

OXFORDSHIRE UNCOVERED

Why collaboration is needed
to strengthen our communities

ABOUT OXFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF) is an independent charity that connects people who care with causes that matter. We inspire local philanthropy, and nurture community-based solutions to key social problems across Oxfordshire.

We are one of 46 community foundations in the UK, and over 1,800 similar foundations around the world. Community foundations collaborate with private philanthropists, family trusts, businesses and the public sector to provide a permanent, flexible and growing source of local charitable funding.

OCF has built an endowment fund of nearly £5 million, and awarded more than £5 million in grants to local community groups working to make Oxfordshire a better place. We aim to increase our endowment fund to at least £10 million by 2020.

We believe in lasting, strategic and proactive solutions to complex social problems. To achieve these, we are committed to developing our knowledge and understanding of Oxfordshire's needs and all available resources.

We work in partnership with others so that we can have a greater impact.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past 22 years, through our work at Oxfordshire Community Foundation, we have been uncovering a reality in Oxfordshire that is in stark contrast to the general perception of our green and wealthy county.



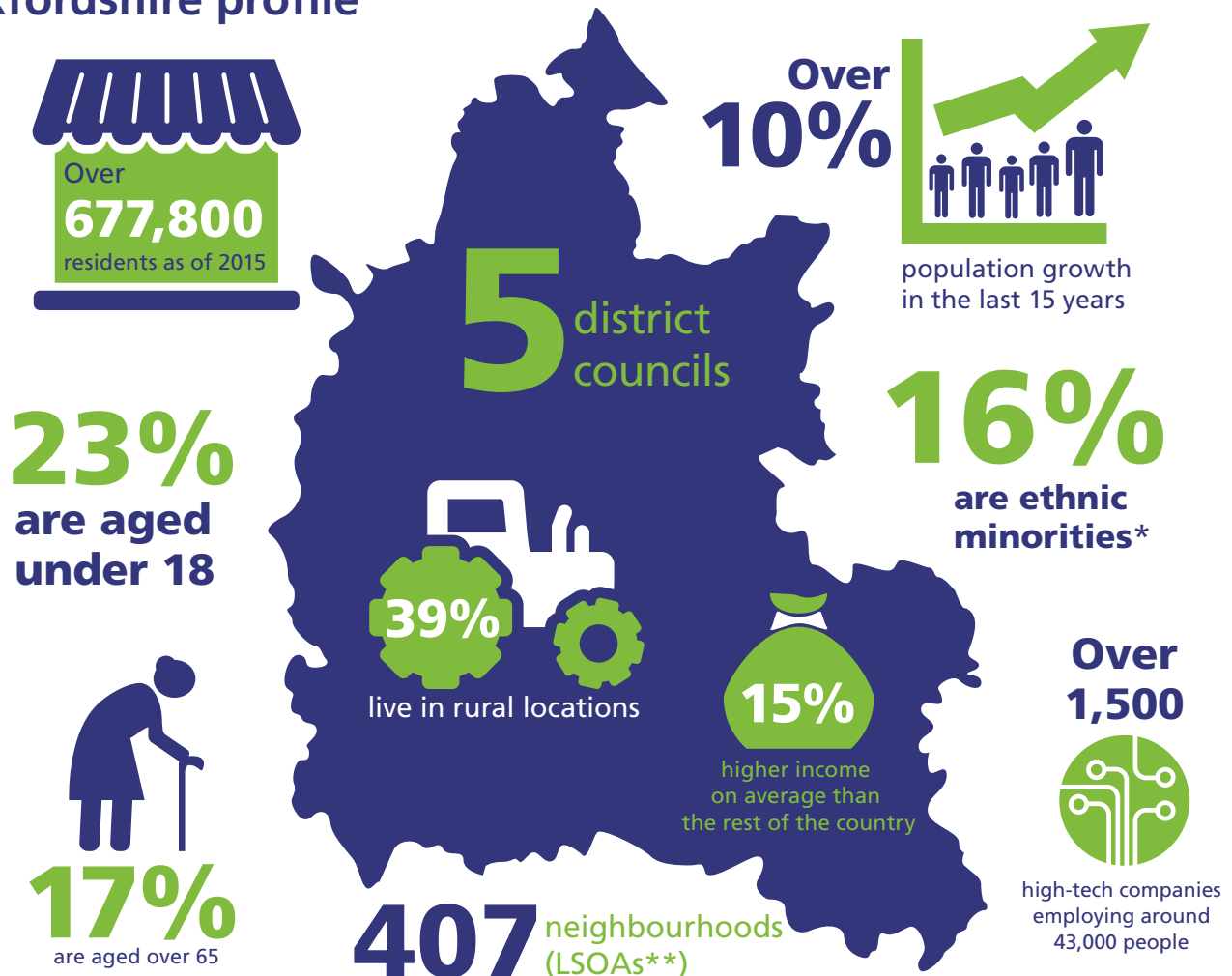
Despite the best efforts of the many thousands of small local charities and their generous supporters, we remain deeply concerned by a number of simply shocking and distressing social problems here on our doorstep in Oxfordshire and within our communities.

With this report, *Oxfordshire Uncovered*, we have chosen to highlight just a few of these problems. However, perhaps more importantly, we also share our aspirations for how we might pool our resources, focus our collective efforts and work in partnership to find solutions that will ensure a better future for Oxfordshire.

Jayne Woodley

Chief Executive, Oxfordshire Community Foundation

Oxfordshire profile



* Ethnic minority refers to all who are not "White British or Irish".

** An LSOA (Lower Super Output Area) is the government's term for a small area averaging approximately 1,650 people and 700 households. Throughout this document we will refer to LSOAs as neighbourhoods.

Beyond the stereotypes



EXCEPTIONALLY WEALTHY

- 15 neighbourhoods** are in the 20% most deprived in England
- 1 in 5 children** in Oxford are living in poverty*
- More than half** of Oxfordshire's neighbourhoods are in the worst 30% in England for access to services

*Children in families in receipt of out of work benefits OR tax credits with an income of less than 60% of national median income



BEAUTIFUL TOWN AND COUNTRY HOUSES

- Oxford is the least affordable place to live in Britain, with houses costing **16 times** the local annual income
- Rental costs are **nearly double** the England average
- Less than half** of the population can afford so-called 'affordable' housing
- Over 7,000 people** live in unsuitable housing
- Around 600 people** are homeless



WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR OUR CHILDREN

- Oxford's Key Stage 2 (age 7–11) school results are in the **bottom 25%** nationally
- There were nearly **10,000 cases** of domestic abuse cases involving children in 2013–14
- Operation Bullfinch estimates that there were **373 victims** of grooming by one paedophile ring
- There are over **600 children** subject to child protection plans, 70% of whom are under 10
- On average, **two children** in every Oxfordshire classroom are young carers, and nearly 40% of them have special educational needs



YOUNG AND VIBRANT

- There are over **115,000 over-65s** – the fastest-growing age group in the county
- A quarter** of older people live alone – around 30,000 people
- 40%** of pensioner households have no access to a car
- Around half** of people aged 65+ say TV or pets are their main company

A COUNTY OF CONTRASTS

While the county of Oxfordshire has many positive attributes, it also features great inequality. For every show of affluence for which places like Oxford, Henley and Chipping Norton are known, there are clusters of individuals and families living in poverty, mostly in small neighbourhoods on the edges of towns, or isolated at the end of country lanes. Deprived families live cheek by jowl with millionaires. What effect does this have on the social fabric and cohesion of our county?

This report sets about uncovering those areas and themes where pockets of deprivation can be found, and where communities are struggling. To do this, we have used many sources, especially the government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). These indices allow us to compare the picture in Oxfordshire with the rest of England, and to visualise the granular detail of the areas of social need specific to our county.

An initial look at the IMD rankings seems to support the stereotypes about Oxfordshire, giving the appearance that few people in the county experience deprivation:

However, a little further exploration of the detail paints quite a different picture. By drilling down into the different facets of deprivation, and adding information from supplementary sources, we find that:

There is a large wealth differential

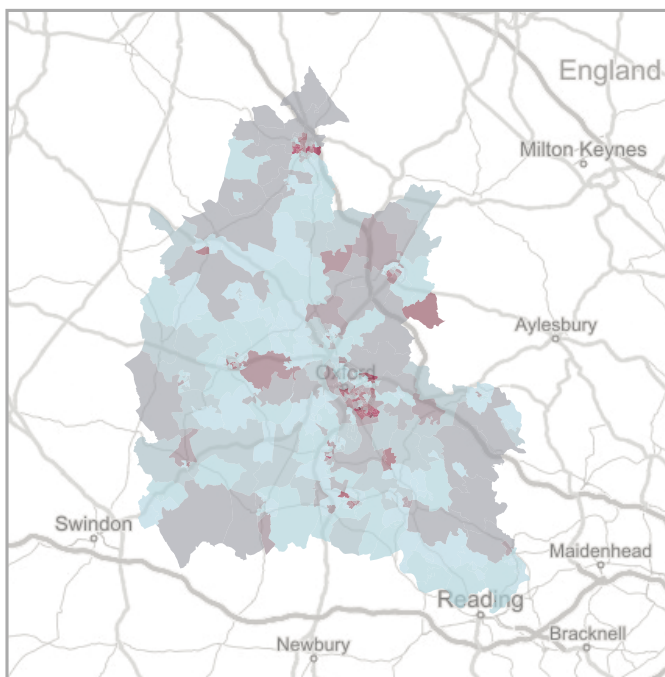
- Oxfordshire is an affluent and prosperous county, ranking the 12th least deprived upper-tier local authority of 152 in England.
- However, there are 15 neighbourhoods in Oxfordshire that are ranked among the 20% most deprived nationally.
- When deprived communities live in areas that are very affluent more generally, their sense of social exclusion is exacerbated.

"The comparative wealth of the area can easily mask the needs, leaving many people feeling isolated, lonely and unheard. Many children struggle with chaotic family lives, leading to inconsistent attendance at school, loss of motivation and ultimately poor literacy, which in turn increases their risk of remaining outside education, employment or training later in life."

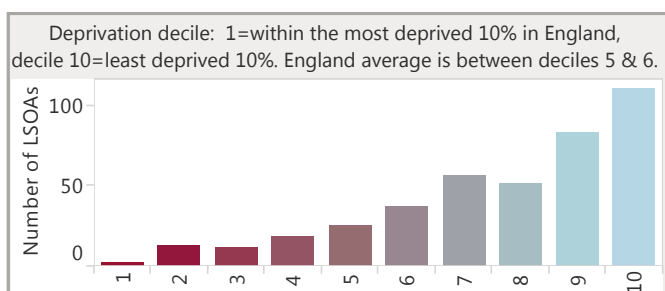
Sue Prior, Project Lead at Henley-based Nomad Youth Project

There are great geographical inequalities

- Child poverty in Oxfordshire is at around 12% – comparing favourably to the England figure of 19%.
- However, Oxford city has a higher figure, with 21% of



Index of Multiple Deprivation



children living in poverty – that is 1 in 5 children.

- Research has shown that as well as struggling with life's economic basics, children from deprived backgrounds are more likely to be victims of abuse.

A full list of sources by section can be found at the end of this publication, in the references list.

Oxfordshire is one of the most expensive places to live in Britain

- One in five neighbourhoods is in the worst 20% in England for barriers to housing and services.
- Oxford city is the most unaffordable place to live in the UK. Houses in Oxford cost 16 times the average local annual income.
- There is a rising trend in the number of homeless households in priority need, and in the number of rough sleepers.

Oxfordshire has an ageing population

- 17% of the population is aged over 65.
- The number of people aged over 85 is expected to double in the next 20 years.
- There are 30,000 people aged over 65 living alone. Loneliness and isolation can have serious health consequences.

“The raw numbers of older people in poverty cannot match urban concentrations on official measures. This is why people get ‘lost’ and the problems lie submerged in villages and communities.”

Paul Cann, former Chief Executive, Age UK Oxfordshire

The rural character of the county leads to specific social challenges

- 39% of Oxfordshire residents live in rural locations (towns or villages of under 10,000 people) – the highest proportion in the South East.
- The proportion of people living in isolated hamlets or

rural dwellings is higher than the England average. South Oxfordshire has the highest proportion.

- Barriers to services in rural areas include being at inaccessible distances from hospitals, GP services, shops, and community amenities such as social clubs.

“Not one pupil eligible for free school meals in Oxfordshire got into an Oxbridge university in 2013. It is shocking that many of the richest areas of the country are the ones failing their poorest children the most.”

Alan Milburn, Chairman, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission

Many children in Oxfordshire are living in deprivation or are at risk

- Many areas of Oxfordshire fall into the most deprived in terms of education and skills.
- Oxfordshire's 'Thriving Families' programme will work with more than 3,000 troubled families.
- There are over 600 children subject to a Child Protection Plan in the county.
- Services such as children's centres can help, but in reality we know that many of these are being cut or reduced.

What are the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)?

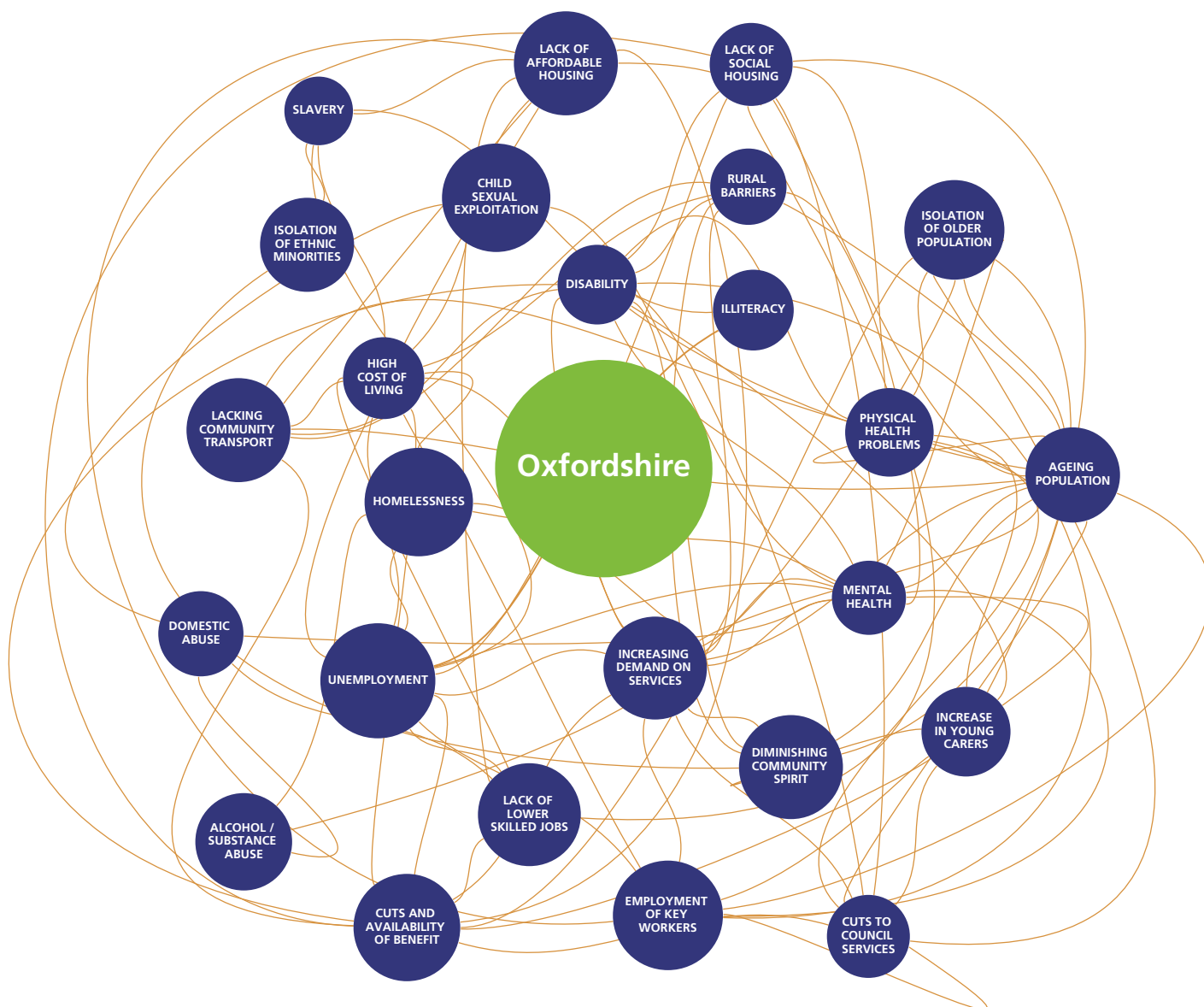
The IMD rankings are published by the Department of Communities and Local Government and are derived from census data. They work on the assumption that there are several different types of deprivation, and that these can be measured within small neighbourhoods, or Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). Each area has an aggregate ranking, but more telling information can be found by drilling down into the detail of each of the indices. The domains measured by the IMD are as follows:

- Income deprivation
- Employment deprivation
- Health deprivation and disability
- Education, skills and training deprivation
- Barriers to housing and services
- Crime
- Living environment deprivation

More detail and statistics can be found at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015.

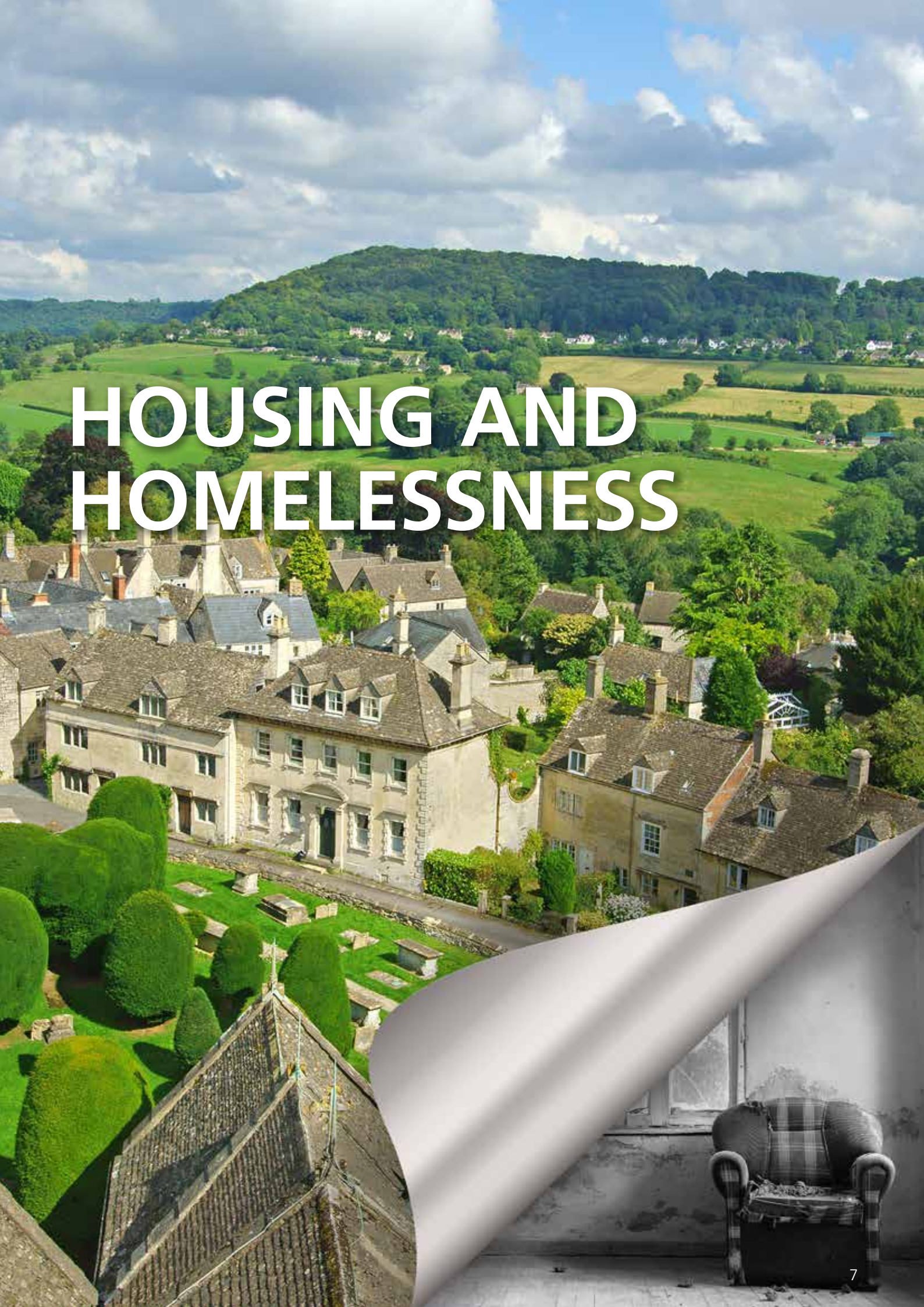
The focus of this research

We know that many of these issues are inter-related:



We see this report as the start of a longer journey in understanding this landscape. We have started the journey by taking a deep dive into three themes: **housing and homelessness**; **children and families**; and **loneliness and isolation**.


HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS



In Oxfordshire...

HOUSING SHORTAGE

Over **677,000**  people **& 270,000**  households

 Current house-building rate meets only **HALF** the need

Population growth around **6,000** per year



HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



Purchase of property requires average income of **£60,000**



£3  **ANNUAL INCOME** needed to rent the average property on the private market

Average rents more than **DOUBLE** the England average

Average house price in Oxford in 2015  around **£425,000** – 16 times local annual income

TOWARDS HOMELESSNESS



Around **300** people in hostels and sheltered accommodation

Around **200** households in temporary accommodation

Around **90 people** **SLEEPING ROUGH** – up 50% in the last year

ANALYSIS

Housing is a clear demonstration of the inequalities in Oxfordshire. Some can afford to live in the county's beautiful country and town houses; but a larger number have to spend a disproportionate amount of their income on housing, or live in unsuitable dwellings – to the extent that their quality of life, health and wellbeing are adversely affected.

The demographic demands contributing to the issue of housing availability include:

- A longer life expectancy
- More people coming to Oxfordshire to work in the 'knowledge spine' of technology and research companies
- Divorce, separation and family breakdown
- An increase in young people wanting to live alone for longer
- Population increases as a result of immigration.

Additionally, in cities like Oxford there is a severe scarcity of land to build on, and a green belt that restricts expansion. This suggests that the housing crisis is likely to be with us for some time.

Oxfordshire is an area of England in which the housing crisis is at its most acute. This is demonstrated by the IMD's 'Barriers to Housing and Services' domain, which shows that more than half of Oxfordshire's neighbourhoods are in the most deprived half of England.

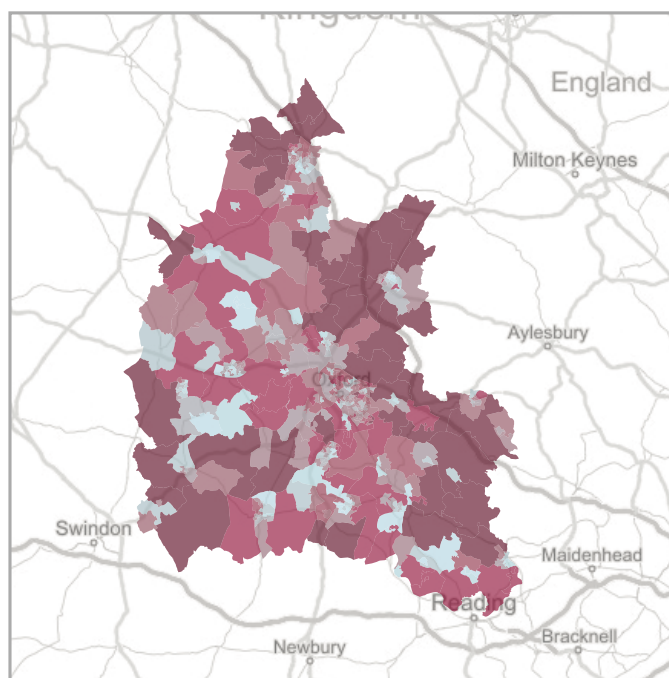
Compared to the IMD map showing aggregate levels of deprivation across all domains, the map opposite makes it clear that the housing crisis really is a headline issue for Oxfordshire.

So what impact does this have on our communities and the people within them?

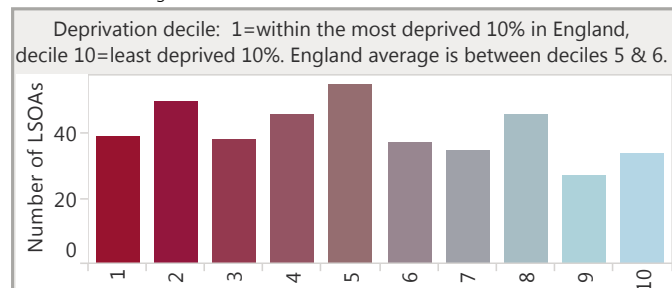
Homelessness is the most obvious outcome of Oxfordshire's housing crisis. However, lack of affordable housing affects almost everyone – whether they are a young couple trying to get onto the property ladder, or a business owner trying to attract staff. When the demand for housing outstrips the stock available, people resort to living in sub-standard or overcrowded housing, or are driven away from the areas where they have roots and support networks.

"Private landlords can obtain significantly higher rents from those earning more money or students, and we have significant pressures on council housing."

Mike Rowley, Executive board member for housing, Oxford City Council



Barriers to Housing and Services



The housing problem has many knock-on effects, which we see daily: absolute poverty, physical and mental health problems, substance abuse, educational underachievement, unemployment and crime. For this reason, we see this as a significant threat to the wellbeing of Oxfordshire, and one that needs to be prioritised.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable housing is often described as housing sold or rented at 80% of market value. The problem with this definition is that it does not take into consideration inflated house prices, levels of income or housing benefit. What is more, since 1994 the number of council houses available to rent in Oxfordshire has decreased by more than 75%. Housing association stock has grown, but not enough to meet demand.

54% of people in Oxfordshire can only afford social housing rent or below – or in other words, over half of people cannot afford so-called ‘affordable housing’ at all. Market rent across Oxfordshire is about double the national average. The council says it is nearly impossible to find private landlords accepting housing benefit as payment.

To purchase a property requires an annual household income of around £60,000 on average. Less than a quarter of Oxfordshire households have an income at this level.

The demand for social and truly affordable housing is extraordinary. The backlog of demand includes 7,000 households living in ‘unsuitable housing’ – that is: in ill repair, overcrowded or costing too high a proportion of the household income.

According to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment carried out for the county council in 2014, plans for housing growth (set at 2,887 new homes per year) would need to be almost doubled to meet demand.

This issue has the greatest impact on the lower- to middle-income population, including Oxfordshire’s key workers: teachers, nurses, social workers, bus drivers – people with a direct role in keeping the county moving and thriving. These people now find it prohibitively expensive to live in Oxford, leading to many organisations having to use expensive temporary staff (including, ironically, the council’s own planning team), or suffering high levels of staff turnover.

“Some of the reason it is hard to recruit planners is because the city needs affordable housing.”

Ruth Wilkinson, Oxford City Councillor

Businesses are also finding it difficult to recruit and retain staff, particularly trainees or lower-skilled workers. Oxford Bus Company are finding it so hard to recruit that they are considering building a dormitory so they can attract drivers from

further afield. The lack of affordable housing will, in the long term, damage business growth and the local economy.

This instability has an adverse effect on the services delivered, and on the social wellbeing of Oxfordshire’s population, especially children and the vulnerable.



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS



Oxfordshire Community Land Trust (OCLT)

There is an urgent need for housing that is genuinely affordable in the short term, but also in perpetuity. OCLT has a vision to create a vibrant sector of community-owned, permanently affordable homes.

Across Oxford city and the county, land costs are very high. This is a root cause of high house prices, and makes it almost impossible to build affordable homes. One way to get round this is to remove land from the market and hold it in a trust specifically for the provision of permanently affordable homes.

The land would be owned by the trust, which would in turn lease the land to clusters of local people (set up as co-ops, co-housing, custom-build or self-build) for them to build permanently affordable homes.

OCF is currently exploring with OCLT how best to inspire philanthropic support into the development of such schemes and/or the donation of land sites.

HOMELESSNESS

What is a homeless person? When asked this question, most of us will picture a rough sleeper. However, in its broadest sense homelessness is the problem faced by people who lack a place to live that is supportive, affordable, decent and secure.

Almost 1 in 10 of the UK's population will be homeless at some point in their life, be it 'sofa-surfing', in a hostel, or rough sleeping.

For every rough sleeper, there are around 100 people in hostels, and 1,100 households in overcrowded accommodation

In Oxfordshire there are approximately:

- 200 households in temporary accommodation (such as B&Bs or on friends' sofas)
- 300 people in supported accommodation such as hostels (who would otherwise be rough sleeping)
- 500 homeless households (a family or individual who has applied for local authority housing support and been judged to be homeless)
- 90 rough sleepers.

The issue of homelessness is particularly acute in Oxford city, and the count of rough sleepers has increased by 50% in a year.

All of these numbers are in constant flux, as the personal circumstances of each individual can change on a daily basis. Homeless charities believe that published figures significantly underestimate the scale of the homelessness problem, and some charity heads are warning that in the context of severe local government cuts, places like Oxford could see the re-emergence of shanty towns on our streets.

What is more, council figures show that the number of households prevented from becoming homeless has been on the rise. This suggests that there is a large number of households on the brink of homelessness.

So what does this look like in terms of the impact on our communities and individual members of our society? Homelessness is undoubtedly exacerbated by systemic factors such as economic inequality and the housing crisis. However, getting to grips with this particular social problem means acknowledging that it is not just about physical access to housing. The most common reasons people give for losing their

accommodation are that a friend or relatives are no longer able to provide support, or because of relationship breakdown.

Socio-cultural issues linked to homelessness include mental health, drug and alcohol misuse, crime and sexual exploitation – although it is often very difficult to determine whether these are the original causes of homelessness, or a side effect of the harsh living conditions it entails.

"I became homeless about five years ago as a result of domestic abuse... He started tearing the house up, knocking me about, screaming... We left with nothing."

Clare, featured in *Not Just Homeless* by Oxford Homeless Pathways

Homeless people do not have a secure place in which to sleep at night, to keep their possessions, to eat or wash in, or to give as an address to friends, potential employers or authorities. It is hard to imagine that anything but the minority of cases have come about by choice. What homeless people need more than ever is compassion.





“Generally speaking around 75% of our clients at O’Hanlon House have a substance misuse problem (drugs, alcohol or both), and around 60% have a diagnosed mental health problem. Plus a high proportion have physical health, debt or offending problems.”

Lesley Dewhurst, former CEO, Oxford Homeless Pathways

Although mental health issues and substance misuse may be *causes* of homelessness for some, it is probable that the strains of being homeless mean that they are also its *effects* – coping mechanisms and normal human responses to great distress. Each homeless person is an individual, and will have their own stories of how they became homeless and of how it has affected them.

The homeless are vulnerable. Thames Valley Police report finding houses in Oxfordshire in which many people, often from ethnic minorities, are living in the same room. These people are often being exploited, frequently in connection with criminal activity, in what can only be described as modern day slavery.

Homeless people are 13 times more likely to be a victim of violence

That anybody should be living in these circumstances, especially in a county as wealthy as Oxfordshire, is unacceptable. With the reduction in state funding, together with the lack of affordable housing and the forthcoming changes in the availability of Local Housing Allowance, it is likely that homelessness and its consequences will continue to grow in the near future.



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS



Oxford Homeless Pathways (OxHoP)

OxHoP provides a range of services for homeless people, including two shelters in Oxford, O’Hanlon House and Julian Housing. Their homeless medical fund helps people access vital health and welfare.

Crucially, OxHoP also looks at long-term solutions to homelessness, helping people tackle the issues that have led them to become homeless, and to build confidence, develop new skills and put in place plans to change their lives. They proactively convene the other homeless services in the city to try and provide a holistic service to people who have reached rock bottom. For the adults they support, the service is not a statutory responsibility – so without charities such as OxHoP, they would have nowhere else to turn.

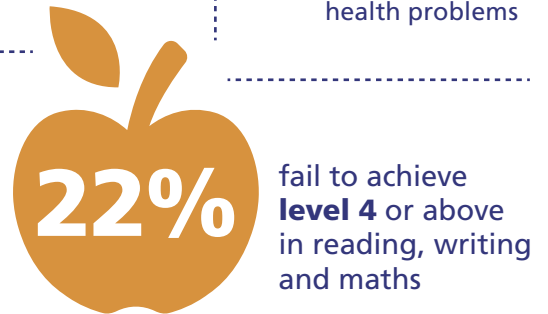
Since 2012, OCF has awarded over £32,000 in grants to OxHoP to support its vital work with homeless people.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

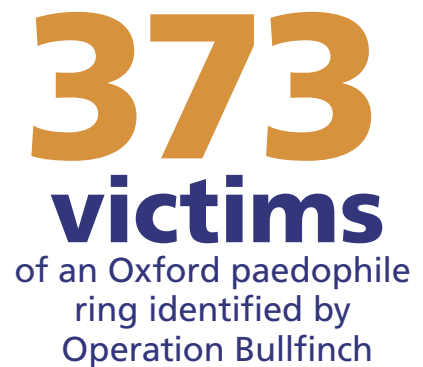
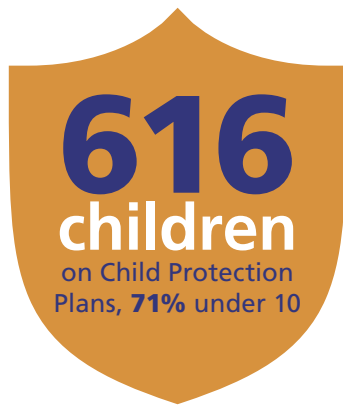


In Oxfordshire...

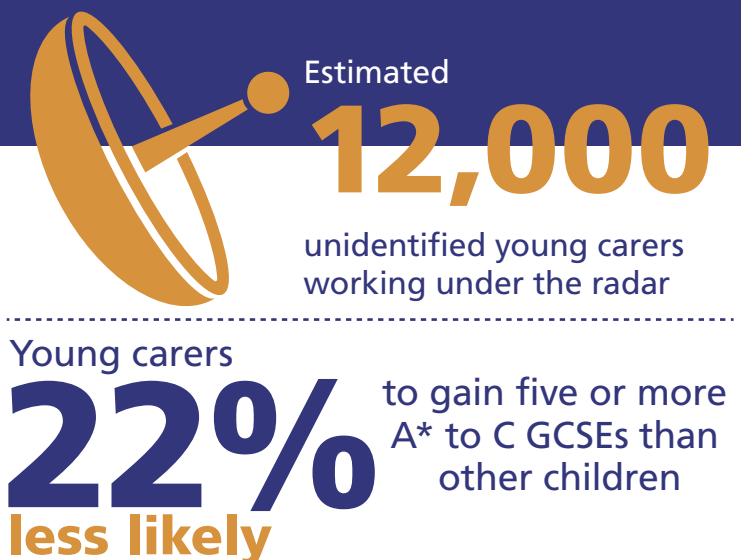
CHILD DEPRIVATION



CHILD ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION



YOUNG CARERS

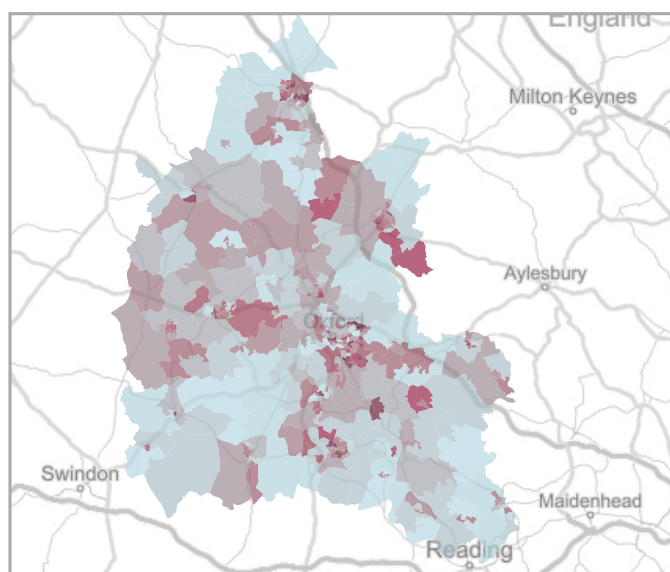


ANALYSIS

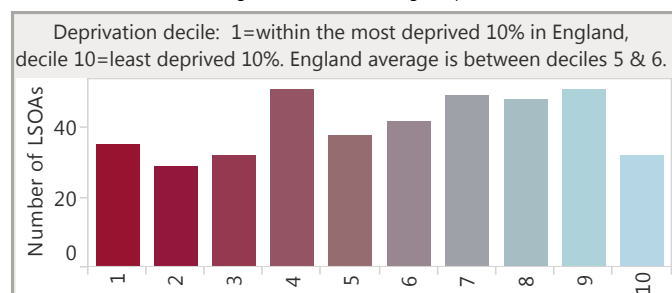
Despite Oxfordshire being a wealthy county, many children are living in deprivation, are not being offered the best opportunities, or are at risk.

As the most unaffordable city in England, many of Oxford's population are among the country's wealthiest. In contrast, more than 1 in 5 children in the city are living in poverty.

Disadvantage and poor educational attainment often walk hand in hand. The index for Education, Skills and Training for children and young people show 64 of Oxfordshire's areas to be in the 20% most deprived in England.



Education, Skills and Training: Children and Young People sub-domain



This shows that many children across the county are not achieving academically in comparison to the rest of the country. Although Oxford is world-renowned for its universities, for children in Key Stage 2 (age 7–11), the city ranks in the bottom 25% of districts nationally. This continues into secondary school, where there are persistently high rates of absence and expulsions.

As part of its 'Thriving Families' programme, Oxfordshire County Council will be working with more than 3,000 families that have at least two of the following problems:

- Children not attending school
- Adults out of work

- Families involved in anti-social behaviour or youth crime
- Children on child protection plans or Children in Need plans for neglect
- Domestic abuse
- Health issues, including substance misuse.

These signs of deprivation are concerning. In general, victims of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) tend to be from more deprived backgrounds, and are most often living with one or more of the 'toxic trio': parental mental health issues, domestic violence and parental substance misuse. All of this paints a very different picture to the idyllic rural or privileged childhood we might imagine when we think of families in Oxfordshire.

In May 2011, Thames Valley Police and Oxfordshire County Council launched Operation Bullfinch – an investigation into serious sexual offences against children across the county. As part of the inquiry 11 men have been convicted for offences including rape, trafficking and prostitution of girls as young as 11. Bullfinch has drawn our attention to the pervasiveness of CSE in Oxfordshire, and to the causes of the susceptibility of the victims.

"It beggars belief that men who claim to pride themselves on being family men, some with daughters of their own, could treat other people's daughters in this way, and that exploitation of children of this kind could persist for so long in 21st-century Britain. They treated the girls as less than human."

Lady Justice Hallett, Bullfinch judge

Another vulnerable and rarely discussed group is young carers. It is believed there are around 14,000 children in Oxfordshire who take care of parents, grandparents or siblings – often jeopardising their educational attainment and therefore their future life chances.

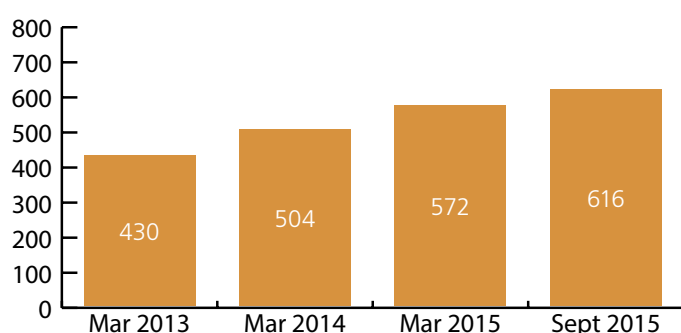
These findings demonstrate just how many childhoods are lost or stolen across Oxfordshire. The consequences can have a devastating effect on these children's futures. For this reason, we believe that safeguarding our children and giving them the best opportunity in life should be a focus of significant attention.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

During the 2014–15 academic year there were 5,278 referrals to Children's Services – more than 14 per day. Since Bullfinch, our understanding of safeguarding has improved, as the proportion of referrals being converted to Child Protection Plans (CPPs) has risen.

Children who have a Child Protection Plan are considered to be in need of protection from either physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, or a combination of two or more of these. The number of children subject to a CPP in Oxfordshire has steadily increased in recent years:

Children with CPP in Oxfordshire



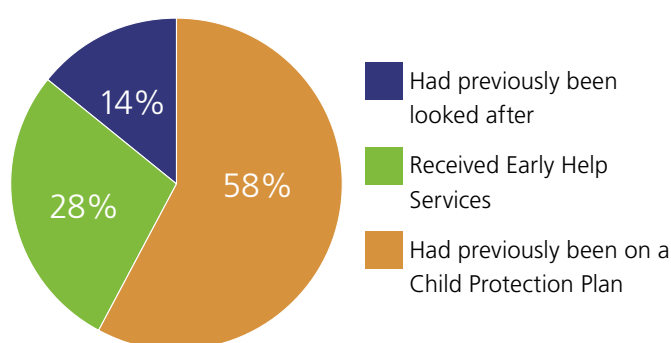
England generally has seen a rise in CPPs, but not to the extent seen in Oxfordshire. This rise is only comparable to other local authorities that have been through high-profile Child Sexual Exploitation cases such as Derby, Rochdale, Blackpool, Rotherham, Oldham, Torbay, Peterborough and Manchester. In Oxfordshire, 71% of children on protection plans are under 10 years old – a higher proportion than elsewhere.

The number of children with a CPP only shows part of the story. Thames Valley Police data shows that in 2013–14 there were 6,270 children recorded at 9,798 domestic abuse incidents involving children. 28% of these were involved in multiple incidents of domestic abuse.

Oxfordshire's Kingfisher Team, which protects children at risk of sexual exploitation, reports that, between its set-up in 2012 and February 2015, 287 at-risk children have been identified. Of these, the great majority are white girls. We know that there are barriers to children coming forward, particularly boys and children from minority ethnic groups – so the problem is likely to be significantly under-reported.

After exploring every possibility of protecting a child at home, the local authority will seek a parent's consent or a court decision to move a child away from their family home. Such decisions are only made when it is in the best interest of the child. In Oxfordshire there were 527 children in care at the end of March 2015, compared with 463 at the end of March 2014.

Children coming into care



Of these 500 or so children in care, nearly 70% are living with foster families. The local authority is aware of a further 46 children living in a privately arranged foster placement.

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS



Donnington Doorstep STEP OUT project

Doorstep is a family centre in East Oxford, used by around 80 visitors every day from an area of social and economic disadvantage with significant and visible social problems. Families and young people come from a wide range of ethnic, social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

In 2011 Doorstep set up the STEP OUT project after staff identified that girls in Oxford were being sexually exploited. The project offers outreach and one-to-one support, as well as advocacy and participation work to ensure the voices of the children and young people are heard, and preventative initiatives such as training for professionals and workshops on healthy relationships, CSE awareness, keeping safe and building self-esteem.

In 2015, only 21% of Doorstep's referrals came through statutory channels such as social care or the police, suggesting that a hidden need is being met at the heart of the local community.

Throughout our history, Oxfordshire Community Foundation has consistently supported Donnington Doorstep, awarding over £70,000 in grants since 1998.

No matter what a child is suffering – sexual abuse, domestic violence, physical or emotional abuse, or neglect – and no matter what their race, religion or age, deprivation appears to be a common characteristic. Sadly the consequences of all these forms of abuse tend to perpetuate a vicious circle: the abused suffer mental health problems, are more likely to misuse drugs or alcohol, struggle or fail in education, and so continue to live life in deprivation. Children of the abused are far more likely to be abused in turn – not necessarily by their parents, but due to their inherent vulnerability.

Referrals of abuse and support of the victims are provided by the public sector at schools, through the health service and social services, at children's centres and at early intervention hubs. However, government spending on some of these services is likely to be cut in the coming months and years.



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS



Children's Centres consultation

Due to significant budget cuts, Oxfordshire County Council recently voted to withdraw financial support for Children's Centres that offer universal services for families. These services are accepted as essential to reducing the number of children and families whose cases are escalated to statutory social services, requiring long-term, complex and costly support.

During the consultation process, Oxfordshire Community Foundation engaged with stakeholders across the county, including county commissioners; health and social care providers; voluntary sector service delivery partners; service users; and centre managers and staff. OCF will continue to build these partnerships.

We will support community-based solutions that: preserve universal, preventative services; avoid loss of contact with vulnerable families; and protect the physical spaces in which these services are delivered.

This can be achieved by identifying and sharing good practice; involving community and voluntary organisations in the running of family centres; and accessing funding streams not available to the public sector, such as trusts and foundations and private philanthropy.

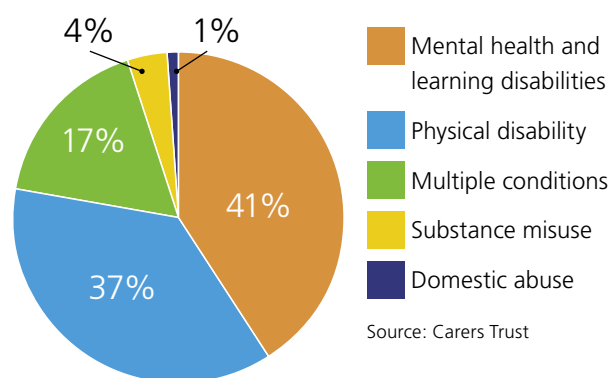
YOUNG CARERS

Young carers are children under 18 years of age who often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult.

These responsibilities can include:

- Helping to give someone their medicine
- Physical care, such as helping someone out of bed
- Personal care, such as helping someone to dress or wash
- Managing the family budget and collecting prescriptions
- Practical tasks, such as cooking, housework and shopping.

Reasons for people being cared for in Oxfordshire



In Oxfordshire there were 2,272 identified young carers in March 2015. This number has increased by 63% since March 2012. Estimates based on census data reveal that there may be as many as 12,000 further, unidentified young carers in Oxfordshire.

Among young carers in Oxfordshire, there is a prevalence for children to come from an economically deprived family (46%), or an ethnic minority background (16%).

While there are over 2,000 young carers on record, only one in three of these has benefited from statutory support in the past year – leaving a huge list of children awaiting support

Number of young carers receiving support

Academic stage	Number of young carers
Foundation (age 4–5)	6
Primary – Key Stages 1 and 2 (age 5–11)	269
Secondary – Key Stages 3 and 4 (age 11–16)	332
Further education (age 16–19)	98
Young adults (19–25)	24
TOTAL	729

Source: Oxfordshire Young Carers Service

Shouldering the responsibility of caring for another can put enormous pressure on these young people. The task can be immensely time consuming – in the UK, nearly 20% of 5–17 year-olds do at least 20 hours per week, with some doing more than 50. These hours, together with the time spent worrying about the person they care for, often affect their education. In Oxfordshire:

- Around a third of young carers have school attendance below 85%.
- Young carers are 13% less likely to achieve Level 4 or higher at Key Stage 2, and 22% less likely to gain five or more A* to C GCSEs.
- 38% of young carers are identified as having Special Educational Needs – likely to be as a result of time spent away from the classroom.

These difficulties also translate into problems later in life, when young carers in the 16-to-19 age group are significantly more likely to be NEET (not in education, employment or training).

This can have a detrimental effect on carers' mental health. One survey found that 75% of young carers experienced depression or stress in the previous year; and the 2011 census found that young carers providing more than 50 hours of care per week were up to five times more likely to report their health as "Not Good".



Photo: Damian Halliwell

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS



Be Free Young Carers

Be Free YC offers free, friendly, confidential advice and support to young carers. As well as a sympathetic ear and emotional support, trips are organised to give young carers a break from their responsibilities and help them socialise with other young carers. They are a place to turn to for financial or practical advice, and offer a safe haven for children who may find it impossible to relax, experience stress and pressure, or find their situation embarrassing to discuss with their peers.

Since 1997 OCF has supported Be Free YC with nearly 20 separate grants totalling over £66,000.

"We are seeing a worryingly high proportion of young carers developing mental health issues due to the impact of their caring roles."

John Tabor, Manager Be Free Young Carers

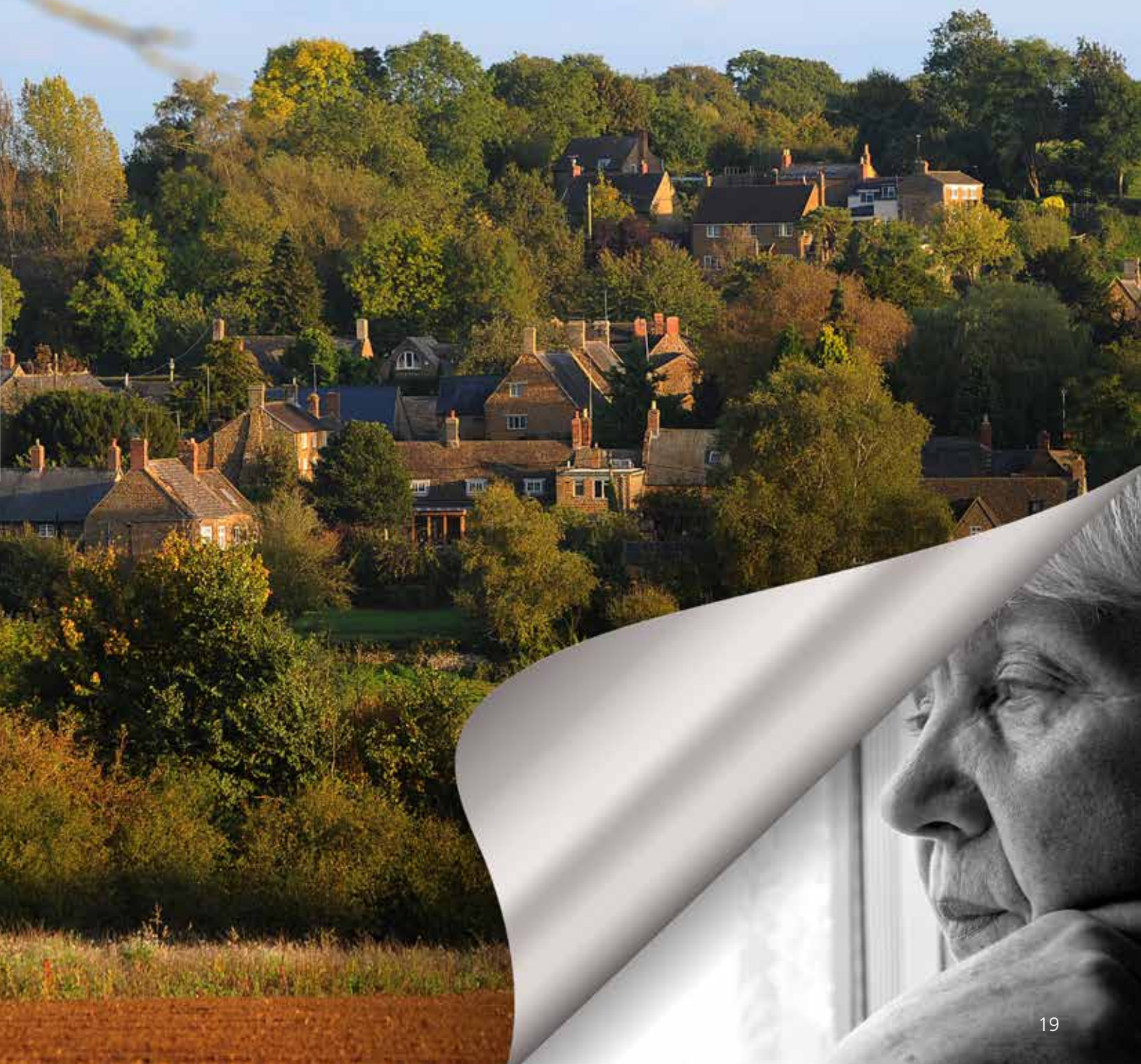
Since April 2015, new laws under the Children and Families Act and the Care Act have placed responsibility on authorities to actively identify young carers and support them. However, identification is not easy, and as social care budgets are being cut and home help is being withdrawn from many adults, it is likely that more children are going to be pushed into caring roles.

Young carers value a number of sources of support because they make a positive difference to their mental health. For example, counselling and practical help from a professional support worker, or flexibility and understanding from their school.

The delivery of these services, in particular ones that take a 'whole-family' approach, require joined-up working between young carers services, mental health services, schools and charitable groups.

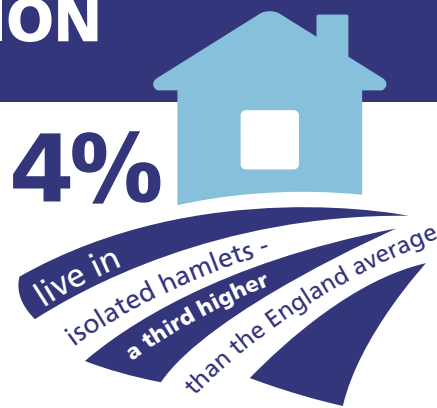
We are concerned that there is a significant lack of support available for young carers. These young people risk becoming vulnerable adults, more prone to deprivation and even exploitation.

LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

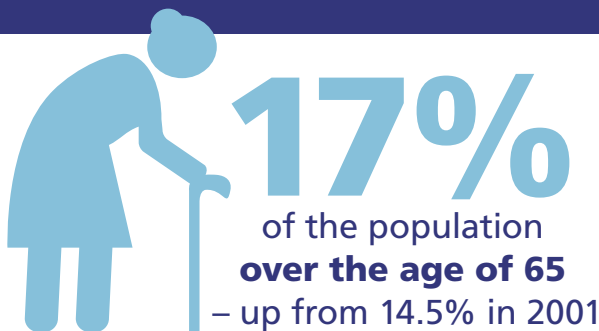


In Oxfordshire...

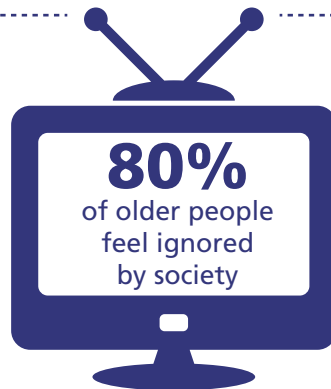
RURAL ISOLATION



LONELINESS IN OLDER PEOPLE



30,000
over-65s
living alone



Number of people aged 85+



projected to double
over the next two decades

VULNERABLE MINORITIES



People with learning disabilities
are 58 times more likely
to die before the age of 50

16%
ethnic minorities in
Oxfordshire vs 35% in Oxford city

ANALYSIS

Oxfordshire has some inherent geographical and demographic characteristics that make its population vulnerable to isolation and loneliness.

Firstly, it is the most rural county of South East England. There is a preponderance of people living in small hamlets – especially in South Oxfordshire.

Secondly, Oxfordshire has an ageing population. Between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, the number of over-65s grew from 14.5% to 16% of the population. This trend is likely to continue, with the number of people aged over 85 projected to double over the next two decades. Older people who experience high levels of isolation are almost twice as likely to die within six years compared with those who feel engaged in relationships and the community.

Thirdly, the immigrant population is growing. About two thirds of Oxfordshire's population growth is down to immigration (the other third due to births exceeding deaths). In 2014 net international migrants totalled 3,712.

And finally, there is a significant minority living with disabilities. Because one in six people are living with a disability or impairment, and a high proportion of people are living alone, there is a great demand for care from local services, charities and families.

The chances of premature death are raised by 30% for those who are lonely

Isolation and loneliness are different but interrelated concepts:

ISOLATION	LONELINESS
Limited geographical access to services such as shops, hospitals and post offices	Personal, subjective sense of lacking affection, closeness, and social interaction

Clearly, factors inherent to particular neighbourhoods result in a high degree of isolation, and this in turn can lead to loneliness, with a huge impact on mental and physical health.

Some of the health risks associated with loneliness include:

- Depression and suicide
- Cardiovascular disease and stroke
- Increased stress levels
- Decreased memory and learning
- Poor decision-making
- Alcoholism and drug abuse
- Faster progression of dementia.

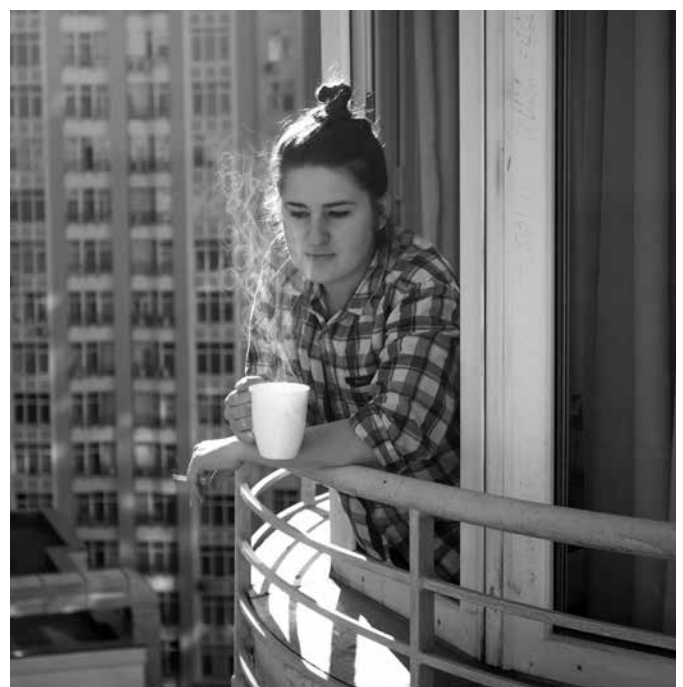
Recent medical research has shown the effects of loneliness to be as detrimental to health as:

- Smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Not exercising.

It is also thought to be twice as harmful as obesity.

The demographic pressures and consequences of loneliness increase demand for both health and social services. A national survey of GPs in 2013 found that three quarters saw up to five people per day who they thought had come in mainly because they were lonely. It is a concern to us that our sense of neighbourliness or compassion seems to have waned.

Despite the complex and harmful effects of loneliness, some of the preventative and curative measures that have been the most effective are surprisingly simple. Befriending services and activity groups, to keep isolated people active and socialising, can cost around £80 per person per year, and result in monetary savings of around £300 per person per year just by reducing the rate of depression. This means that for every pound spent on services such as these, society could be saving almost £4 – as well as helping communities to build stronger links, and promoting genuine wellbeing.



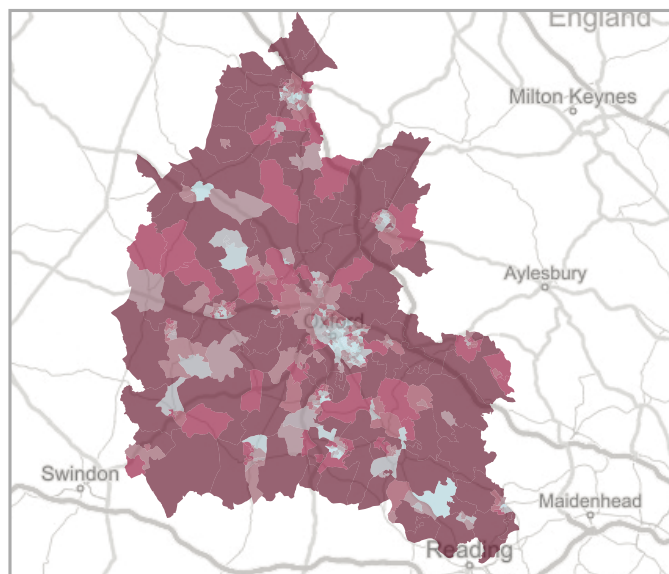
OLDER PEOPLE

Generally, people are living longer, with more people than ever living beyond 100. This has obvious implications for where people live and who takes care of them. Oxfordshire is distinctive because the rural nature of the county exacerbates access to services, and therefore associated feelings of loneliness.

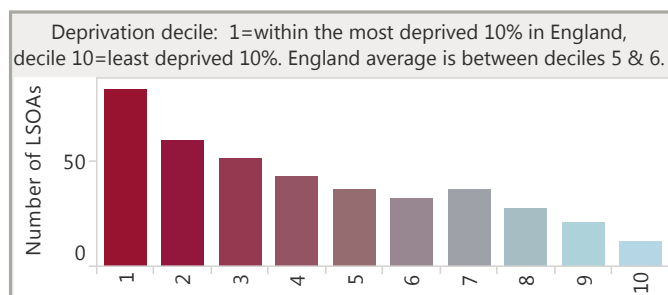
There are 16,200 over-85s in Oxfordshire – a figure predicted to double by 2030.

In 2011, around a third of over-65s lived alone. Based on current trends, the number of older people living alone could be as many as 50,000 by 2024.

Older people are more likely to live in rural areas of Oxfordshire than other age groups. The proportion of older people living in rural areas (41.5%) is higher than the average (39%). Added to this, IMD analysis shows that the majority of Oxfordshire's rural areas are among the 20% most deprived in England in terms of geographical barriers to services:



Barriers to Housing and Services: Geographical Barriers sub-domain



All of this paints a picture of isolated areas where the population is skewed towards older age, with little age diversity and few informal community connections between people of different generations. This is a challenge when 30% of rural households

in Oxfordshire are over one hour's travel time from the nearest hospital, and 41% of pensioner households in Oxfordshire have no access to a car.



TV or pets are the main source of company for half of older people across the UK

Among over-65s living alone in Oxfordshire, over half have a long-term health problem or disability. The transition to living alone in later life (primarily due to the death of a partner) makes them susceptible to psychological distress.

A significant number of older people report being limited in their daily activities – nearly half of over-65s and over 80% of over-85s. These proportions can only increase according to the population projections for Oxfordshire. This will present a significant challenge for the already-stretched local medical and social services.

In the UK, eight people a day are being buried by their local council after dying with no known friends or relatives

Many of the services required by the older population are provided by local or national government. However, as we have seen in the previous section, the recruitment and retention of medical and social care staff in Oxfordshire can be problematic due to the cost of housing locally.

“Loneliness is now recognised as an additional risk to health in old age.”

Dr Jonathan McWilliam, Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire

The prevention of loneliness in the elderly population is not strictly the responsibility of the state, and has generally fallen on the community. Over recent years we have seen our communities change, especially in rural locations. Many villages and towns in Oxfordshire have become ‘dormitory towns’, where a high proportion of the population, due to escalated urban house prices, commute from their homes on a daily basis. Village halls, community centres, sports clubs and pubs have closed down, or are not open during the daytime.

Nonetheless, charities and community groups are still integral to supporting the elderly and combating loneliness, as well as building social cohesion and community spirit. In Oxfordshire, these are very diverse – ranging from lunch and activity clubs, to classes and befriending services – but provision can be patchy or fragmented, depending largely on the initiative and goodwill of individual community members. These initiatives need the encouragement and support of local funders if they are to equip themselves to combat the serious fall-out of loneliness amongst the elderly.



VULNERABLE MINORITIES

Ethnic minorities

The ethnic diversity of the population in Oxfordshire varies dramatically from district to district. Oxford city’s population is 35% minority ethnic, but Oxfordshire as a whole is only 16%.

Ethnic minorities – those who identify as anything other than “White British or Irish” on the census – may feel segregated from the majority population, and are at risk of feeling isolated and lonely. Ethnic minorities may suffer higher rates of loneliness, with loneliness rates of up to 50% reported in some studies.

Given that around two-thirds of population growth in the county is due to inward migration from other countries, the ethnic minority population is likely to grow. This would suggest that nurturing community support that helps them directly would be a useful investment in the future.

Some of this immigration consists of students coming to Oxford University and Oxford Brookes, particularly from nations such as the USA and China. While international students and those from countries that have established communities in Oxford will not be immune to loneliness, they will be at lower risk.



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS



Dance to Health

The Dance to Health project runs intensive, age-appropriate dance classes for older people to improve strength, stamina and balance, thereby preventing the falls and accidents that can set an older person back.

Dance to Health is so successful because it ‘smuggles’ physiotherapy routines into a fun, sociable and ongoing activity for older people, focusing both on immediate improvement and ongoing maintenance of stability. Oxfordshire Community Foundation has helped establish the national pilot by supporting classes at the Health and Wellbeing Centre in Abingdon, with other sessions happening in Banbury.

Those who are most vulnerable to isolation, loneliness and deprivation are refugees, arriving from troubled countries often with great cultural differences to our own. They face numerous barriers to making a home, starting a new life and integrating themselves into our community: language, accommodation, education, racial discrimination, childcare, mental health, training or cultural barriers.



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS



Sanctuary Hosting

Sanctuary Hosting is a project that matches destitute sanctuary-seekers to people with spare rooms in the community, who are prepared to allow someone to stay with them rent free for a pre-defined period of time. Formerly Oxford City of Sanctuary, Sanctuary Hosting has now re-formed in response to the refugee and migrant crisis affecting Europe.

In September 2015, Oxford City Council unanimously passed the proposal to accept at least 60 Syrian refugees into the local community, with the first families arriving in December. The city council is working closely with Sanctuary Hosting and other refugee charities to support them, and Oxfordshire Community Foundation is backing the new initiative with an emergency grant of £5,000.

Oxford has a tradition of welcoming and supporting refugees. In light of the recent refugee crisis across Europe, there is an appetite among the community to keep this tradition going. Local funders and strategists should be aware of groups that support people of specific nationalities, and multicultural groups who run programmes of education, socialising, training and activities.

Many of the services required focus on issues specific to women or men, or on different religious or language communities. These issues are sometimes the most hidden, or thought not to occur in Oxfordshire. For example, a new group, Oxford Against Cutting, has formed to help prevent female genital mutilation (FGM) of girls and women living in Oxfordshire.

In 2014–15, Oxfordshire charity Asylum Welcome supported 82 unaccompanied young asylum seekers and refugees, with 30 of them regularly attending their weekly youth club

Disabled people

Those with disabilities are another significant minority often susceptible to becoming isolated from the community. There are an estimated 114,300 people living with a disability or impairment in Oxfordshire.

Impairment type	Number*
Mobility	62,900
Stamina/breathing/fatigue	43,400
Dexterity	32,000
Mental health	20,600
Memory	18,300
Hearing	16,000
Vision	14,900
Learning	13,700
Social/behavioural	6,900
Other	17,100

*Extrapolated from Family Resources Survey data
Source: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
Many people have multiple impairments.



Mental illness
affects one in four
of us in our lifetime



Many types of disability are hidden or not immediately obvious. This means that it can be more challenging for people affected by these disabilities to get help. For example, mental health is an under-funded and under-supported area:

- One in five people receiving benefits in Oxfordshire are on benefits for a reason directly related to their mental health.
- In Oxford city, 54% of people on incapacity benefit/severe disability allowance have mental health problems.
- Less than 25% of disabled people with mental health problems are in employment.

People with learning disabilities do not receive the same standard of healthcare as everyone else. According to Oxfordshire disability advocacy charity My Life My Choice, they are 58 times more likely to die before the age of 50, and four times more likely to have a preventable cause of death.

Apart from those with the most severe disabilities, the majority of the disabled population seek a greater degree of independence and want to feel they are contributing members of the community. Pioneering community groups working to reduce marginalisation and increase the integration of disabled people in Oxfordshire are looking to become increasingly self-sustaining – but they need our support in order to achieve this. This is likely to involve significant, bold infrastructure funding, as well as cross-community collaboration.



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS



FarmAbility

FarmAbility runs a day service for adults with autism and learning disabilities, based on a working livestock farm in Wytham. Participants are trained as co-farmers, learning to take part in purposeful activities such as egg collecting and grading, growing vegetables, caring for farm animals and carrying out seasonal farm tasks.

Co-farmers can undertake accredited courses, traineeships and apprenticeships, building confidence and equipping them for a more independent future.

OCF has supported the charity with several funding opportunities over the past few years – in particular a large infrastructure grant from our Step Change Fund that is helping them scale up their operation to reach more beneficiaries.

A photograph of two women in traditional Indian attire, likely performing a ritual. They are wearing green and yellow sarees with gold borders and jewelry. They have white flower garlands in their hair and are looking down at the ground. The word "CONCLUSION" is overlaid in large white letters.

CONCLUSION

Oxfordshire has some impressive headline wealth, education and health figures. By sharing this report, we hope to reveal that there are also some serious social problems and stark deprivation. This inequality is both a sign and a cause of the fragmentation of community, which has a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of everyone.

Deprivation, the key underlying factor of the issues, can take many forms: income and wealth, barriers to services, health, education, housing, crime, etc. The overall IMD rankings may show few areas of Oxfordshire to be deprived, but by drilling down further we see that there are still fewer areas free from all deprivation of one kind or another. Through our work and this research we have seen the complex interconnectivity of the issues. While a problem may appear only to be present in one area or for one section of society, it will affect the whole of Oxfordshire.

The social problems we have identified are pressing – and they are just the tip of the iceberg. We would like to do a lot more to address them, and fast.

We believe that the stronger a community is, the better life is for everyone. And we believe that the solutions to the problems Oxfordshire faces will come from within our community.

Community-based solutions

There are over 4,000 charities and community groups in Oxfordshire. The people working and volunteering for these organisations are helping vulnerable people day in, day out, and are often those who have the greatest understanding of their needs. They are also those who have the expertise, compassion and imagination to come up with impactful community-based solutions. Our work at the community foundation over the past 20 years has connected us to the networks of people and relationships needed to address the problems we have highlighted here.

Recently, we have seen drastic cuts to statutory funding, and to some of the services that local government provides. Less funding and a greater demand on services is a challenge to the charitable sector; but necessity is the mother of invention. The present climate is an opportunity for the charitable sector to embrace greater collaboration, share its expertise; deliver its services more efficiently, and create new solutions in partnership with the whole community.

The Oxfordshire community is made up of all three sectors of society: public (national and local government), private (businesses and individuals) and third (charitable and community organisations). All sectors have a part to play in providing community-based solutions to the social problems of Oxfordshire. To be more successful, there needs to be greater collaboration within and across all sectors for the common good.

The role of philanthropy

Philanthropy is the desire to promote the welfare of others. This includes the generous donation of money to good causes, but it is also so much more than that.

Throughout history philanthropy has developed and provided solutions to many of society's problems. The Victorian age saw George Peabody start a housing association, Thomas Barnardo set up his children's charity, and George Cadbury develop Bourneville for the welfare of his workers. These were not simple acts of donating large sums of money, but the convening of resources to create a community movement of compassion.

The twentieth century saw the growth of the welfare state, which displaced some of the need for philanthropy. A reliance on the state to provide seems to have led us to forget how communities looked after themselves in the past.

We believe that Oxfordshire has the collective resources to do for our county's community what Bill Gates is doing for the global community.



Taking action

Building a stronger community with fewer social problems and a more secure future is no small task. We certainly cannot do it alone. We want to use what we have learnt in this report to inform our development as a community foundation, equipping us to advise donors and partner funders where to invest – so that together, we can move towards our vision of a better life for everyone in Oxfordshire.

What follows is the approach we plan to take: a five-point plan that we believe we can deliver, and that will take us a big step in the right direction.

1. Continue to research and develop our knowledge of Oxfordshire's voluntary sector and key social and community problems
2. Convene local groups and charities and work in partnership with them to develop community-based solutions
3. Identify opportunities to fund larger, preventative projects
4. Combine resources with other grant-making organisations from public, private and third sectors to invest in community solutions
5. Inspire local philanthropy and work proactively with donors to relieve deprivation

How you can help

If you have been surprised by the findings in this report, or inspired by our community goals, we want to hear from you. Please get in touch with us now if you feel you can help with one or more of the actions on our five-point plan.

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We are indebted to **Oxfordshire County Council**, which manages the indispensable Oxfordshire Insights tool, and publishes the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). Oxfordshire Insights and the JSNA have provided the information and statistics that are the foundations of this document.

Many more individual people (far too many to list!) have talked to and encouraged us with the research and thinking behind Oxfordshire Uncovered. We are very grateful to them all, and pleased to be well connected with such a thoughtful community of people.

We would also like to thank the organisations below, especially their employees and volunteers, who have helped us add greater depth to this document.

Thank you.

360 Giving
Age UK Oxfordshire
Barnardo's
Be Free Young Carers
Big Issue Foundation
Carers Oxfordshire
Carers Trust
Cherwell District Council
Community foundations of Berkshire, Leeds, Milton Keynes, Surrey, Sussex and Wiltshire
Crisis
Donnington Doorstep
Hunts
Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Oxford Brookes University
Oxford City Council
Oxford Homeless Pathways
Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA)
Oxfordshire Young Carers Service
Shelter
South Oxfordshire District Council
Thames Valley Police
The Student Consultancy
University of Oxford
UK Community Foundations (UKCF)
Vale of White Horse District Council
West Oxfordshire District Council

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A full list of web links to these sources is available on request. Please email marketing@oxfordshire.org or visit our website www.oxfordshire.org.

“A reality check, which I think accurately paints the picture of life in the county. This is the first time I have seen such a holistic document describing life in Oxfordshire, and it will undoubtedly inform some of our decision making.”

Andy Boyd,
Chief Superintendent, Thames Valley Police

“An excellent report which deftly talks about the care gap that needs to be addressed in our communities.”

Jonathan McWilliam,
Director of Public Health, Oxfordshire County Council



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