

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

28 November 2023

Cherwell District Council Safeguarding Self-Assessment 2023.

Report of Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing

This report is public

Purpose of report

To update the committee on how well the council is performing in delivering its safeguarding duties.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To consider self-assessment and actions
- 1.2 Consider actions for future safeguarding briefings for Members

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 The assessment requires organisations to carry out their existing functions in a way that considers the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. The audit is an opportunity for each agency to demonstrate compliance with statutory guidance and to consider any actions required for improvement as well as reporting on actions from previous audits.
- 2.4 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.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 As outlined in the introduction this report will focus on providing Members with more detailed information around actions on the Section 11 Self-Assessment. The Section 11 Self-Assessment is attached as appendix 1). The report will also highlight the processes being put in place by Officers to ensure that Staff and Members have access to the support and training needed to fulfil their roles. In addition, the report will give information on any trends in terms of reporting of safeguarding incidents through the internal reporting mechanisms.
- 3.2 The assessment will also cover whether commissioning arrangements are sufficiently robust and address the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children based upon these standards. As part of these assessments there is the ability to recognise any opportunities that may be needed to support some commissioned services with their safeguarding responsibilities.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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. This year we have provided an improved safeguarding training package for the Youth Activity workers including behaviour Management. 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.

4.0 Staff Awareness

4.1 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 that 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. This year we have achieved a 51% increase against last year's attendance for all the internal safeguarding briefings.

4.2 All delegates provide feedback on the learning, which has generally been a positive experience and therefore intend to continue with this offering next year

4.3 A number of these briefings are offered to Members, and these are available on the members page including pre-recorded briefings on Neglect and Domestic Abuse. Attendance of these sessions has been disappointing and therefore we would like to engage with Members to identify how we could make them more accessible and what would encourage use of the resources available.

4.4 As part of the assessment, we share relevant information with the two safeguarding boards, Oxfordshire safeguarding adults Board (OSAB) and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) 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.

4.5 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.

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.

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Boards Financial Abuse Training has also been offered to Housing and Customer Service Jan 2023.

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

- 4.6 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 -Oct 23 (Part completed is where PREVENT training is the only session completed).

	iHasco Training Completed	iHasco Training Not Completed	liHasco Training Part completed
Conservative	9	8	3
Labour	9	2	1
Progressive Oxfordshire	6	4	4
Independents	1	1	0

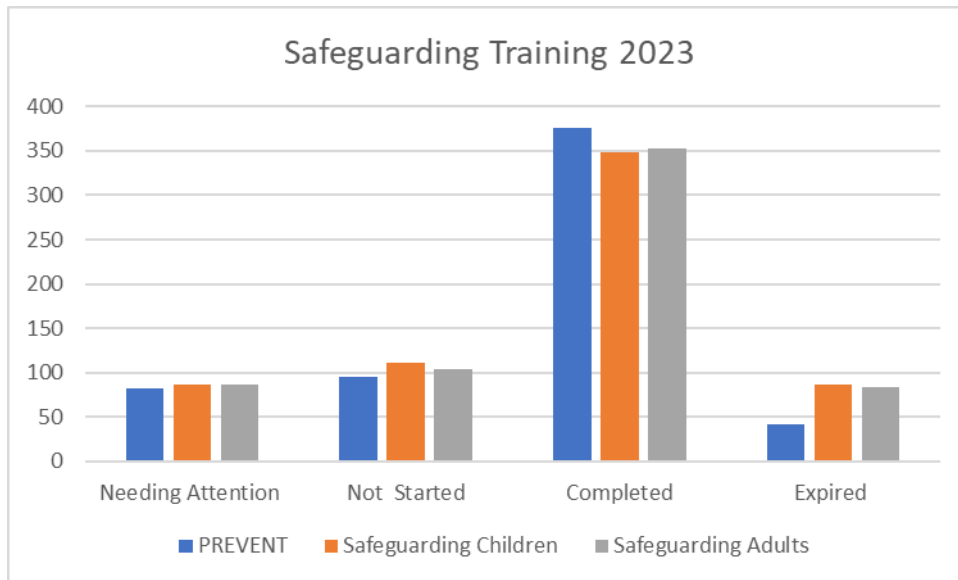
Awareness campaigns continue in line with the CDC awareness calendar which is available on the intranet. These campaigns are shared with districts in Oxfordshire to run campaigns at a similar time for improved effectiveness across the County. Often these are linked to National campaigns.

- 4.7 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:

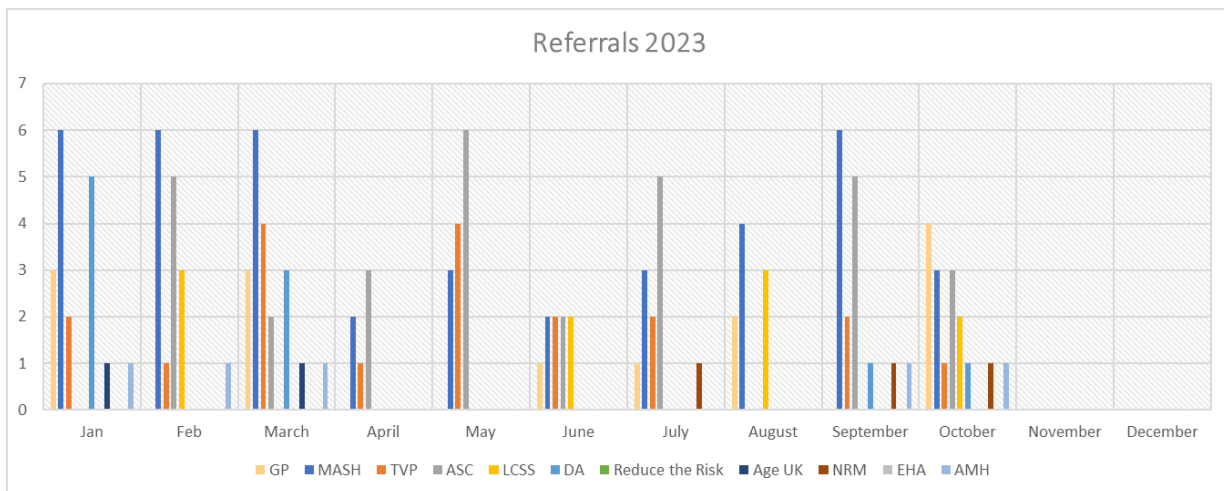
Active Users		Needing Attention	Not Started	Completed	Expired	Training Hrs/CPD Time logged
564	PREVENT	82	96	375	42	6254
564	Safeguarding Children	87	111	348	86	6254
564	Safeguarding Adults	85	104	353	83	6254

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



5.0 Reporting Safeguarding

5.1 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



2023 – we have recorded 184 SIRI reports (Jan-Oct), the actions taken from the SIRI reports referring to the Police and Social Care Services as follows:

- Adult Social Care, 31 29% increase on 2022.
- MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub), 41 70% increase on 2022.
- TVP (Thames Valley Police), 19 35% decrease in 2022.

This equates to a total of 107 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 SIRI. Individual services have

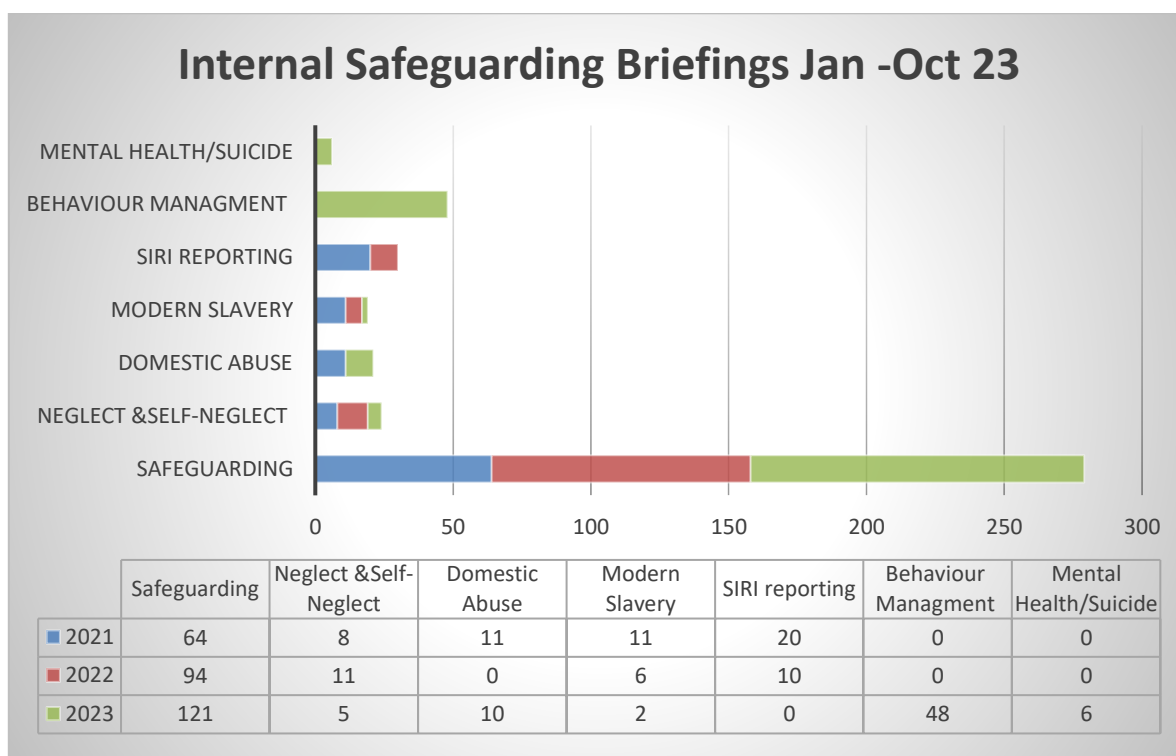
reported concerns directly to Oxfordshire Social Services not informing Cherwell Safeguarding team.

5.2 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 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, SIRI reporting, Mental Health/ Suicide, and Self – Harm / Self-Neglect / How to make a Good Referral etc.

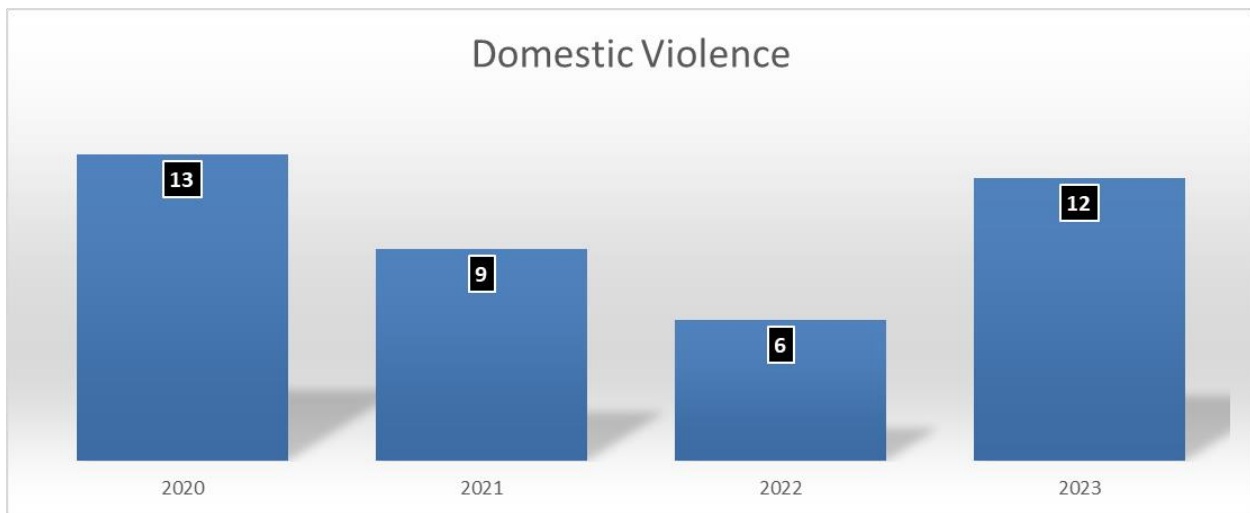
We developed these short presentation/ briefings to support this knowledge and underpin the safeguarding training available through the iHasco modules.

5.3 We have had a total of 192 members of staff attend safeguarding briefings this year, on a number of themed topics.

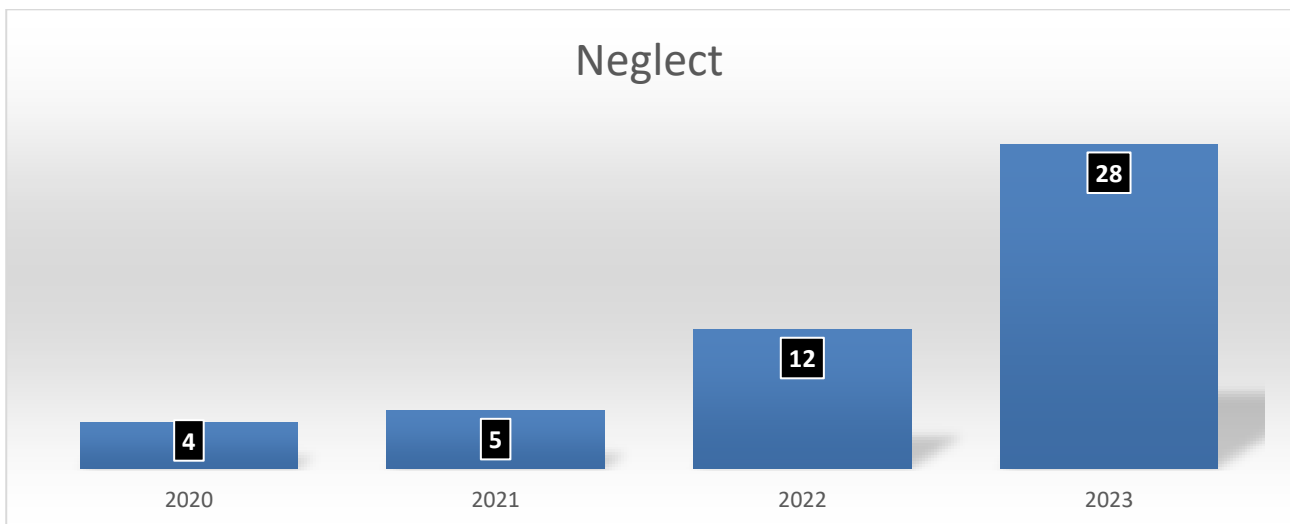


In addition to the above we have provided briefings on How to make a Good Referral / Child Sexual Exploitation / Criminal Exploitation.

5.4 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.



5.5 Mental Health and Neglect are the two areas we continue to see the most reported on the SIRI 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.

6.0 External Partnering

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.

- 6.3 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.

7.0 Findings of Self-Assessment and Peer Report for 2021-2022

- 7.1 Attached as appendix B is the findings and identified actions from the Self-Assessment and Peer Reports for 2022

8.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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.

- 8.3 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.

9.0 Consultation

None

10.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: To not endorse the self-assessment. Rejected because there are improvements that have been identified and the council wants to show its commitment to being integral partners in the safeguarding partnerships.

11.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 11.1 There are no additional resource implications arising from the report

Comments checked by:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer), 01295 221845, michael.furness@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Legal Implications

- 11.2 The report is to facilitate scrutiny in accordance with the OS work plan and constitution.

Comments checked by:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer, 01295 221651 shiraz.sheikh@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Risk Implications

- 11.3 The Council's approach to managing its safeguarding risks is captured in its Corporate Risk Register and includes a programme of training and awareness raising events with staff and members.

Comments checked by:

Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus, 01295 221652, shona.ware@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Equalities and Inclusion Implications

- 11.4 The council delivers its safeguarding duties in line with its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion commitments that are set out in its Including Everyone, Equalities Framework.

Comments checked by:

Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus, 01295 221652,
shona.ware@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

12.0 Decision Information

Key Decision N/A as not an Executive report

Financial Threshold Met: N/A

Community Impact Threshold Met: N/A

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Healthy, resilient and engaged communities.

Lead Councillor

Councillor Phil Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities.

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix A Learning from the national auditing tool and feedback from the 2022 peer review event fed into the updated 2023 template.
- Appendix B – Self Assessment 2023.

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

Susan Asbury Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Susan.asbury@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Phone: 01295 753748