

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Self-assessment 2023-24 - Oxford City Council

1.1

How do strategies and plans clearly set out the organisation's safeguarding responsibilities and commitment to promoting the welfare of children and adults with care and support needs?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

Our Council Strategy 2020-24's Thriving Communities Corporate Priority, includes a clear statement about our safeguarding responsibilities through its stated outcome that 'vulnerable people will continue to be safeguarded against harm'.? The Council's Annual Business Plan sets out how the Council will achieve this outcome.? The Council's Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-2027 brings together leisure, culture, and our work with communities to tackle inequalities. The annual safeguarding report and policy updates go to Scrutiny Committee each year ahead of Cabinet ensuring political oversight and leadership. In 23/24 Scrutiny has commissioned reports on the Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation (DAHA) and Domestic Abuse Review Group Update and Adult Exploitation, demonstrating political interest in safeguarding matters. The annual Safeguarding Action Plan identifies any areas within the council for further improvement from both internal and external learning, board priorities, data from our safeguarding reporting system, and the expectations and the results of this assessment process. The action plan is also presented at Scrutiny committee and Cabinet annually. The plan has clear actions and deadlines for completion. It's monitored quarterly through the strategic Safeguarding group and daily by the Safeguarding Coordinator, as it directs the work programme for this role. February 2023 saw the recruitment of a Make Every Adult Matter (MEAM) Coordinator, in line with the national approach to multiple disadvantaged vulnerable adults.

Rating



Evidence

A commitment statement plan, detailing all aspects of organisational safeguarding, was agreed with our partner district councils in response to the Neglect Action Plan; this includes the HMR (Homeless Mortality Reviews) and MARM (Multi Agency Risk Management) commitment

statements requested by the Boards. The agreed commitment statements are RAG rated throughout the year and tested at the annual quality assurance audit which is completed for, and presented to, the PAQA subgroup.

The Safeguarding Policy and Procedures were reviewed, updated and presented by the Safer Communities portfolio holder at Scrutiny committee and Cabinet in July 2023.

In addition, Oxford City Council have an individual annual action plan which identifies areas of improvement. The action plan was approved by our Cabinet members, alongside the revised Safeguarding Policy and Procedure in July 2023.

Within the last year, Oxford City Council employed an EDI Lead to lead on the work of our EDI strategy.

The Council's Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-2027 was agreed and published in 2023.

Work has begun on the 2024-2028 Corporate Plan and will reference the organisation's safeguarding responsibilities and commitment to promoting the welfare of children and adults with care and support needs.

In 2023, ODS, Oxford City Council's wholly owned company, providing essential services to tenants and the public, developed a standalone Safeguarding Policy, in line with Oxfordshire's MASA and Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Policy.

The MEAM Coordinator works with cohort of 12 of the City's most vulnerable people, identified through the Countywide MEAM steering group.

1.2

How do strategies and plans align with the multi-agency strategies and policies of the Safeguarding Boards?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

The Oxford City Council Safeguarding Policy and Procedure has been created to align with the Boards' policies, setting out the MASA arrangements, associated legal framework, safeguarding response including Early Help, escalation policies and information sharing. The annual Safeguarding Action plan includes areas for improvement internally and any actions resulting from this annual self-assessment, clearly aligning with the Boards' priorities. We have continued to update the Neglect Strategy action plan on a quarterly basis, this is reported back to the Neglect Strategy group. In partnership with three other district councils, Oxford City Council have created a commitment

statement document, to assess via RAG ratings, how we are meeting the commitments as set out in our policy. This includes the commitment statements the Boards have specifically requested we commit to and share internally and will, going forward, replace the individual Neglect action plan. Oxfordshire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-26 has been adopted by all councils in Oxfordshire. The strategy is informed by the recommendations of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Boards' Thematic Review (SAR) of Homelessness, which explored the circumstances surrounding the deaths of nine individuals who had all experienced what the report terms 'multiple exclusion homelessness' leading up to, and at the time of, their deaths in 2018/19. The strategy is also informed by the recommendations from the Homelessness Health Needs Assessment published in 2019. This has also resulted in the development of a Homelessness Directors Group to lead this area of work across the system. Our Executive Director for Communities and People is a member of this board and will continue to support this work. Oxford City Council is currently working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, evidencing our commitment to tackling domestic violence. Our Scrutiny committee has taken a keen interest in the development of our work on domestic abuse and made 48 recommendations as part of the Committee's Domestic Abuse Review Group undertaken in 2020/21, one of which was to achieve DAHA accreditation.

Rating



Evidence

The Safeguarding Policy and Procedure was reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee in July 2023 and subsequently approved by Cabinet in July 2023, after agreeing three out of four of the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.

The Safeguarding Coordinator meets quarterly with district officers to update the Neglect Strategy action plan which is reported back to the Neglect Strategy group.

As a direct result of the Oxfordshire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-26 and the City Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28, Oxford City Council's Housing Needs department underwent a restructure, resulting in the formation of the Rapid Rehousing Team and Homeless Prevention Team, with many sub-teams within.

The countywide strategy on homeless is subject to an annual review with partners.

An action plan flows off the back of the mortality review which the city is committed to delivering, this was created in 2021 and is reviewed regularly.

Our Anti-social Behaviour Policy 2022-2025 makes specific reference to safeguarding and its primacy in determining our approach to addressing ASB. It refers directly to our Safeguarding Policy that underpins the partnership arrangements we have in place to support children and vulnerable adults.

The Domestic Violence Policy has been approved by the DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) Board and is due to be agreed at Cabinet and adopted in the future.

In 2023, ODS developed a standalone Safeguarding Policy, in line with Oxfordshire's MASA and Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Policy.

A DAHA Project Manager has been appointed and of the 38 agreed recommendations, 21 have been completed. The 17 remaining will be completed through the DAHA accreditation.

1.3

How do strategies and plans promote the partnership responsibilities of the organisation?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

The recently reviewed Safeguarding Policy includes sections entitled: Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, Safeguarding Governance, Safeguarding Prevention, Safeguarding Practice and Reviews, Training, and Reporting Concerns. All of these refer to and promote our responsibilities in partnership with the Boards. Our Strategies and plans consider and highlight the priorities of our partnership commitments at board level. For example: We align narrative, using the same terminology We have roles specifically focused on partnership work and relationship management We continue to commit funding to both OSAB and OSCB We actively signpost to pathways and organisations where and when appropriate through a range of our services We actively contribute to the development of partnership approaches to complex issues – homelessness and housing in particular. The annual safeguarding action plan addresses partnership responsibilities and identifies how these responsibilities will be met. The recently approved Thriving Communities strategy includes safeguarding under its heading 'Network of strategies and approaches'. Our Anti-social Behaviour Policy 2022-2025 makes specific reference to safeguarding and its primacy in determining our approach to addressing ASB. It refers directly to our Safeguarding Policy that underpins the partnership arrangements we have in place to support children and vulnerable adults. Oxfordshire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-

26 directly informs Oxford City Council's homeless prevention and rapid rehousing response. The Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership 2022-2023 Plan references the partnership work undertaken by the Council. Our lead role in the Community Safety Partnership requires us to review our partnership priority and implement multi-agency approaches to address those priorities. These currently include knife crime, serious violence including youth violence, modern slavery and violence against women and girls.

Rating



Evidence

The Safeguarding Policy and Procedure was reviewed, updated, and approved by scrutiny committee and Cabinet in July 2023, alongside the annual safeguarding action plan.

Development of the Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-2027 and the EDI Strategy.

The Community Safety Partnership's action plan is reviewed each year.

Our taxi licensing, gambling and Licensing policies have been renewed this year, and all make specific reference to safeguarding, both in terms of our role in protecting children and vulnerable adults in each context, but also the responsibilities of the organisations and people we licence.

The City Council are signed up to the Joint Operating Framework for the Transportation of Children and Adults with Care and Support Needs and Taxi Licensing in Oxfordshire. The framework sets out a range of measures that assist in information sharing and consistent practice in the management, regulation and safeguarding within the taxi sector.

ODS' safeguarding policy was created collaboratively and in partnership with Oxford City Council.

How do you know that staff across the organisation understand and act on their safeguarding responsibilities?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

All employees, volunteers and members are required to complete the internal safeguarding awareness briefing. This is refreshed every two years and in addition to any further, higher-level training appropriate to individual job roles. Colleagues are prompted to attend safeguarding training before the current training period has lapsed. The Council's Safeguarding Coordinator has attended team meetings to discuss the individual team's safeguarding response, their use of MyConcern and any additional training which will benefit them and their safeguarding response. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at team meetings and one-to-one meetings between colleagues and their line managers. An internal safeguarding newsletter is distributed to all staff on a quarterly basis, the information therein includes safeguarding responsibilities of colleagues and the structure of roles and responsibilities throughout the organisation. Clicks to links within the newsletter are monitored to obtain information on what colleagues found useful and looked further in to. MyConcern, the internal safeguarding concern recording system, is monitored by five Designated Safeguarding Officers. Reports are distributed throughout the organisation to evidence which departments are recording concerns and thereby acting on their safeguarding responsibilities. These reports are also discussed at the quarterly Strategic Safeguarding meeting and provided to the Corporate Management Team on a monthly basis. The 2023 staff questionnaire showed 33% of respondents answered yes to the question 'Have you ever recorded a Safeguarding concern internally using MyConcern?' The most common reason to not have recorded a MyConcern is staff not encountering a safeguarding concern. Others team procedures require a line manager to record on MyConcern. The questionnaire also asked: 'How confident would you feel raising a safeguarding concern about a colleague e.g. when there's a safeguarding allegation made to you about a colleague or you have personally witnessed concerning behaviour?' 76% answered 'Very confident' or 'Confident' These responses show an understanding amongst colleagues of their safeguarding responsibilities. Safeguarding Champions continue to meet quarterly. A contact tracker was created and is used to identify when safeguarding champions are contacted, what the concern was, and the outcome of the support and advice offered by the champion. All ODS staff receive training via video and higher levels are mandatory for staff in customer facing roles.

Rating



Evidence

We have received 214 reports through MyConcern in the last 12 months. These have been reported from various departments and roles across Oxford City Council including:

Business Improvement – 48

Community Services – 11

Corporate Policy, Partnership and Communications – 7

Councillor – 1

Financial Services - 15

Housing Services – 56

Oxford Direct Services – 30

Planning and Sustainable Development - 10

Regulatory Services and Community Safety – 34

Welfare Reform – 3

The Annual staff questionnaire was open for two weeks in October 2023 and received 384 responses.

Quarterly newsletters were distributed to all staff throughout 2023.

2023 saw the recruitment of seven Safeguarding Champions with representation now across six service areas.

Response to a concern of neglect by an ODS operative resulted in social services intervention for a family of three children and subsequent removal of the children to a place of safety.

ODS shared a Financial Exploitation article which was published in the Oxford City Council October 2023 Safeguarding newsletter. As a

direct result of this, suspected financial abuse was recognised and reported using the correct procedures.

1.5

How do you know that senior management/board level leads are accountable for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

The Safeguarding Policy was reviewed and updated, and subsequently agreed at Cabinet in July 2023. The most significant change to the policy was the organisation's safeguarding governance structure. The Executive Director for Communities and People now holds accountability for safeguarding at Oxford City Council and the Cabinet member for Safer Communities holds political responsibility and accountability for Safeguarding, The Community Safety Service Manager has responsibility for the delivery of the Council's safeguarding duties and reports to the Executive Director for Communities and People. The Community Safety Service Manager is a DSL (Designated Safeguard Lead) and holds the following responsibilities: The Oxford City Council representative on the OSCB (Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board) Full Board and OSAB (Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board) Full Board meetings and responsible for ensuring relevant safeguarding information is provided to the Corporate Management Team, Councillors and staff. The lead officer for escalations to partner agencies when necessary. Responsible for the implementation and promotion of effective safeguarding policy and practice within Oxford City Council. Responsible for implementing safeguarding training to all staff and Councillors The Head of Business Improvement and Head of Housing Services are also DSLs with collective and individual responsibilities. Staff mentioned above are required to complete training up to level three for both adults and children. All senior staff, including the Chief Executive, are required to complete safeguarding training and refresh every two years alongside all staff, members and volunteers. Oxford City Council Heads of Service put forward staff from across Service Areas to upskill to safeguarding champion level and support this through releasing their time to attend training and Champions meetings and deliver support to others. Safeguarding training is provided to Councillors to ensure they gain an awareness of the wider safeguarding framework including MASA (Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements) and gain good understanding of how they can input into this work programme both day to day but also at partnership level.

Rating



Evidence

The safeguarding governance structure saw significant changes in 2023, the changes were adopted and shared widely via various methods of communication.

Seven Safeguarding Champions were recruited in 2023, a total of six service areas are now represented.

12 safeguarding briefings delivered to all staff between 01.4.2023 and 01.10.23 and one training session delivered to Councillors in May 2023.

The safeguarding briefing will be delivered to Members again following local elections in May 2024 and following any subsequent by-elections.

Monthly reports are provided to the Corporate Management Team to identify themes and trends. Recently CMT (Corporate Management Team) requested a three-year report to track safeguarding themes before, during and after the pandemic.

The Head of Business Improvement is the Chair of the Council's internal strategic safeguarding group, to ensure that the accountability and responsibility oversight is shared across the senior leadership team.

The annual safeguarding action plan is presented to the Corporate Management Team, Scrutiny and Cabinet annually. It was last presented for check and challenge in July 2023.

Safeguarding audits are completed on an annual basis to ensure external assessment of the Council's compliance.

1.6

How does your organisation demonstrate that your Senior managers/board level leads have the required knowledge, skills and expertise, and keep abreast of local and national developments and learning to ensure that practice continues to improve?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

The Safeguarding Coordinator works closely with the HR team to determine appropriate levels of safeguarding training for each job role within the Council. The highest level of safeguarding training, level three for both children and adults, is mandatory for the accountable officer, responsible officer, three designated safeguarding leads, those directly responsible for safeguarding in the organisation and senior managers of teams which are customer facing. Senior managers attend the Strategic Safeguarding group meetings which include updates from subgroups such as: PIQA PAQA Neglect Strategy group Business group OSCB OSAB OSCB OSAB Executive board Missing and Exploited Children Sub-Group Child exploitation subgroup. Homeless Mortality Review group Domestic Abuse Board Senior managers and board level leads review and contribute to the annual safeguarding action plan, ensuring practice continues to improve, prior to presentation to Cabinet members for approval. Every job description in the organisation, including those of Senior managers and board level leads includes the statement: "Our commitment to Safeguarding Oxford City Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk and requires all staff and volunteers to demonstrate this commitment in every aspect of their work." Local and national developments and learning are shared in the quarterly safeguarding newsletter which is received by all staff, including senior managers and board level leads. The Horizon Scan which is compiled by the Policy Officer and shared with senior managers includes local and national matters and updates relating to safeguarding.

Rating



Evidence

In April 2023, the safeguarding function moved to the Community Safety service area. Existing team members are highly experienced in the prevention and response to safeguarding concerns.

The annual safeguarding action plan was reviewed and agreed at Cabinet in July 2023.

The Community Safety Service Manager attends the OSCB and OSAB Full Board meetings and reports key updates and learning to the Corporate Management Team.

Newsletters are sent to all staff on a quarterly basis throughout the year.

Updates from subgroups are provided at the Strategic Safeguarding Group and at the quarterly Safeguarding Champion meetings.

1.7

How do you ensure that safeguarding activity is routinely monitored within the organisation at a senior level (senior manager/board level lead/elected members), issues are identified at the appropriate level and resources are put in place to resolve them?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

As part of our corporate dashboard monitoring that is distributed to all senior leaders and members, we provide a monthly statement on safeguarding. This includes information on reports and concerns received in the month through the MyConcern safeguarding concern recording platform. MyConcern reports are distributed and discussed at Strategic meetings to routinely monitor safeguarding activity. The Safeguarding Coordinator monitors MyConcern daily and a team of Designated Safeguarding Officers triage all new concerns when they are raised. The safeguarding governance structure was reviewed, resulting in overall accountability now lying with the Executive Director for Communities and People and responsibility for delivery of safeguarding with the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety. The political accountability and responsibility lie with the Cabinet member for Safer Communities. Senior managers and board level leads are all required to complete mandatory safeguarding awareness training, within six months of joining the organisation and every two years thereafter. The awareness training is regularly updated to reflect national and countywide safeguarding activity. All DSLs hold responsibility for resolving inter-agency issues with the Community Safety Service Manager acting as DSL responsible for escalations.

Rating



Evidence

The safeguarding governance structure was reviewed, and subsequent changes were agreed at Cabinet in July 2023. The Cabinet member for Safer Communities presented the policy changes, alongside the annual report and action plan to the elected members.

Quarterly portfolio meetings are held with elected members, during which the portfolio holder receives information about current safeguarding activities, challenges and positive outcomes.

All elected members have attended the internal safeguarding awareness briefing.

At monthly cross department management meetings, safeguarding is on the agenda and managers across service areas are given an update on the current programmes of work and raise any concerns of their own with a DSL (Designated Safeguard Lead).

Issues are identified within our Safeguarding Champions' network and escalated where necessary through the Safeguarding Coordinator and DSL responsible for escalations. Six additional Safeguarding Champions have been recruited within the last four months to ensure resources are in place to resolve issues colleagues may have.

Strategic safeguarding meetings are held throughout the year at which senior managers are present.

1.8

How do you know that key messages and issues raised at the Boards are fed back into and cascaded throughout your organisation?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

A quarterly newsletter is distributed by the Safeguarding Coordinator to all staff. Key messages in the newsletter include learning from CSPRs, SARs, and rapid reviews, updates to legislation, annual reports, training availability and any issues raised by the boards; as well as any internal information such as a case studies, contact details for champions and DSLs, contact details for support for colleagues such as mental health first aiders and an employee assistance programme. The newsletter is available via intranet news stories as well as being emailed directly to all staff. Key messages and issues are discussed at quarterly safeguarding champion meetings which is led by the Safeguarding Coordinator who also attends the strategic safeguarding meetings, at which updates are provided from attendees at the following subgroups: PIQA PAQA Neglect Strategy group Business group OSCB OSAB OSCB OSA Executive board Missing and Exploited Children Sub-Group Child exploitation subgroup. Homeless Mortality Review group Training subgroup The internal training package is updated quarterly to reflect identified learning, key messages and issues. The key messages and learning from Full Board meetings are shared by the Council representative to colleagues, as appropriate. Staff are encouraged to attend the learning events arranged by the Boards and when there is attendance the member of staff will share the learning with the other team members either via email or in a team meeting.

Rating



Evidence

The internal training package was reviewed and updated in February, May, August and November 2023.

Newsletters are distributed quarterly; this years have included:

Neglect audit findings and Oxford City Council's response to the findings

Promotion of Early Help and safeguarding prevention, including tools such as 'Framework for recording the condition of a home', Strengths and Needs and MARM

MARM and HMR annual reports

Updates to the operating of LCSS and MASH

Available training opportunities

Oxfordshire Neglect Strategy

OSCB Horizon Scanning

Financial exploitation

7-minute briefings

Safeguarding champion meetings have been held quarterly throughout 2023.

The annual safeguarding report to Cabinet sought approval of the future action plan further to this self-assessment.

ODS share the Oxford City Council safeguarding newsletter articles through their employee social media app, Blink.

1.9

How do you know that the Safeguarding Boards are abreast of emerging local issues and acting upon the latest research/reports into safeguarding?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

An Oxford City Council DSL attends the OSCB and OSAB Full Board meetings and the OSCB Child Exploitation Sub-group. A District Council representative attends all subgroup meetings such as OSCB Business Group, NSG, PIQA and PAQA. Both contribute to the latest discussions on both national practice and the local response and prepare briefings following the meetings to share with all staff. PIQA and PAQA include discussion and review of recent safeguarding research and data. We have representation at the OSCB Training subgroup where changes to training according to emerging local issues are shared in order that internal training provision is up to date. The Boards regularly share information and updates via email and on their websites which is shared internally via communications channels.

Rating



Evidence

Representation of the district councils at Board subgroups moved from Oxford City to Cherwell District Council in November 2022 resulting in an increase in frequency of cross-district meetings from quarterly to monthly, ensuring adequate levels of information sharing.

Communications released by the Boards are sent directly to the Safeguarding Coordinator for inclusion in the quarterly safeguarding newsletter and sharing with the Safeguarding Champions team.

The Corporate Dashboard update to the Corporate Management Team has included comparisons of countywide and City data, available through PIQA and PAQA.

Child Exploitation subgroup representation and lead on the group for violence and vulnerability agenda. Updates on the work of the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit and an annual report on the work of the Council in support of child safeguarding.

1.10

How do you know that your escalation policies are clear and that staff know what to do when their safeguarding concerns are not being addressed within your organisation or by other agencies?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

The Annual staff questionnaire asked the question: 'How confident would you be to escalate issues if you felt that your safeguarding concerns were not being addressed within your organisation or by another organisation you had raised the case to e.g. County Council, Police, etc.?' The response showed: Very confident - 19% Fairly confident - 43% Slightly unsure - 30% Very unsure – 6% The questionnaire

also asked: 'Do you know who your organisation's lead/deputy lead officer(s) for safeguarding are and how to contact them and have you contacted them in the last 12 months?' 82% of staff answered yes Safeguarding roles and responsibilities are included in the recently revised Safeguarding Policy, including the change to governance structure and the DSL responsible for escalations. The updated policy was shared widely and 'lead for escalations' is clearly stated next to the DSL in all communications, such as intranet pages. Section seven of the recently revised safeguarding procedure states, in relation to adult safeguarding: "Escalation - Designated Safeguarding Leads are responsible for handling escalation processes and inter-agency disputes. If there is a need for escalation, the line manager must be contacted in the first instance." Section nine of the recently revised safeguarding procedure states, in relation to child safeguarding: "Escalation - Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) are responsible for handling escalation processes and inter agency disputes. The Council has signed up to the OSCB Escalation process DSL with overall escalation responsibilities is: Community Safety Service Manager" ODS staff training ensures colleagues know how to escalate their concerns to their line managers and DSL information is shared widely.

Rating



Evidence

The Safeguarding Allegations Against Staff policy was reviewed by HR representatives, the Safeguarding Coordinator and the DAHA project manager.

The Safeguarding Policy and procedure was reviewed, updated, and subsequently approved by Cabinet in July 2023.

The Safeguarding Coordinator has supported in escalations in the first instance prior to pursuing the formal escalation process, this was in relation to challenging professional opinion upon the advice that a MASH assessment would not be opened.

The July newsletter shared details of the new policy and procedure and change to governance structure, including lead for escalations and the escalation procedure.

Intranet pages have been updated to reflect changes to governance structure and lead for escalations.

ODS have raised 35 MyConcern cases in the past 12 months, their procedure states line managers will record MyConcern cases on behalf of an operative.

1.11

How does your organisation respond to challenge and improve practice as a result of constructive feedback?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

The Safeguarding Coordinator attended the Peer Review in February 2023 to receive scrutiny in 2022's safeguarding self-assessment. Feedback was received constructively and reflected in this year's self-assessment and annual action plan. Prior to the presentation of the annual safeguarding report, annual action plan, and the safeguarding policy and procedure at Cabinet, both are presented at Scrutiny Committee for challenge and recommendations. Constructive feedback was received, and the policy and action plan were amended to reflect the recommendations. The Safeguarding Coordinator has attended individual team meetings in response to feedback that further training was required on the use of the internal safeguarding recording system, MyConcern. Training feedback evaluations are received after each internal safeguarding awareness briefing. The comments made on these evaluations directly impact the training package and are taken into consideration when planning the length and content of future training sessions. We provide an audit of our safeguarding work across Districts to PAQA, where colleagues can consider our practice and feedback suggestions.

Rating



Evidence

Peer review was attended in February 2023 by the Safeguarding Coordinator and feedback has directly impacted the annual action plan.

Scrutiny Committee was attended by the Safeguarding Coordinator, Community Safety Service Manager, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, the Director for Communities and People and the Cabinet Member for Safer Communities in July 2023.

The annual staff safeguarding questionnaire was released in October 2023 to understand colleagues' experiences of safeguarding at Oxford City Council. 384 responses were received and will inform future training and communications.

The 2023 questionnaire received 259 responses to the question 'Can you give an example of how Safeguarding briefings/training and/or learning from reviews has improved your Safeguarding knowledge and practice?'

The internal safeguarding awareness briefing training package was reviewed at the start of 2023 as a result of 2022's staff questionnaire.

Internal safeguarding awareness evaluation forms were moved online, in line with the OSCB's training feedback in July 2022. 173 responses have been received and these are discussed at the quarterly trainer meeting, resulting in the training package being amended where possible/applicable.

3.1

How do commissioning arrangements set out quality assurance and service standards in order to safeguard children and adults with care and support needs?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Organisations should be considering this from the point of view of being a commissioner of services, being a commissioned service or in some cases both.

If you are neither a commissioner of services or a commissioned service, please write NA as your rating response.

Response

Voluntary organisations must comply with standards set by Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board; this is stated in our funding agreements. Safeguarding guidance is included throughout our grant process within all service areas and through our formal procurement portal process. When groups apply for grant funding from Oxford City Council, the organisation must provide its safeguarding policies. Where relevant to the post, all agencies that provide us with contracted staff must have procedures in place to safeguard young people and adults with care and support needs equivalent to those described in the safeguarding policy. In homelessness there is a continual cycle of commissioning and recommissioning services. Each time a new service is commissioned, or an

old service is recommissioned, there is an opportunity to update tender documents and reconsider how we deal with issues such as safeguarding. If required, this will form part of the specification / statement of requirements (defined by the service area). Procurement is involved in high value requirements and there is not a standard statement in the Request for Quotation document (apart from modern slavery).

Rating



Actions

Action	Lead	Due
Explore documentation relevant to low value contracts and associated risks for individual organisations.	Safeguarding Coordinator	31-05-2024

Evidence

The current grant assistance template states:

4.15 Where applicable the Organisation shall have policies and procedures in place that comply with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board recommendations as amended from time to time.

4.16 Where applicable the Organisation will ensure that it has in place protection and prevention of abuse and child protection policies consistent with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board procedure manual as amended from time to time and will ensure compliance with these policies.

4.17 Where applicable the Organisation will ensure staff are recruited and employed in line with Safer Recruitment Practices and receive appropriate training in safeguarding, including allegation management, in line with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board guidance (see www.oscb.org.uk – guidance under professionals section for advice)"

The Procurement Manager is currently reviewing all commission services and grant templates. The Safeguarding Coordinator has suggested each are updated to include the following:

The Council require the Service Provider to have a safeguarding policy that adheres to requirements set out by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, under the auspices of the Oxfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. Specifically, the policy must include safeguarding training for staff, recording and reporting arrangements, policy lead and escalation processes.

The Council requires the Service Provider to have in place a whistleblowing policy for staff to report concerns about other members of staff or sub-contractors.

The Council requires the Service Provider employ staff in line with Safer Recruitment Practices.

The Council requires the Service Provider to inform the Council of any incidents or concerns relevant to the delivery of the service set out in the Schedule.

If the Service Provider does not consider a safeguarding policy necessary, they must inform the Council of the justification for the request.

The Commissioned Services self-assessment provided by the OSCB was distributed by the Safeguarding Coordinator. Responses and actions are shared with the Council contract managers for monitoring and review at their contract monitoring meetings.

Oxford City Council, Cherwell District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and South and Vale District Council worked collaboratively to create a 'Grant and commissioned services checklist.' This lays out the adherence and response to:

Oxfordshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements including the requirements set out by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, and their associated legal frameworks

Safeguarding governance and structure within service organisation, including policy leads

Safeguarding prevention and Early Help

Employment of staff in line with safer recruitment practices and DBS requirements

Escalation processes

A staff allegations policy

Appropriate level of safeguarding training dependent on employee's role

Reporting and recording of safeguarding concerns

A whistleblowing policy for staff to report concerns about other members of staff or sub-contractors.

Advice on information sharing and the associated legal frameworks

Monitoring and review of safeguarding policy and procedures

The Grants Services manager has added a recommendation to include the Safeguarding checklist in the Cabinet Report for grants in order to set the application criteria.

Oxford City Council are currently tendering a new leisure service provider, the tender process will ensure the service provider has adequate safeguarding policies, procedures, and training, in line with Oxfordshire's multi agency safeguarding arrangements.

A tender contract for the Housing First Service which was published in November includes:

“Safeguarding

45. The Service Provider is responsible for the quality and safety of the Service and must:

- a) Ensure the highest standards of protection for vulnerable people
- b) Adhere to such standards throughout the term of the agreement.

46. The following are the key requirements for effective safeguarding in the delivery of the Service:

- a) Prevention through the delivery of high quality support.
- b) Effective response where harm or abuse occurs.
- c) Continuous Service Provider learning and improvement.

47. The Service Provider shall identify a designated safeguarding manager with responsibility for the development of safeguarding policies and procedures within the Service Provider.

48. The designated safeguarding manager will also be responsible for:

- a) Coordinating the Service Provider's response to concerns of abuse and/or neglect where they arise within the service in accordance with local procedures.
- b) Information sharing with other agencies for the purposes of preventing crime and preventing harm to people who use the service.
- c) Report any Safeguarding concerns including deaths to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board

49. The Service Provider must immediately notify the Council of a death or serious incidents or near misses including attacks on staff or other people in or within the vicinity

50. The Council require the Service Provider to have a safeguarding policy that adheres to requirements set out by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, under the auspices of the Oxfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. Specifically, the policy must include safeguarding training for staff, recording and reporting arrangements, policy lead and escalation processes.

51. The Council requires the Service Provider to have in place a whistleblowing policy for staff to report concerns about other members of

staff or sub-contractors

52. The Council requires the Service Provider employ staff in line with Safer Recruitment Practices”

3.2

How does contract monitoring ensure that commissioned services meet the required standards on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults with care and support needs?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Organisations should be considering this from the point of view of being a commissioner of services, being a commissioned service or in some cases both.

If you are neither a commissioner of services or a commissioned service, please write NA as your rating response.

Response

Oxford City Council provides services that support the development and promote the wellbeing of children and young people and adults with care and support needs. We will refer contractors to guidance documents, which are issued under section 11(4) of the Children's Act 2004 and the Department of Education and Skills Statutory Guidance on arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 (issued 2015). A specific section of the contract handover document states: "Safeguarding Contract monitoring must ensure that commissioned services meet the required standards on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults with care and support needs. We review all safeguarding policies of commissioned services to check they meet local and national standards and have developed and 'Grants and Commissioned Services checklist' to ensure safeguarding arrangements' adherence and safeguarding response. Voluntary organisations must comply with standards set by Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board, and this is stated in our funding agreements. Safeguarding guidance is included throughout our grant process within all service areas and through our formal procurement portal process. When groups apply for grant funding from Oxford City Council, the organisation must provide its safeguarding policies. Where relevant to the post, all agencies that provide us with contracted staff must have procedures in place to safeguard young people and adults with care and support needs equivalent to those described in our policy. Services are required to notify the Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Team of serious safeguarding incidents when they occur. This forms part of the monitoring cycle. Monitoring meetings may include discussion of relevant incidents from the preceding quarter. If Procurement are involved in the process these areas will be picked up in the Contract Management Guidance/Handover document as areas that should be monitored and managed.

Rating



Evidence

Cross district grants and commissioned services checklist created in collaboration with three other district council to ensure safeguarding arrangements' adherence and response.

The annual Commissioned Services self-assessment provided by the OSCB ensures safeguarding standards are met. The Safeguarding Coordinator requests the self-assessments annually and supports services in completing actions if the criteria are not already met. Self-assessments responses and actions are shared with the Council contract manager for monitoring and review at their contract monitoring meetings.

Contract monitoring meetings are held quarterly with all services commissioned by the Rough Sleeping & Single Homeless Team to provide accommodation/support for vulnerable single adults experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping, there are currently 14 contracts in place. Contract monitoring meetings for services commissioned under the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance are to be set up from November 2023 with both Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council present.

Contract monitoring meetings cover the last quarter of the services and can cover a range of discussion topics: what outcomes have been achieved for service users, challenges and barriers the service face in achieving positive outcomes, cases that are a cause of concern/escalation internally within OCC (Oxford City Council), wellbeing of staff team, training and development, new initiatives etc. If any safeguarding incidents or concerns have occurred in the last quarter they will be discussed, including action taken to address these.

Monthly client reports are received by our leisure provider, Fusion Lifestyle.

3.3

How are safeguarding referrals/alerts tracked and under or over-reporting patterns addressed during contract monitoring?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Organisations should be considering this from the point of view of being a commissioner of services, being a commissioned service or in some cases both.

If you are neither a commissioner of services or a commissioned service, please write NA as your rating response.

Response

Information on safeguarding incidents is provided in quarterly monitoring providing an opportunity to compare with previous periods and address any concerns in formal contract monitoring meetings. Procurement is not currently involved in the Contract monitoring (apart from a procurement audit which will pick up on modern slavery where appropriate) – this is with the service area unless it is a contract owned by Procurement for which there are currently no relevant contracts. Oxford City Council use the MyConcern recording system. This system allows us to view reports that show detailed information. We can then use this to consider: How we are performing with reporting Quality of reporting Recognise trends in reports Recognise when some areas are not reporting Recognise when some areas are over reporting Understand the primary areas of concern being reported Ensure professional referrals are made appropriate, in good time and outcomes of the referrals are recorded. We use all of the above information to inform our internal work planning for safeguarding. This translates into an annual action plan.

Rating



Evidence

Safeguarding concerns are recorded on the internal recording system, MyConcern. 214 were recorded between January 2023 and October 2023.

Safeguarding concerns are logged under the 'incidents' section of Fusion Lifestyle's monthly client report. A new contract manager was recently appointed and has amended this section to improve clarity.

Any serious incidents relating to safeguarding that occur in services directly commissioned by the Rough Sleeping & Single Homeless Team are reported to the team by the service, a serious incident tracker is being developed in to keep a consistent log of this. Serious incidents relating to services commissioned under the Oxfordshire Homeless Alliance are reported to Oxfordshire County Council as the lead commissioner. Contract monitoring frameworks used for services commissioned by the Rough Sleeping & Single Homeless Team also require services to detail any safeguarding incidents that have occurred in the last quarter and what action was taken to address them.

3.4

How is action taken to safeguard individuals when standards in services put people at risk?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Organisations should be considering this from the point of view of being a commissioner of services, being a commissioned service or in some cases both.

If you are neither a commissioner of services or a commissioned service, please write NA as your rating response.

Response

Depending on circumstances, this may be resolved with the service provider with an agreed course of action being put in place. However, it could be a situation where someone needs something additional to the service being provided, in which case a more wide-ranging professionals meeting would be called. If a commercial entity has an annual turnover of £36m+, it is subject to publish the Modern Slavery Statement. We check and record the statement's link on the Contract Register. The verified details are: Signed by a Cabinet Member or a Chief Executive Officer; dated with the financial year it refers to; public and accessible with a link from the home page/website; Describe the structure and ownership of the supply chain, policies and due diligence processes in the business, risks and steps undertake for the future." Oxford City Council aims to prevent homelessness. Where an individual is homeless or at risk of, or threatened with, homelessness and accommodation is not available within our own stock, we will safeguard individual by placing them in hotel accommodation until more appropriate accommodation can be sourced.

Rating



Evidence

Managers in Housing Needs continue to meet on a weekly basis to analyse and review those who are in hotel accommodation and plan how to safely move them in to more appropriate accommodation. There is also an ECP (Exceptional Circumstances Panel) to look at managed moves for those who are tenants in OCC properties where there could be a threat to safety. Risk assessments for those in OCC TA (Temporary Accommodation) have been reviewed and updated.

Any issues with external services commissioned by the Rough Sleeping & Single Homeless team would be dealt with directly with the provider as part of monitoring the contract.

3.5

How do you ensure that there is a clear line of accountability for the commissioning and/or provision of services, and the process for escalating service gaps to the commissioning body is understood and established in practice?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you've done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**
Organisations should be considering this from the point of view of being a commissioner of services, being a commissioned service or in some cases both.

If you are neither a commissioner of services or a commissioned service, please write NA as your rating response.

Response

This is clearly outlined in the contract specification as described in the response to 3.1. Safeguarding roles and escalation routes are set out at the commencement of the contracts Procurement would ensure that any process that sits within the constitution (section 19) is adhered to. For long term contracts there are regular contract monitoring meetings at which discussions would take place between Oxford City Council and contractors about service changes and developments. In relation to grants these are also reviewed on an annual basis and opportunities are available to discuss service gaps and how these might be met. Commissioned services must also have appropriate whistleblowing policies to support their safeguarding policies. Regular contract monitoring ensures that contracts are safe and fit for purpose. It ensures that new guidelines have been incorporated into policy and practise. The impact for children and adults with care and support needs is a greater opportunity and access to services.

Rating



Evidence

Contract monitoring meetings have taken place quarterly throughout 2023.

The safeguarding self-assessment template provided by the OSCB was sent to 17 services which Oxford City Council commission. These are requested annually and completed self-assessments are shared with the contract manager for discussion at contract monitoring meetings.

Contract monitoring meetings are held quarterly with all services commissioned by the Rough Sleeping & Single Homeless Team to provide accommodation/support for vulnerable single adults experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping, there are currently 14 contracts in place. Contract monitoring meetings for services commissioned under the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance are to be set up from November 2023 with both Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council present.

Contract monitoring meetings cover the last quarter of the services and can cover a range of discussion topics: what outcomes have been achieved for service users, challenges and barriers the service face in achieving positive outcomes, cases that are a cause of concern/escalation internally within OCC, wellbeing of staff team, training and development, new initiatives etc. If any safeguarding incidents or concerns have occurred in the last quarter they will be discussed, including action taken to address these.

A tender contract for the Housing First Service which was published in November includes:

“Safeguarding

47. The Service Provider shall identify a designated safeguarding manager with responsibility for the development of safeguarding policies and procedures within the Service Provider.

48. The designated safeguarding manager will also be responsible for:

a) Coordinating the Service Provider’s response to concerns of abuse and/or neglect where they arise within the service in accordance with local procedures.

b) Information sharing with other agencies for the purposes of preventing crime and preventing harm to people who use the service.

c) Report any Safeguarding concerns including deaths to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board”

5.1

How does your organisation demonstrate a culture of listening to children and adults with care and support needs and taking account of their wishes and feelings?

In the second box **Evidence**, you should **describe an example of how/when you’ve done/reviewed/checked this IN THE LAST YEAR**

Response

Oxford City Council officers use the Strengths and Needs tool, provided by the OSCB. Use of the S&N form has been promoted internally and forms part of the level 2 OSCB training which colleagues who have direct contact with families must attend. The refugee resettlement schemes take a person-centred approach. Individual support plans for each person ensures their own involvement, taking in to account their wishes, feelings and different cultural perspectives. Services are tendered on that basis. In homelessness services, we adopt a strengths-based approach which takes account of an individual’s assets, not just the risks they pose. When developing plans to find someone a new home, their wishes are considered as part of this process. Even if the next accommodation is not their final home, it’s provided as a stepping stone to their forever home. Tenancy Sustainment Officers and Homeless Prevention Officers work directly with vulnerable families to maintain their tenancies, also working closely with families by supporting them at multi-agency meetings as well as attendance at case conferences. If a tenant or family is at risk of eviction and a warrant is to be authorised, the Homeless Prevention Team now open homeless

prevention duty cases which provides a legal offer of support to help the tenant or family avoid eviction. This creates a plan with the tenant to avoid eviction which may be due to arrears, property condition or anti-social behaviour. The Homeless Prevention Team check with clients their preferred method of communication. Where people have literacy challenges, they often prefer to have a written record such as an email or text of conversations and meetings so that they can check through comments and actions later and forward them on to relatives or carers who support them. The Homeless Prevention Team often work in collaboration with ODS to assist managers and contractors to work with tenants who are hard to access and have multiple vulnerabilities by allowing for ODS access and essential works to take place such as gas safety checks and electrical checks. Youth Ambition ensure staff have a range of skills and knowledge to support young people with care and support needs. We currently have staff roles including: - EET Youth Worker - Mental Health Youth Worker - Female Participation Lead Youth Worker - Mentoring Youth Worker

Rating



Evidence

Strengths and Needs forms have been completed by Domestic Abuse Housing Link workers and Homeless Prevention officers throughout 2023, specific feedback on the completion of an S&N form was received by the Safeguarding Coordinator from the LCSS manager due to the outstanding work by the Homeless Prevention officer in supporting the family.

A Homeless Prevention Tenancy Sustainment Officer worked with very ill tenant and her son to make the property condition workable for ODS so that essential works could take place at the address to safeguard the tenants' health and safety.

A Homeless Prevention Officer was supporting a tenant around risk of eviction due to high level rent arrears. Through the course of visiting with the female tenant and building up trust, historic domestic abuse and poor mental health was disclosed. Through further discussion it was apparent to the HPO that the young daughter in the property may be experiencing her own needs due to the complicated issues her single mum was experiencing, subsequently, an S&N form was completed and a TAF (Team Around the Family) meeting arranged. The HPO arranged and attended the TAF which is still in place today to look at the young person's needs. The HPO also supported the tenant to contact Oxfordshire Mind, apply for Personal Independence Payment and get further support from the GP.

Tenancy Sustainment Officers and Accommodation Sustainment Officers have attended Tenants at Risk meetings monthly throughout 2023, these are chaired by the ASO/TSO team leader.

MARAC meetings are attended monthly alongside a multitude of agencies, including other housing providers, IDVA, Social care, safeguarding, mental health team, probation, health services, turning point, Elmore and Connections, among others. This meeting promotes

joint working, networking and links between the people that attend as well as an effective care and support plan for the victim and perpetrator moving forward. These are attended by HPOs.

MATAC meetings are also attended monthly by HPOs, these meetings concentrate on the perpetrator of different forms of ASB, crime and domestic abuse. These meetings allow for valuable information sharing and instrumental in not only protecting the public from perpetrators but also ensuring support is in place.

The Refugee and Migrant Team continue to deliver a person-centred support model whereby a local support provider has been commissioned to work with families using support plans and review meetings to listen to the views of all family members.

As a result of commissioned research, the Refugee and Migrant Team have funded and instigated a bespoke service called the Refugee Employment Support Programme (RESP) which is listening to the needs of adults to help them on their employment journey. The officers delivering this service have all received trauma informed training.

We have stated in our youth work curriculum, which informs our work with young people, the importance of listening to young people. Below are some of our pledges to young people in line with this.

Youth Ambition pledges to:

Ensure young people are central to the process of youth work. Their voice will be listened to and inform the work that takes place.

Recognise that everyone has different needs and experiences and learn in different ways, and this will be reflected in the youth work being delivered.

Offer choices and give control to young people – a process of supported empowerment. We will promote young people's rights to make their own decisions and choices.

5.2

How do you know that safeguarding is personalised, so that children and adults experiencing or receiving safeguarding services are treated sensitively and respectfully, feel safer as a result of your intervention and that outcomes are consistent, regardless of the ethnicity, cultural identity / diversity, gender, sexuality, disability or age of the service user?

Response

In commissioning homelessness services; safeguarding, safety and health and wellbeing are important themes in the tender process. Potential providers must be able to show how they work effectively in these areas and deliver a personalised service to people. The views of residents are further sought through case closure letters and Customer feedback cards with a view to ascertain how the service was delivered and what could be improved. Our Equality and Diversity strategy is based on the idea of fairness whilst recognising that everyone is different and that we may need to deliver services differently to ensure that services are delivered efficiently and effectively. Support plans for individuals will consider their strengths and wishes, with solutions being co-designed. The Homeless prevention duty work that is offered under a legal duty to all regardless of the ethnicity, cultural identity / diversity, gender, sexuality, disability, or age of the service user. The work around MARAC includes honour-based violence cases and multi-agency working between services which support a wide range of people from differing cultural backgrounds. TSO attendance at every MARAC meeting monthly and cases of high-risk DA are raised via the TSO designated MARAC officer for the Council as a whole. We participate in the Domestic Abuse Champions network so that we can liaise with other teams and agencies efficiently on behalf of clients. All Youth Ambition sessions which involve young people are evaluated by young people. They also have the opportunity to develop their own sessions based on their own needs. Where people lack decision making capacity, we have worked to develop processes that do not necessarily require talking or writing. An example includes the development of our partnership with the Additional Needs Partnership which will offer buddies to young people who have particular needs to be fully included in the programmes that run in their areas. Support plans are developed with customers and upon completion, Tenancy Sustainment Officers send closure letters which are sensitive, respectful and personalised whilst ensuring the service user is happy with the intervention and outcomes are consistent.

Rating



Evidence

The newly introduced Domestic Abuse Housing Link workers worked with 36 clients, involving 55 children, in 2023.

Strengths and Needs forms have been completed by Domestic Abuse Housing Link workers, Tenancy Sustainment officers and Homeless Prevention Officers.

As part of the process of monitoring commissioned services, safeguarding issues are considered and discussed which demonstrates the approach being taken. Reports are provided from commissioned providers in relation to any serious incidents, which often demonstrate an individualised approach to safeguarding.

The Homeless Prevention Team's use of the Strengths and Needs tool means that the persons voice is used, which includes the child/children.

The concept of safeguarding is explained to families on the refugee resettlement scheme within a few months of their arrival by services commissioned by Oxford City Council. As part of the contract with the support provider all officers receive appropriate safeguarding and trauma informed training.

An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed upon review of the Safeguarding Policy and the annual safeguarding report include an Equalities Impact section. This is a requirement of all policies, strategies, plans and reports.

We have a guidance and procedure document which includes a policy on youth work and confidentiality, and information sharing. These guidance policies inform the importance of dealing with sensitive work with young people correctly, including when dealing with safeguarding issues. We also have a statement on equality, diversity, and inclusion, where we embrace and celebrate people's differences in our youth work. Following these guidance policies and statements helps us achieve positive outcomes and a consistent approach in this area. We have used these approaches in cases over the last year. By having an understanding of young people's protected characteristics, including young carers (some cultural barriers), in some cases, building meaningful relationships with parents helps them better understand our duty of care for young people, hence, they are more supportive of actions taken.

5.3

How do you know that outcomes are defined by the individuals concerned or, where people lack decision- making capacity, by their representatives or advocates and advocacy is used appropriately for children and adults with care and support needs who are (or may have been) experiencing abuse?

Response

Support plans for individuals consider their strengths and wishes, with solutions being co-designed. All Youth Ambition sessions which involve young people are evaluated by young people. They also have the opportunity to develop their own sessions based on their own needs. Where people lack decision making capacity, we have worked to develop processes that do not necessarily require talking or writing. An example includes the development of our partnership with the Additional needs partnership which will offer buddies to young people who have particular needs to be fully included in the programmes that run in their areas. All staff that come into contact with children and vulnerable adults have safeguarding training ranging from awareness training to specialist training. Staff can discuss views raised by residents with OCC named Safeguarding Champions who in turn have the opportunity to raise views at the Safeguarding Champions meeting which is chaired by the Safeguarding Coordinator. Issues can subsequently be shared with district safeguarding officers and the Safeguarding Boards. Furthermore, OCC carry out an annual safeguarding questionnaire to all staff giving staff the opportunity to voice their

views and that of residents. Tenants at Risk, a multiagency meeting for adults, has the key element of the process of successfully working with children and adults. Additionally, OCC are members of the Housing Safeguarding Network at which safeguarding concerns are discussed. 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, Advice centres etc. Homeless prevention duty cases involve collaborative working with internal Council services and teams to make processes for tenants as streamlined as possible and aid the customer journey. All services work towards a common goal. e.g., rents, TSO's, Welfare Reform and Private Rented and Options teams all working with the common goal of homeless prevention under new restructure. The School Advocacy project creates infrastructure to support and advocate the individual and family, in the event of a safeguarding concern. This will help mitigate lack of interpreting services across the city enabling safeguarding concerns to be identified. Mental Capacity Act (MCA) training is available to all staff through the OSCB and OSAB websites and this is promoted via quarterly safeguarding newsletters. The Safeguarding Coordinator attend the joint OSCB and OSAB Training Subgroup at which the development of bespoke MCA training for individual agencies has recently been discussed and contributed to.

Rating



Evidence

The Housing Needs team work collaboratively with other agencies such as Elmore, Connections Support to ensure care plans are put in place to facilitate decision making. Embedded mental health workers advocate on behalf of our customers. Tenants at Risk meetings have been attended by HPOs throughout 2023.

A Tenancy Sustainment Officer (TSO) has recently started working with a tenant following a referral from a social prescriber at the local GP surgery. Information was shared between the referrer and TSO to establish the support already in place, the history of the case and what was needed going forward. Joint working between the two is open should the TSO need further information on the case in the future.

Recently, a TSO was advised by tenants she has previously worked with/ supported that they had ongoing concerns for a friend they knew but didn't know where to go with the information and felt that they were not being listened to. Though the person in question was no longer an OCC tenant the TSO had previously supported the person to move so was aware of some of his vulnerabilities. TSO was concerned as to what was being reported so raised a safeguarding referral and made the housing association aware. TSO felt the individual did not have the capacity to raise the concerns himself. The concerns related to cuckooing and financial exploitation.

Incidents of cases with cuckooing and closure orders have been referred to the TSO team from the Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team (ASBIT) and Police. The TSO team manage these safeguarding cases to protect and maintain the safety of the vulnerable tenant and work in a multi-agency way to look at best outcome for tenant- i.e., Exceptional Circumstances Panel/moving/access to additional care and

support.

A referral was received by the TSO team from a Tenancy Management Officer regarding multiple issues within the household such as children with additional needs, a new baby due, overcrowding, and hoarding. TAF meeting is now in place, and action plan has been agreed to work with tenant and address housing and hoarding issues. The Council have also funded a skip.

The Refugee and Migrant team continue to fund the School Advocacy Project which enables parents to understand and be involved with their children's education. This has been funded until August 2024. Due to the success of this project within the city, it will be explored as to whether this service could be offered across county for others to benefit.

The RESP (Refugee Employment Support Programme) has been created in answer to individuals struggling to become financially independent and the service empowers individuals to make decisions as to how they want to be supported into employment.

Every young person who accesses our programme, either through the open access route or referral, is asked to complete our registration form. On the form, it asked young people if they have care needs, including if they have any disabilities. Where the need for decision-making capacity is identified by staff, we ensure that activities are inclusive and different communication methods are used. We also rely heavily on parents and seek their consent as necessary and regularly for those young people who lack decision-making capacity.

5.4

How do you know that the safeguarding process is proportionate, puts individuals in control and where this is not possible (for instance where there is concern that an individual or organisation could harm others) this is fully discussed and the person's views considered as much as possible?

Response

The Refugee and Migrant Team hold regular family reviews where each family member can highlight any concerns directly to the officer to follow up on their concerns and look at ways of addressing those issues. The Schools Advocacy project puts individuals in control and each plan is discussed ensuring the person's views are considered. All cases are treated on an individual basis and those involved are confidentially informed of the full process from the beginning, this includes concerned colleagues and individuals they are concerned about. All staff who come into contact with children and vulnerable adults have safeguarding training ranging from awareness training to specialist training. The Tenancy Sustainment team work closely with the Tenancy Management team and ASB Investigation Team. Collaborative work is also undertaken alongside external agencies such as social care and the Police. Visits to tenant are joint and individual to ensure the tenants' needs are heard and discussed. Plans of support and next steps are agreed with the tenants' views and concerns at the forefront of

the support plans, taking into consideration safeguarding risks and concerns as part of a plan. All agencies and departments involved meet at multi-agency meetings and cases are taken to Exceptional Circumstances Panel, where appropriate. The TSO team attend social services and AMHT case conferences which allows them to suggest the least restrictive options for clients continuing accommodation and support needs. The Youth Ambition have a participation plan document that includes the Hear By Right Framework. The framework secures the sustained and effective participation of young people, as the standards enable continual improvement in an organisation. This is to ensure that a more responsive and listening organisation, more in touch with the intended beneficiaries, will be more efficient and effective in delivering on its vision and mission.

Rating



Evidence

The council's Senior Refugee and Migrant Officer and the Refugee and Migrant Officer continue to be available, should families have concerns and are not able to engage directly with the support provider.

The person-centred support service empowers the individuals to be part of the decision making and take control of their journey.

The School Advocacy Project continues to support parents and their children enabling them to have control and discuss their plans.

A two-year contract for counselling support has also been setup with Refugee Resource, for a dedicated counselling/mentoring service for resettled refugees.

The Tenancy Sustainment team have managed 354 cases in the last 12 months.

At a case conference held with Adult Social Care and AMHT, the TSO team suggested a transfer option for a vulnerable client where AMHT were only considering residential care homes, supported accommodation or a return to the tenants (unsuitable) accommodation.

TSOs manage cases in relation to safeguarding of vulnerable tenants due to poor property condition and risks to safety caused by decants. The team also work with the Options Team and Tenancy Management to look at most suitable decant for a tenant whilst considering their support needs and individual wishes. For example: a tenant needing to move within local area to maintain access to support services or only to ground floor accommodation due to mobility issues.

The Youth Ambition Team continue to embed the Hear By Right framework in our work with young people and remind them to exercise their rights. Our youth workers are fully aware of advocating for young people and empowering them in areas of their lives that affect them. Therefore, we ensure that any changes in our organisation that may impact on young people are advocated for by youth staff and supported

so that they are heard and consulted.

5.5

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?

Response

We have a clear complaints procedure. This is readily available on the Oxford City Council website:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20097/report_it_online/512/make_a_comment_compliment_or_complaint/3 Following the restructured complaints code and the removal of the democratic filter, we ran a long campaign of advertising, consisting of fliers which were sent out to all the ODS trades, and this advised the tenants and customers of our new 2 stage process. Additional to this, we advertised the 2-stage process and improved service in our Tenants in Touch magazine, and online across the website. The changed process was also advertised to all those in landlord services. We have also recruited a customer care and complaints officer. We are aware of the effectiveness of the campaign and our complaints process due to the numbers across Landlord Services over 6 months reaching almost 100 and the same number for Oxford Direct Services. We accept complaints from third parties who are supporting our customers, from Councillors, and from family members. We are improving the logging and monitoring of vulnerabilities across the complaints received and this has ranged from Solicitors and advocates to those who email on behalf of customers with learning disabilities. We have also reached out to tenants who are unable to read and are able to take their complaints down on their behalf and have successfully concluded those cases. As part of our work with young people, the Youth Ambition Team regularly review and encourage young people to share their views and experiences with us, either negative or positive. We have regular practice where staff often check in with young people spontaneously and ask young people during and after activities or engagements about what they like or don't like and if there is anything we can improve. Staff then debrief after each session, and where complaints have been raised, we ensure they are addressed as soon as possible. We also contact parents as necessary, especially if the young person has care needs, because it would help the parent understand the issue better from our communication than the young person.

Rating



Evidence

The process for all Housing Revenue Accounts areas has been simplified to a 2-stage process.

Since October 2022, when the new process began, we have received- 87 complaints across Landlord Services with an additional 168 ODS complaints. We are also logging service requests and five cases have come directly from the Ombudsman and were re-routed into the correct complaints process.

There is no requirement to go through the full complaints process before approaching the Ombudsman as there is now no democratic filter and no 3rd stage. All Stage 1 letters and Stage 2 letters have in the template a reminder how to go directly to the Ombudsman. Stage 1 complaints are investigated and written by a senior officer. All Stage 2 letters are signed by the Head of Housing Services.

All our complainants are asked for any details of vulnerability and concerns, and these are logged on our Airtable system. 19 cases have self-declared as having a vulnerability or disability since October 2022.

Complainants have a range of methods they can complain via; face to face meetings, letters, email, text, or phone call. Most complaints come via a phone call or email through from the customer contact centre. Whether there is a method preferred by vulnerable tenants is not a link/record we currently keep, but it is something we plan on recording in the future.

We check how customers want their responses, for those unable to read, we read the letter to them over the phone.

Any distress or anxiety will be noted, and concerns are always raised either as a safeguarding risk or to Tenancy Management Officer (TMO) to undertake a welfare check. We have not received any since implementing the new complaints process which have needed recording on My Concern, however we do have flags and checks in place for these if a TMO or the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Officer picks these cases up.

We liaise directly with all involved in the complaints e.g. ASB, ODS and any other person who has ever been involved in the investigation. A long running case study demonstrates how the investigations are completed and all those involved.

We are now required to complete a self-assessment on complaints which is reported to the Housing and Homelessness Panel and to the Ombudsman annually. This was published to councillors recently –

<http://mycouncilpages.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s75293/Appendix%201%20-%20Housing%20Ombudsman%20Complaint%20Handling%20Code%20-%20Self-Assessment.pdf>

Debrief from a youth club session where YP (Young People) complained about the session is available as evidence.
