



OSCB publishes a Child Safeguarding Practice Review concerning Jacob: Press Statement

Review highlights national problem of young people being criminally exploited

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) today published the findings of its safeguarding practice review concerning Jacob, a 16-year old boy who was found dead in his bedroom.

Reviews such as this are normally anonymised but in this case Jacob's family wanted his story to be told and his name to be published.

The review analysed how he was criminally exploited and exposed to serious levels of youth violence, between July 2017 and April 2019.

It found that professionals tried their best to understand Jacob's circumstances, the risks he faced and to think of ways to help him.

Derek Benson, Independent Chair of Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB), described the events as a "human tragedy", adding that his "thoughts are with the family at this extremely difficult time."

The purpose of the review was to identify ways to improve safeguarding practice across all agencies. Recommendations for improvement relate to police, schools, mental health services, district councils and Oxfordshire County Council's education and children's social care services.

The review concluded that the local system was not able to respond quickly enough. It highlighted the important need for effective community safety partnerships to ensure a coordinated response to criminal exploitation.

Derek Benson said: "This is a human tragedy that shines a spotlight on a national problem of children in rural and urban areas being criminally exploited, serious youth violence and gang-affiliation. Our response must be co-ordinated, robust and sustainable, targeting people who seek to exploit our children and young people, while at the same time providing support and diversion for those children and young people who are at risk of harm."

The recommendations in the review have been acted upon by all the local organisations involved. This ensures more effective across-agency working is being developed across Oxfordshire to protect young people from all forms of exploitation.

The steps taken as a result of the recommendations include:

- The launch of an integrated youth justice and exploitation service staffed by children's youth justice workers and social workers, police, education and health colleagues; which is introducing a joined-up approach to children and families affected by all types of exploitation
- The establishment of area-based 'missing and exploited' multi-agency panels, which analyse the reasons children go missing, the intelligence about exploitation in the area and set actions to be taken to address the risks