaged with and at risk from criminal exploitation. We are working on support for workers e.g. a new screening tool to identify all types of exploitation training on exploitation and 'contextual safeguarding'. We are also making sure that new services are designed to keep teenagers safe from criminal exploitation. We know that there are increasing concerns for this age group with respective emotional wellbeing, healthy relationships and risk-taking behaviours. The evidence shows us that this age group is more likely to be at risk outside of the home when it comes to safeguarding.

Our priority areas of work will be:

1. Tackling neglect
2. Keeping children safe in (and out of) Education
3. Addressing child exploitation and contextual safeguarding

3. Scrutiny and quality assurance

Our partnership is strong: we challenge each other fairly and make sure we get the best for children in the county. Having an Independent OSCB Chair, from Barnardo's is central to this idea. We meet four times a year as a board to keep all our work on track.

Our purpose is clear: to check, to learn and to change for the better. We will look at how well partner organisations are working to keep children safe through a safeguarding 'self-assessment'. The organisations will rate how well they are doing at keeping children safe through an online form. We ask them to upload evidence to back up their rating. The organisations then must prove how and why they have rated themselves to each other through a face-face meeting.

The Independent Chair will lead 'peer review work' with another local safeguarding partnership: Hampshire. This means that each partnership will check out the other one and give feedback on strengths and weaknesses. It will look at things like: how well we are set up, how well we challenge each other and what difference we make to keeping children safe.

Audit work will look at the things we are most bothered about. To do this we will confidentially review the records of families we work with.

We want to check how good we are at keeping children safe from neglect, how well we work to 'complete and handover' work with families to each other, how well we help those children with mental health problems, and how we are sure that the work to protect children from criminal exploitation is making a difference.

At every point we want to be confident that workers know 'what it is like to be the child in this family'.

The partnership reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews will identify the learning we need to improve how we keep children safe. Importantly the OSCB will make sure that change happens. The OSCB will run Learning events for workers on: child exploitation, gangs and violence, neglect, keeping children safe in school and keeping children at the forefront of our thinking in all the work that we do.

OSCB safeguarding training already has a reach to over 10,000 learners each year through online and face to face training. A priority will be to increase the range of courses, in particular child criminal exploitation and training regarding lesbian, gay, trans-gender and questioning children.

Our priority areas of work will be:

1. Check how effectively local agencies work together to keep children safe through peer review and self-assessment
2. Learn from case reviews, multi-agency audits, analysis, impact assessments
3. Embed change

Our aims and priorities on a page

Leadership and Governance

1. Embedding the new safeguarding arrangements including the child death review arrangements with Buckinghamshire
2. Joint work with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board on housing
3. Collaborative work with Barnardo's on contextual safeguarding
4. Commending good practice across the safeguarding partnership

Improving practice

1. Tackling neglect
2. Keeping children safe in (and out of) Education
3. Addressing child exploitation and contextual safeguarding

Scrutiny and quality assurance

1. Check how effectively local agencies work together to keep children safe through peer review and self-assessment
2. Learn from case reviews, multi-agency audits, analysis, impact assessments
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