

<b>This report is public</b>	
<b>Cherwell District Council Safeguarding Self-Assessment</b>	
<b>Committee</b>	Overview and Scrutiny
<b>Date of Committee</b>	11 November 2025
<b>Portfolio Holder presenting the report</b>	Councillor Rob Pattenden
<b>Date Portfolio Holder agreed report</b>	
<b>Report of</b>	Nicola Riley, Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services

## **Purpose of report**

To provide an overview of the progress made on safeguarding measures and activity across Cherwell District Council, highlighting areas that have progressed through training and briefings. Identifying the themes of safeguarding concerns from the internal reporting mechanism, our partnership working with Oxfordshire Safeguarding Board and District Councils.

## **1. Recommendations**

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee resolves:

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To endorse the multiagency collaboration for safeguarding.
- 1.2 Consider actions for future safeguarding briefings for Members

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 Cherwell District Council responds to safeguarding queries from residents by making referrals to either Oxfordshire County Council social care teams, emergency services: police, fire and rescue, or to health services including mental health teams. No cases are held by Cherwell.
- 2.2 Staff recruitment and management of volunteers are the remit of the district Council and all those staff and volunteers who have contact with residents on a regular basis are recruited safely using appropriate Disclosure and Barring services.
- 2.3 Cherwell employs a dedicated Safeguarding Officer who coordinates our activity in relation to countywide safeguarding partnerships and prescribes training and development for staff, volunteers and councillors.

## Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications		Commentary		
<b>Finance</b>		There are no additional resource implications arising from the report. Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Office, 3 November 2025		
<b>Legal</b>		Cherwell District council has a duty to report on how it promotes the wellbeing and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults with care and support needs and those who are victims of abuse. Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 3 November 2025		
<b>Risk Management</b>		Cherwell District Council acknowledges the risk it faces by not recruiting appropriately and failing in training and supporting staff to understand their safeguarding duties and responsibilities. This risk is being managed through the Leadership risk register,  Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 3 November 2025		
Impact Assessments		Positive	Neutral	Negative
<b>Equality Impact</b>			x	
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?			x	
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?			x	

<b>Climate &amp; Environmental Impact</b>		x		
<b>ICT &amp; Digital Impact</b>		x		
<b>Data Impact</b>		x		
<b>Procurement &amp; subsidy</b>		x		
<b>Council Priorities</b>	Healthy, resilient and engaged communities			
<b>Human Resources</b>	N/A			
<b>Property</b>				
<b>Consultation &amp; Engagement</b>				

## Supporting Information

### 3. Background

- 3.1 Section 11 (s11) of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on key organisations to self-assess the extent to which they meet the safeguarding requirements and standards. (On hold 2025).

These key organisations include both County and District councils that provide any of the following services, including children's and adults social care, public health, sport, housing, culture, leisure services, licencing, and youth services.

Following the publication of Working Together 23, and the renewed leadership, governance, approach, and structure of Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP), the Lead Safeguarding Partners in Oxfordshire have approved the 'Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements which will be published early in December 24.

The new arrangements introduce a new structure which will be determined, established and coordinated under the direction of the Executive Group to support the delivery of the statutory requirements required of local safeguarding partnerships.

The Executive Group are currently reviewing and agreeing the membership for each component of the new structure and have started by agreeing the membership for the 'new' Business Delivery Group. This group has a central and crucial role for providing assurance of the effectiveness of multi-agency practice, and compliance to the requirements of Working Together 23.

- 3.2 Cherwell District Councils core business is not explicitly and directly to work with children and young people, or adults with care and support needs as we do not have the social care duty but where Cherwell services do come in to contact with

children and young people or vulnerable people our systems and processes we must demonstrate an ability and capacity to safeguard and promote their welfare through the following guidelines.

- Effective inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.
- Wider promotion of safeguarding, working agencies that have direct contact with children and young people.
- Senior Management commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.
- A clear statement of the agency's responsibilities for children and young or vulnerable people is available to all staff.
- Staff training on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults for all staff who might come in to contact with children and families.
- Safer Recruitment.
- Monthly safeguarding briefings for all staff on national and local themes of safeguarding concerns.
- Internal awareness campaigns across Cherwell and joint working with District Councils.
- Evidence in the OSAB annual safeguarding report attached.

## **4. Details**

- 4.1 As outlined in the introduction this report will focus on providing Members with more detailed information around actions for safeguarding in Cherwell.
- 4.2 As the District Council has a Contract with Parkwood Leisure to deliver the services at the Leisure Centres the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead takes the opportunity to conduct Centre specific audits to ensure they are also meeting their safeguarding and contractual requirements. This process brings benefit not only to the District Council but also to the Leisure Operator in reviewing their practices. This external auditing of commissioned services is a process officers are keen to implement with other organisations who we commission to act on the Councils behalf.
- 4.3 Whilst there has been an emphasis on safeguarding audits in our Leisure Centres, there has also been internal auditing of the Council's own Holiday Activity Programmes. We have provided an improved safeguarding training package for the Youth Activity workers including behaviour Management training. This has enabled those officers to reflect on the good practices that are in place but also taking the opportunity to improve their confidence in recognising signs of neglect & abuse. Improved mechanisms in place for reporting concerns, making reporting timely and appropriate.
- 4.4 To underpin staff awareness around safeguarding and to complement the training offered via the iHasco platform, staff have been given greater access to various training opportunities particularly through internal briefings. The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead has provided a number of online sessions including topics such as Neglect/ Self-Neglect/ Modern Slavery and Domestic Abuse/ Exploitation/How to make a Good Referral.

These sessions have been particularly well attended by staff and the interactive nature of the training means they are well informed and engaged. We have evidenced a Whilst recognising these briefings were important there was also a need to ensure that if staff were empowered to identify signs of abuse that they should also be better supported in how to carry out internal reporting or how to make an external referral and therefore additional training sessions on this have been provided.

- 4.5 All delegates provide feedback on the learning, which has generally been a positive experience and therefore intend to continue with this offering next year
- 4.6 A number of these briefings are offered to Members; this has not progressed this year.
- 4.7 We share relevant information with the two safeguarding boards, Oxfordshire safeguarding adults Board (OSAB) and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCP) helping to maintain a good awareness and understanding of emerging risks that are relevant to our area. Working with all partners involved to consider strategic actions that can manage and reduce these risks. Cherwell representatives attend several subgroups through the year.

#### **The CE Subgroup.**

#### **The below are the key areas for the CE Subgroup.**

On Thursday, January 16, 2025, the Home Secretary announced that Oldham and four other Local Authorities will be investigated and reviewed for CSE and grooming. Although Oxfordshire was not named, the Executive group (DSP) requires the partnership to prepare as if it might be one of these four LAs. The three-month review, led by Dame Louise Casey, will begin "imminently," according to the Home Office. The audit will examine further evidence, including ethnicity data and demographics of gangs and their victims, as well as "cultural and societal drivers" for this type of offending. The Home Office states it will review existing data to "equip law enforcement with the information and understanding needed to combat these crimes." The audit will be "supported by an expert advisory board and will draw on the views of victims and survivors."

#### **Steps Taken in Preparation:**

- The Mock Joint Target Area Inspection CSE Audit has commenced, with a moderation meeting planned for February 28, 2025. A written report of findings will follow, providing rich qualitative data.
- Laura Gajdus and Gillian Ming have been tasked with urgently conducting a mapping exercise to understand the partnership's architecture.

Mapping exercise Cherwell's response provided to the group before 14th March. (See attached).

#### **Neglect Subgroup.**

The Neglect Subgroup remains well attended by all agencies, with regular submissions of service/agency action plan and progress. It is recognised that leaders in neglect require regular sessions to exchange information and support partnership activity to improve practice and that the subgroup will remain for another year into 2025 to consolidate aims of strategy.

## **Meetings.**

DDSL attends several meetings see safeguarding meeting attendance.

PAQA as vice chair, I will step down from Dec 25.

In addition to these meetings Cherwell has held a Hoarding partnership group meeting with Local authorities (Gloucestershire LA /OCC/ Districts / F&R/ members of the partnership attending.

This has proven the need to review the Hoarding policy and has been picked up by the OSAB, a task & finish group will be working on hoarding. It was suggested a 2-year plan to focus on Hoarding.

I have requested OCC take the lead with this group, Steve Turner OSAB will be looking to support this going forward.

Cherwell guidance for Hoarding has been shared with OSAB to review as a start for the Task & Finish subgroup.

Community centre visits to offer information and awareness on safeguarding issues, attended Grimsby Community centre 3rd April provided information on Cuckooing and hoarding, invited the police and community wardens. Feedback was to attend more.

Working in partnership with Fire & Resue and police has improved and good communication and joint visits for concerns of hoarding is a normal practice.

Supporting frontline services, safeguarding resources have been provided to each service resettlement team have a safeguarding folder now on teams I update for them to use.

Delivering MARM training in team meetings, and any requested themed training. I have regular attendance to the Community safety team which has been very useful for both sides.

- 4.8 Other initiatives to support Officers as part of their role have included the provision of a safeguarding wallet size card on what to do if you are concerned for a child or vulnerable adult. These have been provided to Members, Refuse Collectors and Youth Activity Workers. This initiative was driven by identifying those staff who were often front facing and dealing with members of the public in an external environment who would then have access to the relevant contact details in the need of a referral or reporting of an incident. We are looking at expanding these resources working with Taxi licencing and providing resources/ guidance for exploitation/CSE/CCE for

the Taxi drivers. Working with Community centres safeguarding packs have been provided to ensure information is available for the community.

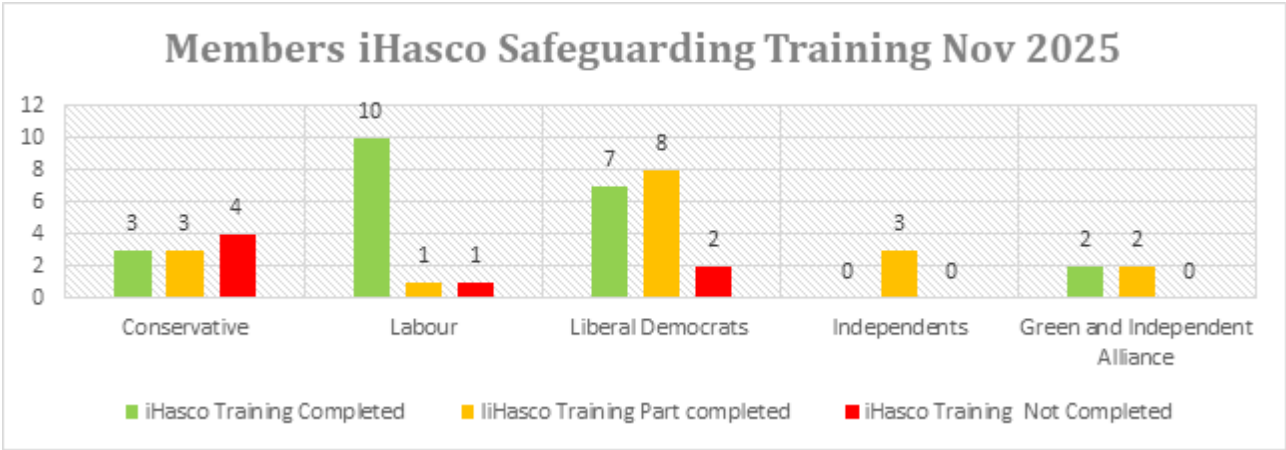
Additionally, customer service and housing and Community service teams also benefit from attendance at their morning briefings by the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead providing advice and support. The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead provides the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Boards 7 Minute briefings on a variety of topics to support the team. This was recognised as a valuable tool to aid those teams who regularly deal with members of the public who are vulnerable.

Updating on Modern slavery reporting and effective referral process in line with the Modern Slavery coordinator from Ox-City who has attended team meeting in Housing, resettlement team and Community Safety.

OSCP training is also provided to all services in Cherwell and underpins the internal online training through iHasco.

- 4.9 The members intranet page has been updated with contact details for safeguarding concerns and pre-recorded briefings on Domestic Abuse and Neglect.

iHasco training logins provided to all members the below chart shows the data for training Jan -Dec 25 (Part completed is where PREVENT training is the only session completed).



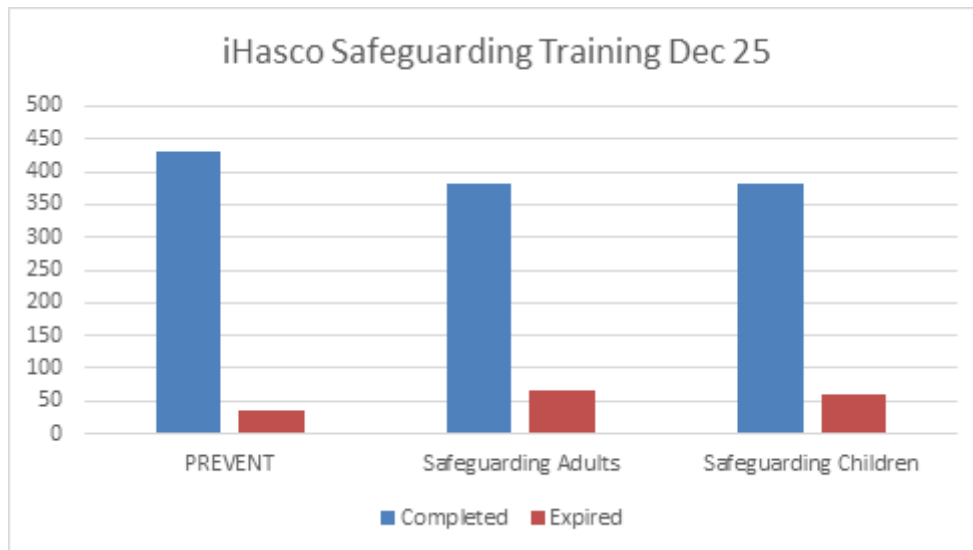
Awareness campaigns continue in line with the CDC awareness calendar which is available on the intranet. These campaigns are shared with districts in Oxfordshire to run campaigns at a similar time for improved effectiveness across the County. Often these are linked to National campaigns.

- 4.10 Since the launch of iHasco online training we have improved the monitoring and recording of safeguarding training across Cherwell. Outlined below are the number of staff who have completed the mandatory training on iHasco.

Compulsory Safeguarding training comprises of the following:

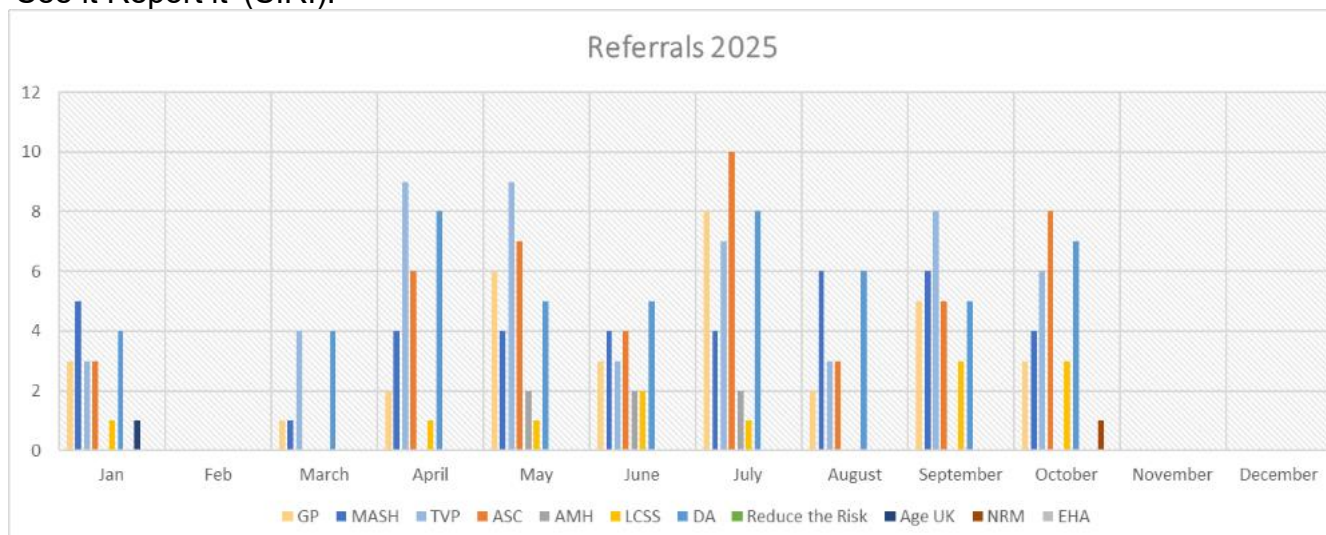
Active Users	Training	Needing Attention	Not Started	Completed	Expired	Training Hrs/CPD Time logged
476	PREVENT	40	81	432	35	10,208 hrs of training, plus 18,634 certificates issued
470	Safeguarding Children	71	87	383	60	
457	Safeguarding Adults	74	63	374	66	
411	GDPR	77	157	328	52	

Safer recruitment training is added to Managers who hire individuals that need a DBS.



## Reporting Safeguarding

- 4.11 As outlined above the District Council hosts its own internal reporting mechanism on the total amount of times external services have been contacted each month for 'See it Report it' (SIRI).



Below are the occasions that each organisation has been contacted by the Council for a referral.



2025 – we have recorded 356 SIRC reports (Jan-Oct), the actions taken from the SIRC reports referring to the Police and Social Care Services as follows:

- Adult Social Care, 46 14% increase on 2024.
- MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub), 41 37% decrease from 2024.
- TVP (Thames Valley Police), 52 51% increase on 2024.

This equates to a total of 214 referrals to Adult Social Care/ Police/ MASH etc.

In addition to this these figures services across Cherwell do contact the Police including wellbeing and safer life checks, through the “Right Person Right Care” process. These are not always recorded on the internal reporting mechanism SIRC. Individual services have reported concerns directly to Oxfordshire Social Services not informing Cherwell Safeguarding team.

- 4.12 Whilst recognising this is an upward trend in the number of referrals there is a suggestion that this could be linked to the additional training given to staff to raise their awareness of incidents. The national trend is seeing increasing records of concerns in line with what we are seeing across Cherwell. The number of referrals is monitored closely to identify trends, work with MASH is in place to review these referrals being made, if they meet the threshold for safeguarding.

As outlined earlier in the report regular safeguarding briefings have been held through the year, these include Safeguarding, SIRC reporting, Mental Health/ Suicide, and Self – Harm / Self-Neglect / How to make a Good Referral etc. External; training has been provided to all frontline staff for compassion fatigue.

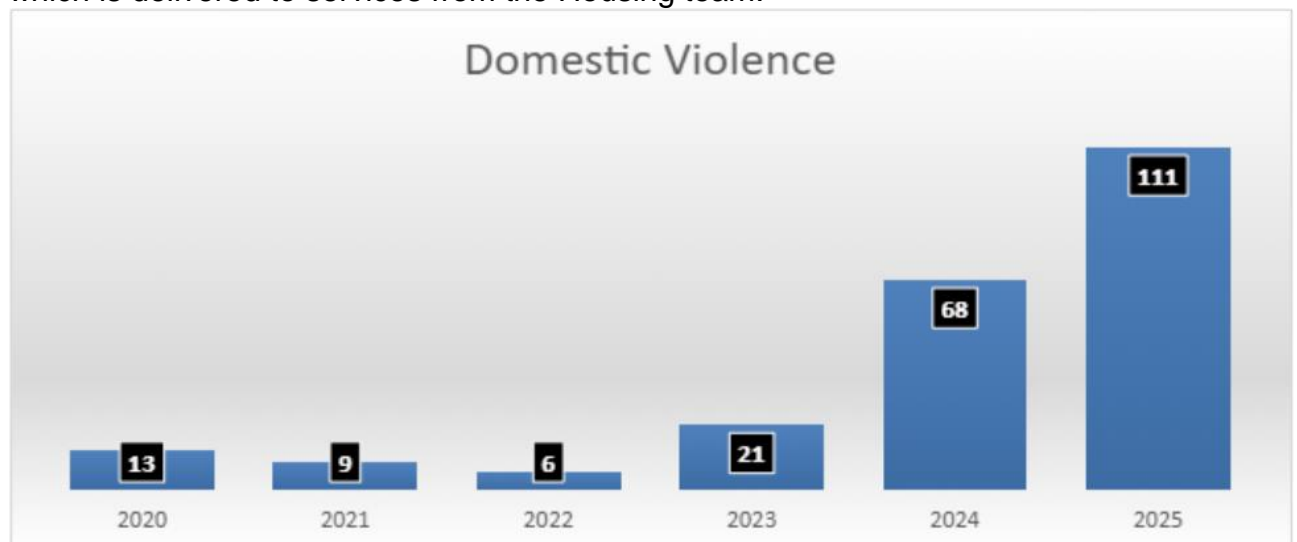
We developed these short presentation/ briefings to support this knowledge and underpin the safeguarding training available through the iHasco modules.

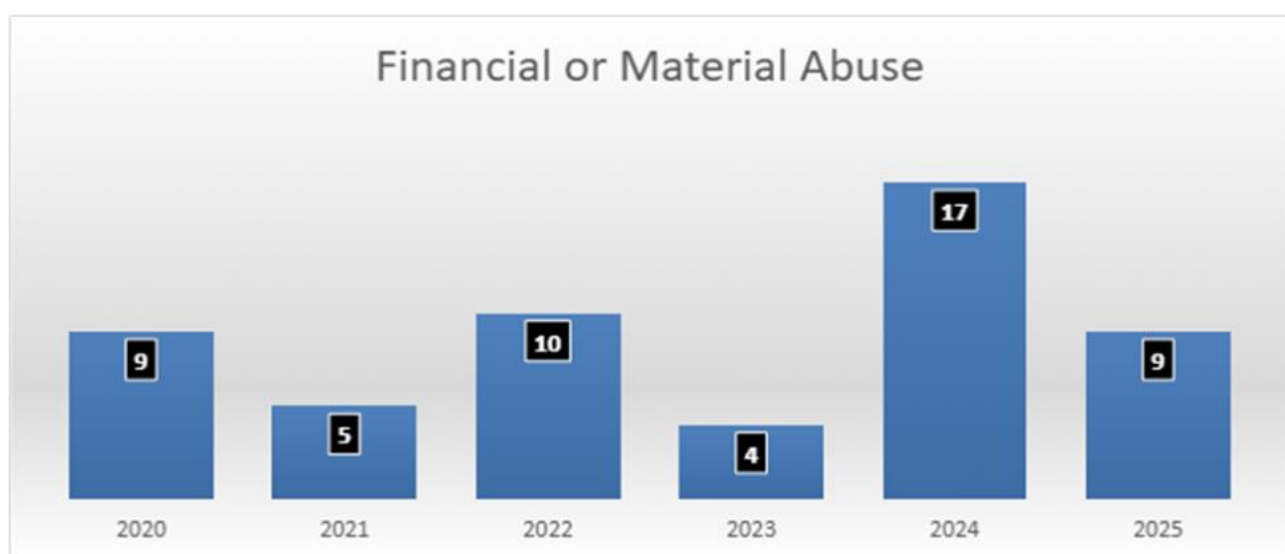
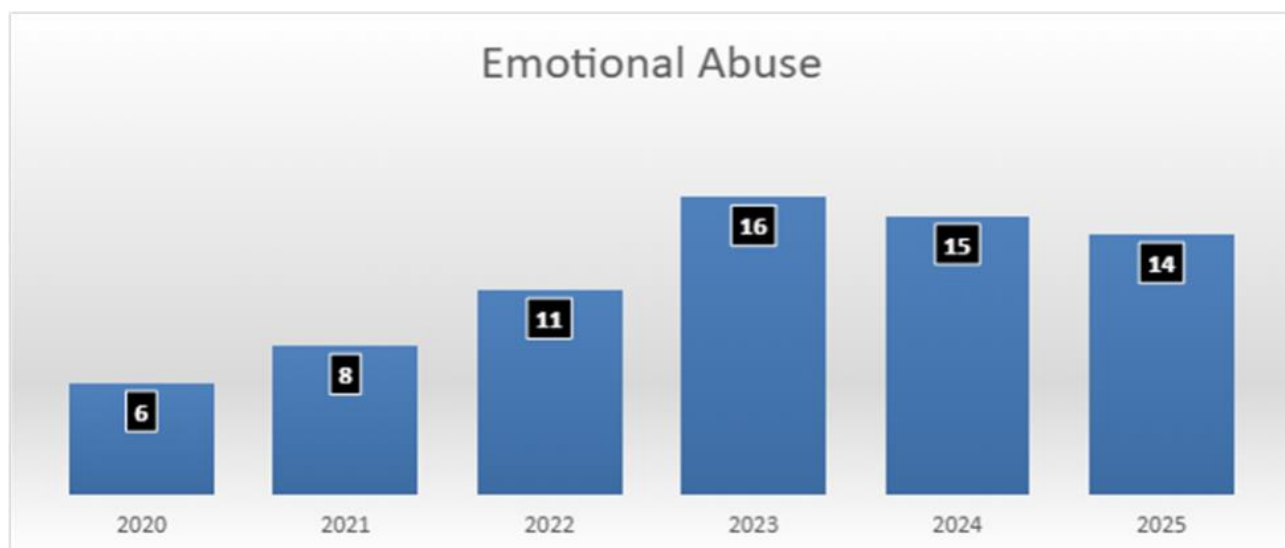
- 4.13 We have had a total of 95 members of staff attend safeguarding briefings this year, on a number of themed topics.



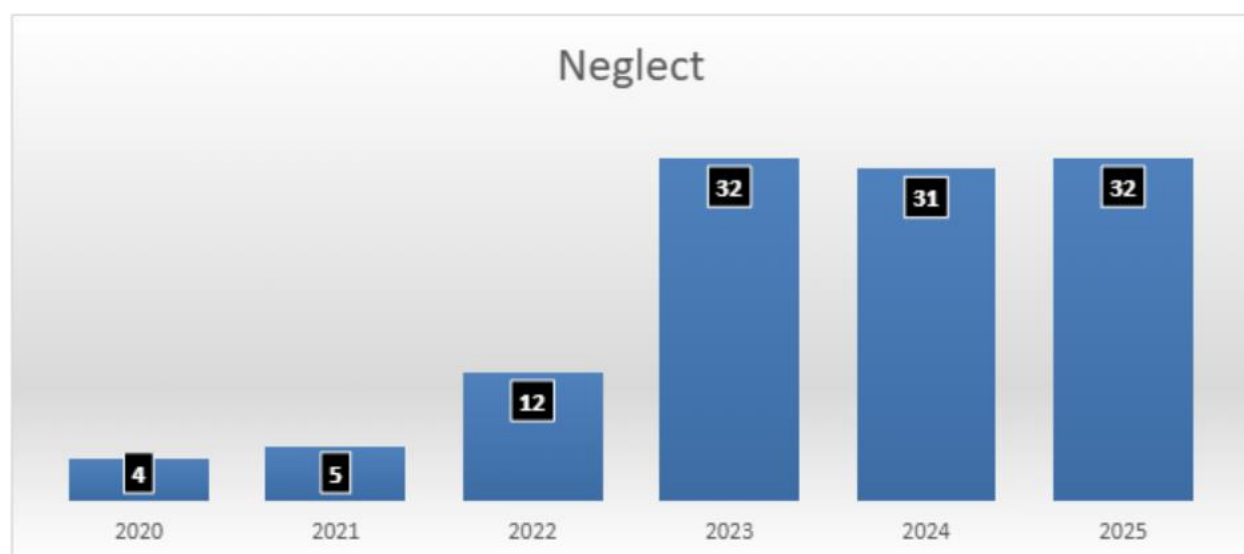
In addition to the above we have provided briefings on How to make a Good Referral / Child Sexual Exploitation / Criminal Exploitation/MARM training.

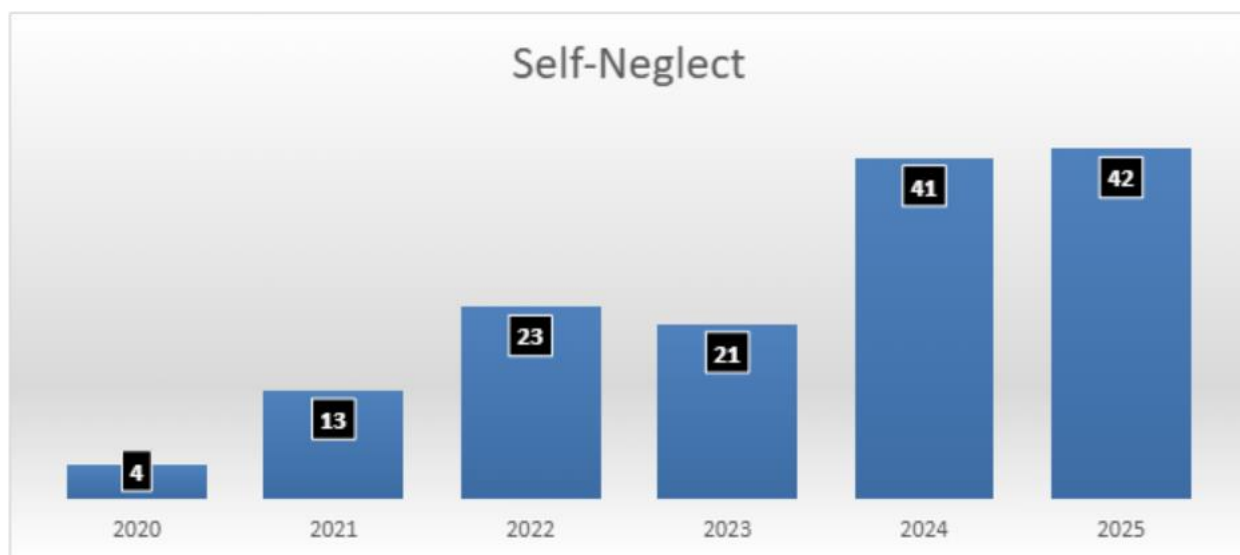
- 4.14 Emerging themes for this year appear to be an increase on domestic abuse reporting, which is at its highest for the last three years. CDC now has a Domestic Abuse key worker embedded in housing team and leads on the DA training and DAHA accreditation. We have provided a Domestic Abuse policy for Cherwell, which is delivered to services from the Housing team.





4.15 Mental Health and Neglect/ Self-Neglect are the two areas we continue to see the most reported on the SRI reports. We are seeing an increase of Physical abuse been recorded this year.





In the Districts meetings we aim to review these themes to identify any concerns across the four districts.

#### 4.16 External Partnering

As part of the partnering work with other organisations across the County the Deputy Safeguarding Lead attends the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Single agency audit performance and quality assurance meetings (PAQA) with district councils. The Oxfordshire Children's Safeguarding Boards (OSCB) subgroups enable the OSCB to deliver its multi-agency objectives as set out in the business plan which are then updated at each meeting.

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead also attends the PIQA meetings (Performance information and quality assurance subgroup). The purpose of this exercise is for agencies / services to share details on their safeguarding audit work and the learning from it. Information from these returns is included in the OSCB annual report.

District Council meetings are held Monthly the aim of the Joint District Safeguarding Partnership Group is to bring together safeguarding representatives from Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council to share information and learning in order to support their statutory safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

#### **This includes the following:**

Establishing ways of analysing data and identifying trends on safeguarding themes to inform Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adult Board (OSAB) and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) understanding of prevalence of abuse and neglect. This analysis of data and trends allows for a focus of resource into these particular areas of concern. Where appropriate this information will assist the Safeguarding Boards in raising awareness of safeguarding issues among the districts, organisations, and the wider public.

Providing single agency returns to PIQA/PAQA covering both children and adults.

Circulation of information within districts to enhance learning gained through the partnership group meetings. (Cherwell District Council attend county safeguarding

groups such as PIQA/PAQA / Neglect Strategy Group/ Neglect Forum/ Business group/ Engagement group providing updates to the districts)

Sharing of good practice and learning to deliver a consistent countywide approach to safeguarding.

Development of training needs across the districts to ensure a joined-up approach across the county.

Consolidating templates for audits, action plans, reporting mechanisms and any other methods of information gathering with a view to streamlining the processes.

## **5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

No alternatives considered

## **6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 6.1 The District Council, has a statutory duty to have appropriate arrangements and procedures in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children, young people and vulnerable adults, living in our community.
- 6.2 This training framework acts as a core part of these arrangements and aims to ensure that employees and members are equipped with the relevant knowledge and skillset to be able to identify safeguarding (and also criminal) concerns and report them to the appropriate person/agency in a timely manner.
- 6.3 We recommend that all members attend a Safeguarding Briefing every two years and encourage members to make use of the resources available including attending themed safeguarding briefings for Domestic Abuse and Self-Neglect/Neglect.

## **Decision Information**

<b>Key Decision</b>	N/A
<b>Subject to Call in</b>	N/A
<b>If not, why not subject to call in</b>	N/A
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All

## **Document Information**

<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix 1</b>	CA211025 OSAB-Annual-Report-2025
<b>Appendix 2</b>	Oxfordshire Mapping – Child Sexual Exploitation Cherwell Return 14-03-2025
<b>Appendix 3</b>	Safeguarding Meetings
<b>Appendix 4</b>	Safeguarding Presentation
<b>Background Papers</b>	None
<b>Reference Papers</b>	None
<b>Report Author</b>	Susan Asbury
<b>Report Author contact details</b>	<a href="mailto:Susan.Asbury@cherwell-dc.gov.uk">Susan.Asbury@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</a> 01295 753 748
<b>Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)</b>	Nicola Riley, Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services, 03/11/2025