

# The OSCB Business Plan 2017-19



## The local context

There are 141,800 young people aged under-18 in Oxfordshire (*mid-2015 estimates*). This population has grown around 6% in the last ten years – mainly in urban areas such as Oxford, Didcot, Witney, Bicester, and Carterton. The percentage of the county's population from minority ethnic backgrounds is approximately 9%, although this figure more than doubles in Oxford City. In the next ten years there is likely to be significant population growth among children born to first generation migrants, particularly those from Middle Eastern, Asian, and new EU countries. According to the IDACI<sup>1</sup> rankings, Oxfordshire's more deprived areas tend to be in the urban centres of Oxford and Banbury, with further pockets in Abingdon and Didcot. Overall, Oxfordshire is ranked twelfth lowest on IDACI measure.

There are high levels of activity in every part of the safeguarding system including the child protection system and care proceedings. The number of children on a child protection plan rose to 607 at the end of 2016/17. The rate of growth of children subject to child protection plans is higher than both the national average and the average of similar authorities. In March 2011 there were 38% fewer children subject to a plan than the national average and the figure is now in line with the national average. Neglect is the most common reason for children to be subject to child protection plans (67%). This is an increase on last year and is higher than the national average where the proportion of children subject to child protection plans for the reason of neglect is 45%.

Children in care are those looked after by the local authority. The number of children in care rose by 14% to 675 at the end of 2016/17. The county still has 27% fewer looked after children than the national average. With the considerable increase in looked after children, the number of children placed out of county and not in neighbouring authorities has increased from 77 to 118, which is a concern. The number of children who have gone missing from home has fallen in the last year from 817 to 798. The proportion of children who repeatedly went missing from home remained at around 18.5%.

The issues of elective home education, persistent absence and permanent exclusions are increasing safeguarding concerns. All of these issues have increased in the last 12 months making them a priority for action.

The number of children open to child and adolescent mental health services continues to increase and there has been a noted intensification in the complexity of need. The open caseload average is 4800 young people at any given time across Oxfordshire. The county's bullying survey shows that, in line with national trends and previous local results, those young people who are "different" from the majority in terms of experience of a long-term illness or disability, race, religion, or sexuality are likely to experience increased frequency of bullying and "feeling unsafe".

Multi-agency work to identify children and young people who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Oxfordshire is coordinated by the Kingfisher Team. There were 236 CSE screening tools completed in 2016-17 compared with 223 in 2015/16. Prevalence reporting continues to highlight hot spots and the most vulnerable groups – it has highlighted the correlation with young people at risk of criminal exploitation in particular with respect to drugs.

<sup>1</sup> IDACI is the index on 'income deprivation affecting children'

## **OSCB aims and priorities for 2017-19**

The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board aims to provide leadership for effective safeguarding practice; to drive forward practice improvement and to then check that children and young people are kept safe. Within these three core aims the OSCB has set out priorities, which are shaped by local need, progress made on existing priorities and shared partnership concerns. A summary of Local need is set out above.

The context for the next two years is one of change and integration across all partners. As part of the integration of the county council's children's social care and early intervention services, the Thresholds of Need matrix has been redesigned and an Early Help Assessment and Team around the Family Plan has been introduced. This is a new way of providing early help to families.

The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board supports these changes and will play a key role in communicating these safeguarding arrangements across the child protection partnership. This is an overarching aim for the next year and will underpin all work that is done.

The safeguarding partnership has been working to address neglect and to safeguard adolescents over the last two years. These issues remain priorities. From 2017 the OSCB and OSAB will have agreed three top priorities to work on jointly and these are training, domestic abuse and transitions from children to adult services. Two joint board meetings a year will be held, one in March to plan the joint business agenda and one in November to review progress and agree priorities for the following year.

OSCB partners also want to ensure that the voice of children, parents and carers remains central to safeguarding work. This will be an underlying principle in the work of the Board and work is already under way with VOXY – representing the voices of young people in Oxfordshire. The Ofsted judgment in 2014 stated that the OSCB needed to further develop work to ensure that the experiences of children, young people and their families contribute to improvement of services and training, and in particular, provide feedback to them to show how their contribution has influenced service development.

**Aim 1:** to provide leadership and governance

**Priorities:** increasing the effectiveness of the board, partnership working with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board and community engagement

**Why these priorities?**

The OSCB has a leadership role to effectively co-ordinate agencies within the safeguarding partnership.

The OSCB is a transparent and effective partnership which holds to account the key strategic partnerships impacting on the safeguarding arrangements in the county. From 2017 it is increasing its joint working with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board, which has the remit to lead the strategic development of adult safeguarding and to hold agencies to account for their safeguarding work with adults. Areas of commonality for collaborative work have been identified as: training, domestic abuse and transitions from children to adult service domestic abuse and training. Two joint board meetings take place each year to plan and review.

The OSCB is placing a priority on increasing engagement with the voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to promote key safeguarding messages through training and to optimise the representation on the board and its subgroups. The sector is recognised as a valuable resource within the safeguarding partnership. Improved engagement is important to raise awareness of serious safeguarding issues such as female genital mutilation, the radicalisation of young people and child sexual exploitation. This links to work of the Children's Trust, the Oxfordshire Safer Partnerships and the districts' Community Safety Partnerships.

## **Aim 2:** to drive forward practice improvement

**Priorities:** working to address neglect and working to safeguard adolescents

### **Why these priorities?**

Neglect is the biggest priority for the child protection partnership in county. It is the most common reason for a child to be subject to a child protection plan. Serious case reviews show that it is a consistent presenting factor in all age groups and that it has a devastating long term effect on children's resilience, leading to other forms of serious harm in later life. This can be a generational issue and only a shared drive and dynamism can make a difference. The contributory factors of domestic abuse; parental substance misuse and parental mental health often underpin situations of neglect. Addressing these parental concerns is part of the solution to tackling neglect and a focus on domestic abuse overlaps with the joint work with OSAB.

Safeguarding adolescents is a priority. Issues such as self-harm and suicide, drug and alcohol misuse, mental health and domestic violence in peer relationships are reflected in the high numbers of young people subject to child protection plans and in the care system. Analysis over the last 12 months has identified that an increasing number of adolescents are at risk of exploitation be it criminal, drugs or sexual.

The increased demands on mental health services and the work to address child sexual exploitation indicate that there is a large number of young people with challenging needs. Audits and case reviews show the complexity of supporting this age group and the importance of continued support from services as they move in to adulthood. Feedback from young people supports this. Practitioners have identified the need for better sharing of information, more training and resources on these 'high risk' issues. Findings from the child death overview panel have highlighted the need to have stronger protective mechanisms in place for children at risk of self-harm and suicide. A focus on transitions for vulnerable adolescents overlaps with the joint work with OSAB. This links to work of the Children's Trust and the Community Safety Partnerships.

**Aim 3:** to quality assure and scrutinise the effectiveness of practice

**Priorities:** to take robust action following learning, to challenge improvements and to assess risk and capacity across the partnership

**Why these priorities?**

The OSCB evaluates the effectiveness of the local safeguarding system to ensure that children and young people are kept as safe as possible. In 2017 a model for early help has been launched in Oxfordshire which includes an updated threshold of needs. The OSCB has a remit to ensure that all partners understand this threshold, the safeguarding arrangements and that they work well to provide both early and ongoing help to families.

The OSCB's learning and improvement framework aims to improve practice across the child protection partnership. The OSCB provides guidance, procedures, learning summaries, local 'tools', learning events and core safeguarding training. Developing a shared approach to training with OSAB will generate common safeguarding messages and focus efforts on the needs of vulnerable children and adults in a family. Together they will ensure that training is well coordinated across the partnership and having an impact on practitioners.

Over the last few years a significant amount of learning has been achieved. The OSCB will use its local framework to test this. For example, scrutinising work through multi-agency audits; single agency reviews of safeguarding practice; agency self-assessments against the standards set out in section 11 of the Children Act; monitoring of the local safeguarding context through performance data and reports to the board on the work with the most vulnerable children in the county.

Audits will focus on work to which safeguards children at risk of neglect; in transitional arrangements as well as children as victims of crime. In all cases the OSCB will seek to hear the views of children and parents and test how effectively are being listened to.

## One page summary of the business plan

Aims of the OSCB	The priorities in 2017/19:	This means the OSCB will:
<b>To provide leadership &amp; governance</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving the effectiveness of the board</li> <li>2. Collaborative work with OSAB</li> <li>3. Engaging with local communities</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop the work of the Board to meet the Ofsted criteria of 'outstanding' performance</li> <li>- <b>Develop areas of commonality for joint working with OSAB and set up a schedule of planning and reviewing this work.</b></li> <li>- Ensure that local voluntary and community organisations are better engaged in the work of the Board and within the partnership</li> </ul>
<b>To drive forward practice improvement</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Addressing neglect</li> <li>5. Safeguarding adolescents at risk of exploitation</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support a co-ordinated and multi-agency response to neglect by ensuring that the neglect strategy is fully implemented across the county. Parental issues such as substance misuse, mental health problems and domestic abuse are addressed as part of this problem.</li> <li>- Support the development of multi-agency responses to safeguard vulnerable adolescents in particular where they are <b>(1) transitioning from children to adult services (2) at risk of domestic abuse or peer abuse (3) at risk of criminal exploitation including drug and sexual exploitation (4) not in full time education</b></li> </ul>
<b>To scrutinise and quality assure</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Take robust action following learning</li> <li>7. Challenging improvements</li> <li>8. Assessing risk and capacity across the partnership</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Test how well learning is embedded in to practice across the safeguarding system through multi-agency audits e.g. safeguarding disabled children</li> <li>- Ensure <b>safeguarding training is well co-ordinated across the OSCB and OSAB safeguarding partnerships and having an impact on practitioners in those safeguarding systems</b></li> <li>- Ensure that the integrated safeguarding arrangements including the front door to services and the threshold of needs are effective and provide early help to families</li> <li>- Challenge how effectively parents, carers and children's voices are heard. Challenge how well agencies take in to account the ethnicity and cultural identity of families.</li> <li>- Check the level of risk and impact on the safeguarding system following the integration of services and restrictions on resources</li> </ul>

**Please note:** Pink text denotes a shared objective with OSAB.