

FOSTERING DIGITAL INCLUSION IN OXFORDSHIRE

Findings and recommendations

for



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report evaluates the scale of digital exclusion in Oxfordshire. It considers two key factors influencing digital exclusion:

1. Access to electronic devices, such as laptops and tablets.
2. Broadband connectivity.

The report then recommends ways of resolving the problem through harnessing the power of local communities. Recommendations are informed by surveys disseminated to the student body and Oxford's libraries, faculties and colleges, and by interviews with and research into local charities.

Main Findings

1. **Approximately 9,377 devices are needed** for disadvantaged children in Oxfordshire.
2. **The highest percentage of areas with low connectivity is concentrated within West Oxfordshire.**
3. **Half of the schools with high deprivation are within Oxford City.**
4. There are **676 postcodes in Oxfordshire where 50% or more of premises cannot access USO-level internet speed**
5. There are **101 postcodes in Oxfordshire where none of the premises are able to access at least 2 Mbps of data.**
6. **39% of Oxford students surveyed own an unused laptop or tablet**, and majority are enthusiastic about donating them to OCF.
7. Most departments and libraries of Oxford University surveyed had few or no unused devices, however **some respondents with high number of unused devices expressed interest in donating.**

Key Recommendations

1. **Involve student volunteers from Oxford University.** This is to foster an interest in the project among the student body, encouraging them to donate devices and seek funding from their colleges.
2. **Create a network of organisations in Oxfordshire.** Implement a businesses model that connects those with the knowledge of the refurbishment process with organisations that recruit volunteers from different sections of the local community.
3. **Mobilise existing charities with suitable capacity.** Partner with charities that run delivery services and have warehousing capacity to assist with the storage and transportation of devices.
4. **Make contact with school authorities and children's charities in High Deprivation areas.** This will be helpful to assess the need for devices within specific districts of Oxfordshire and ensure long-term support is available for the beneficiaries.

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1. Introduction

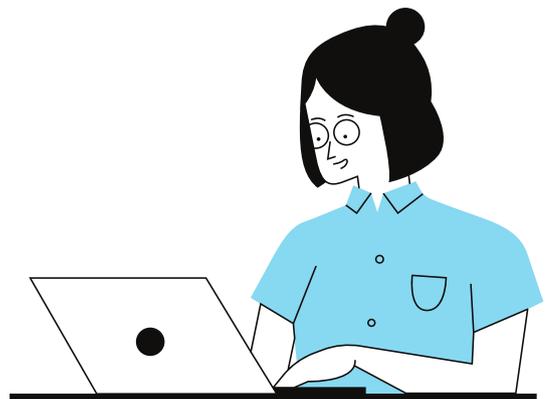
The onset of Covid 19 in March 2020 prompted a dramatic change in UK education policy, with remote learning replacing in-class teaching for all but the children of essential workers. Analysing the impact of the shift to online learning on UK schools, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has suggested that it is the most disadvantaged pupils who have been the least engaged with online learning, with a study* showing that,

- Schools with the highest levels of pupil deprivation (those in the highest free school meal quintile) report 13 percentage point lower levels of pupil engagement compared to schools in the middle quintile.
- Teachers in the most deprived schools report 30% of pupils returning their last piece of work, compared to 49% of pupils in the least deprived schools.
- Teachers report that the following proportions of pupils are less engaged in remote learning than their classmates:
 - Pupils with limited access to IT and/or study space (81%)
 - Vulnerable pupils (62%)
 - Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (58%)
 - Pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding (52%)
 - Young carers (48%)

In summary of the report, director of the NFER stated that:

The shift to remote learning during lockdown has made the implications of children and young people's unequal access to IT equipment and connectivity even more stark. It has also highlighted sharp disparities in the extent to which students are engaging with their school work away from classrooms.

Engaging with the issues highlighted by the NFER study, this report will clarify the extent of digital exclusion in the education of students aged 5-16, specifically within the Oxfordshire area, on behalf of the Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF). It will estimate the scale of the problem in different districts of Oxfordshire, before offering recommendations as to how OCF can harness the power of the local community to minimise the extent of Oxfordshire's digital deficit.



Part 1 of this report will provide an estimate for the size of the problem in Oxfordshire, providing:

- An estimate for the number of children in Oxfordshire lacking adequate resources to engage in online learning, thereby suggesting a rough figure for how many devices might be required.
- Details on the extent of broadband connectivity across Oxfordshire, highlighting areas of weaker connection.

Part 2 will address the practicalities of project implementation, proposing a business model that could be enacted by the project manager that OCF appoints to oversee this venture. It will include:

- A brief overview of the refurbishment process.
- A model of the implementation process, drawing together different community organisations that OCF could employ to strengthen the effectiveness of the project. Sectors of the community from which the donations pipeline might be supplied.

We used two main methods of collecting data for this report. First, we created surveys and disseminated them to University of Oxford students and staff and local charities, in Oxfordshire. The surveys consist of close-ended questions with a 4-point rating system for each.

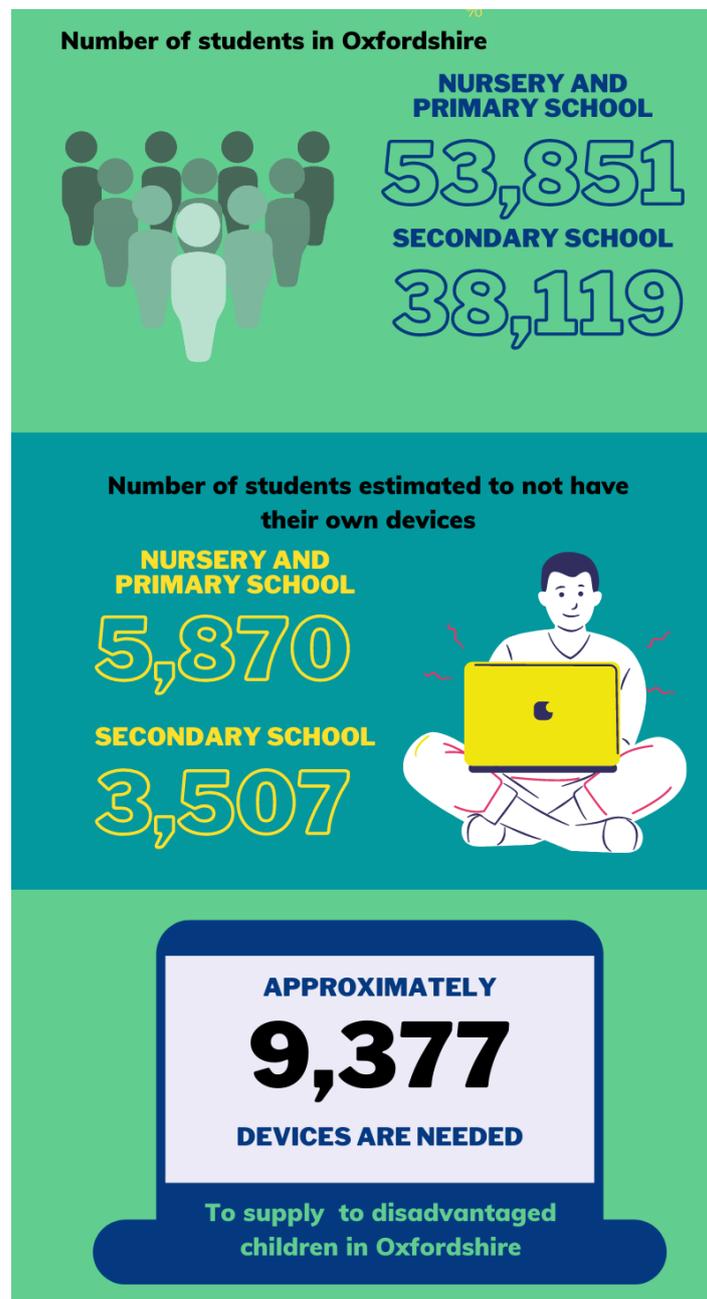
We also interviewed some charities directly through phone calls, e-mails and Facebook chat. Secondary data was obtained from those published online on official sites.

We had hoped to contact several multi-academy trusts and local businesses operating in the Oxfordshire area, but unfortunately, due to the time constraints of this report, we were unable to gather responses.

2. The Scale of Digital Exclusion in School-Aged Children in Oxfordshire

2.1. Analysing Device Ownership of School-Aged Children in Oxfordshire

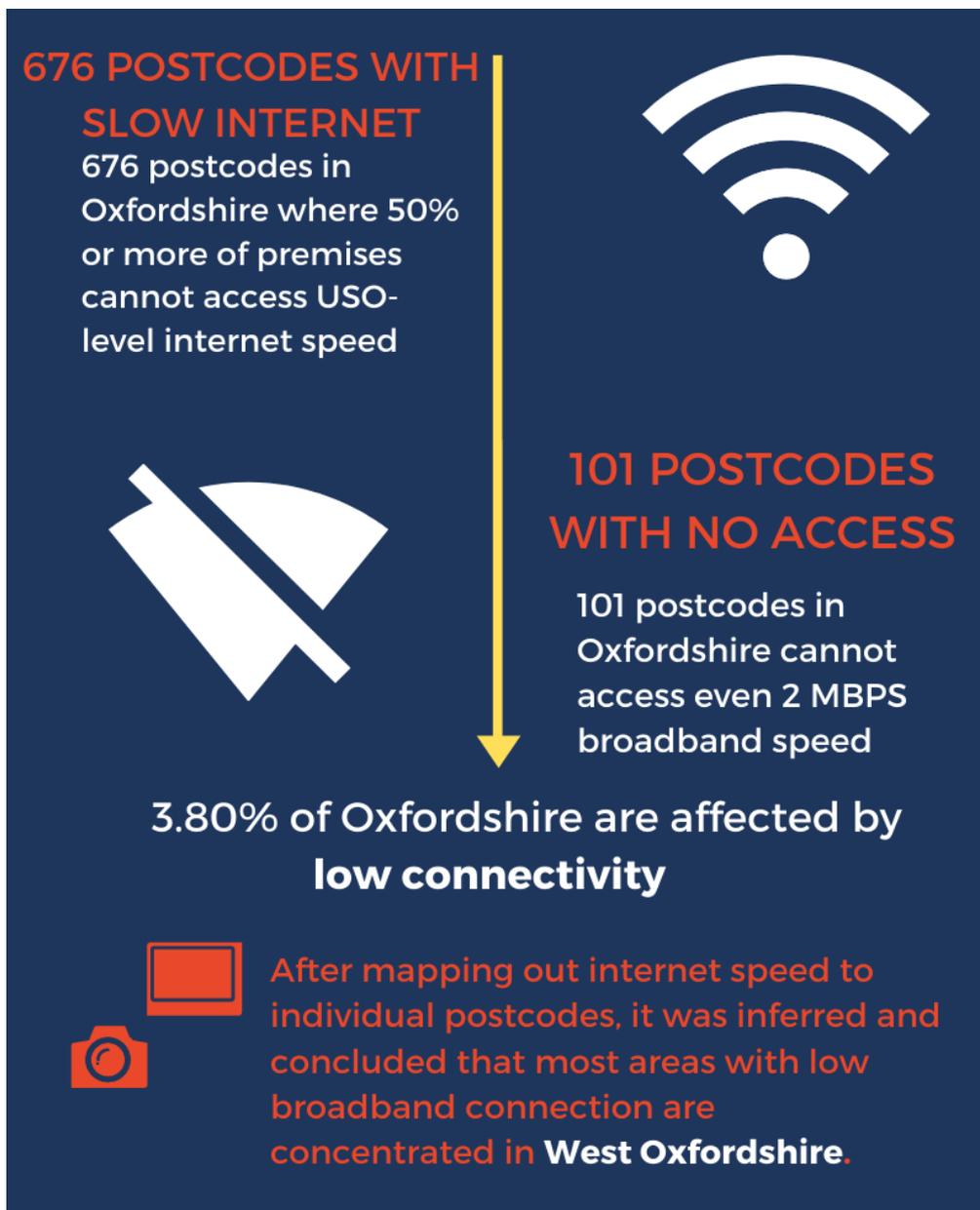
To estimate the number of devices that would need to be sourced for our target demographic, we have used data reflecting the percentage of students eligible for free school meals in Oxfordshire as a proxy against the total number of pupils in all schools in Oxfordshire. We expect that the actual numbers would be much higher than this due to the additional financial difficulties brought on by the pandemic to families.



2.2. Internet Coverage in Oxfordshire

- There are **676 postcodes** in Oxfordshire where 50% or more of premises cannot access USO*-level internet speed.
- There are **101 postcodes** in Oxfordshire where none of the premises are able to access at least 2 Mbps broadband speed.

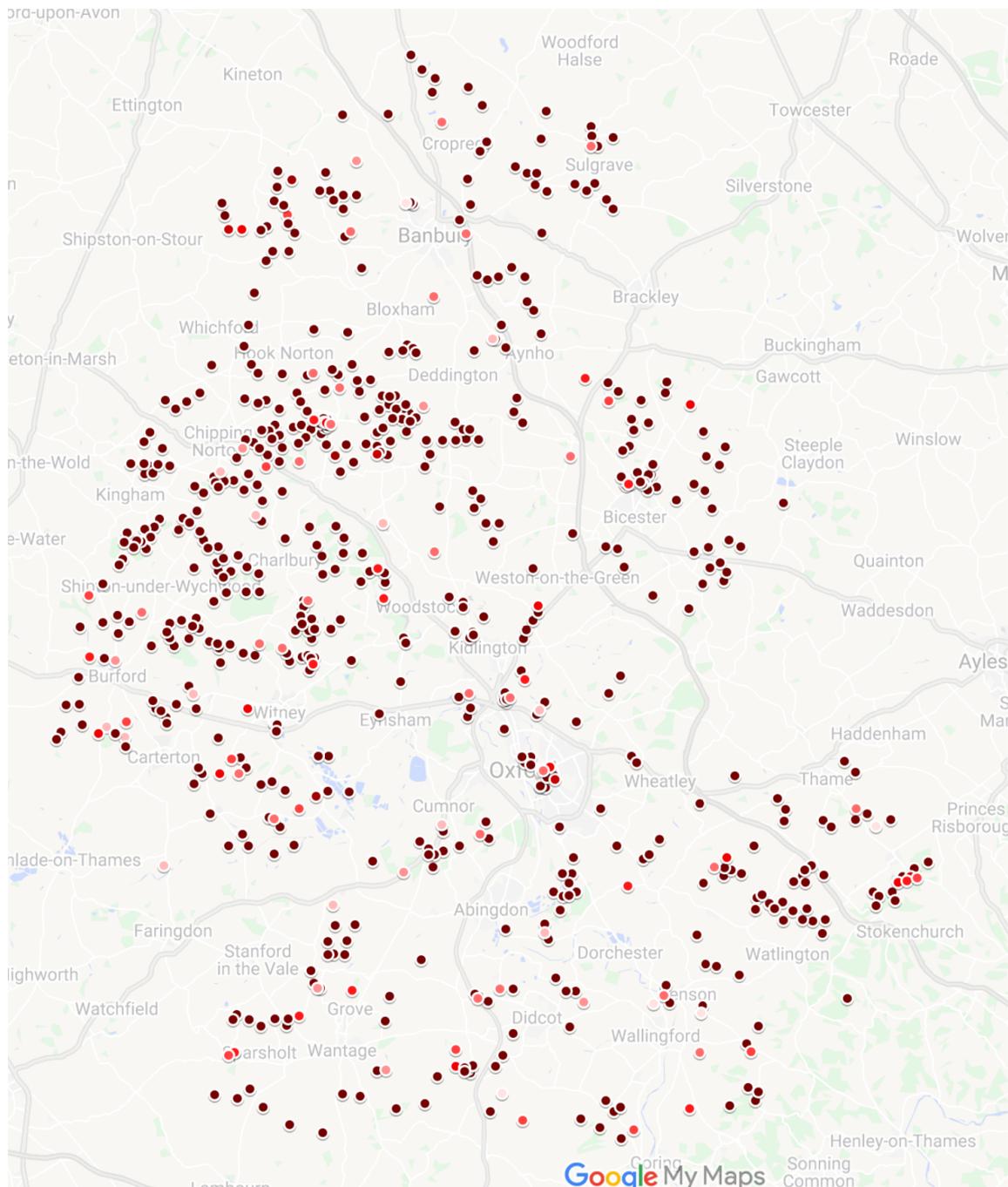
This indicates that approximately 3.8% of the areas in Oxfordshire are affected by low connectivity*. Although this is relatively low when compared to the national average, this also means that those without access to Internet in Oxfordshire will be more deeply excluded from the rest of the community resulting in much deeper digital divide. By mapping out internet speed to individual postcodes, we could detect that most areas with low broadband connection are concentrated in West Oxfordshire (Figure 1 and 2).



*USO-level is the service level proposed by the UK Government, defined as access to a download speed greater than 10Mbps and an upload speed greater than 1Mbps, and is due to be a legal right by 2020

*All data is based on Ofcon's Connected Nation's Spring Report 2019

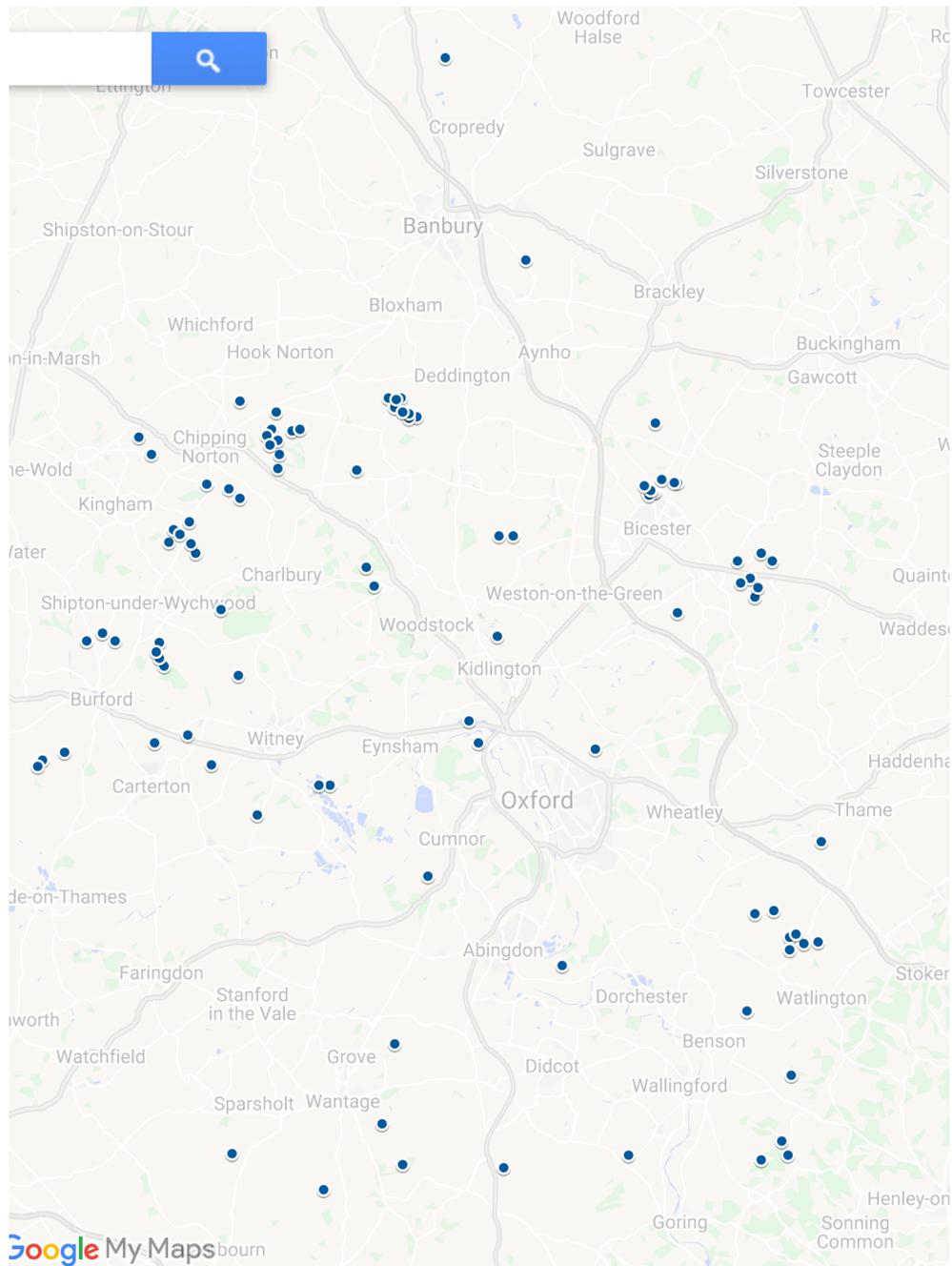
Figure 1. Postcodes where > 50% of premises are not able to meet the Universal Service Obligation speed



Legend (%)

- 53.3 - 60 (24)
- 63.6 - 76.9 (41)
- 77.8 - 88.9 (27)
- 89.7 - 100 (583)

Figure 2. Postcodes where no premises can access services above 2Mbit/s



2.3. Areas of High Priority in Oxfordshire

Using data on internet coverage combined with Deprivation Index*, we have mapped the areas in Oxfordshire where school children are more likely to be digitally excluded (Figure 3). We found that:

1. The area with the highest percentage of areas with low connectivity is **West Oxfordshire**.
2. Half of the schools with high deprivation are within **Oxford City** (Table 1).

From our findings, we suggest that **broadband connectivity is not the most pressing problem for online learning**. Most schools with disadvantaged students are located in the most highly connected district (Oxford City), so provision of devices and free /affordable data plans should be prioritised. However, the relatively high percentages of both deprived schools and areas with low internet speed in Cherwell is quite concerning. We recommend incorporating some measures to increase internet speed here alongside providing devices. It is important to note that not all beneficiaries will be concentrated in these highlighted areas - deprivation indices only show deprivation relative to other small areas. - community partnership (e.g. with local charities and schools) will be important to identify disadvantaged individuals outside this range.

Table 1. The table below shows the percentage of areas with low connectivity and the percentage of schools with high deprivation index within each District Council in the county.

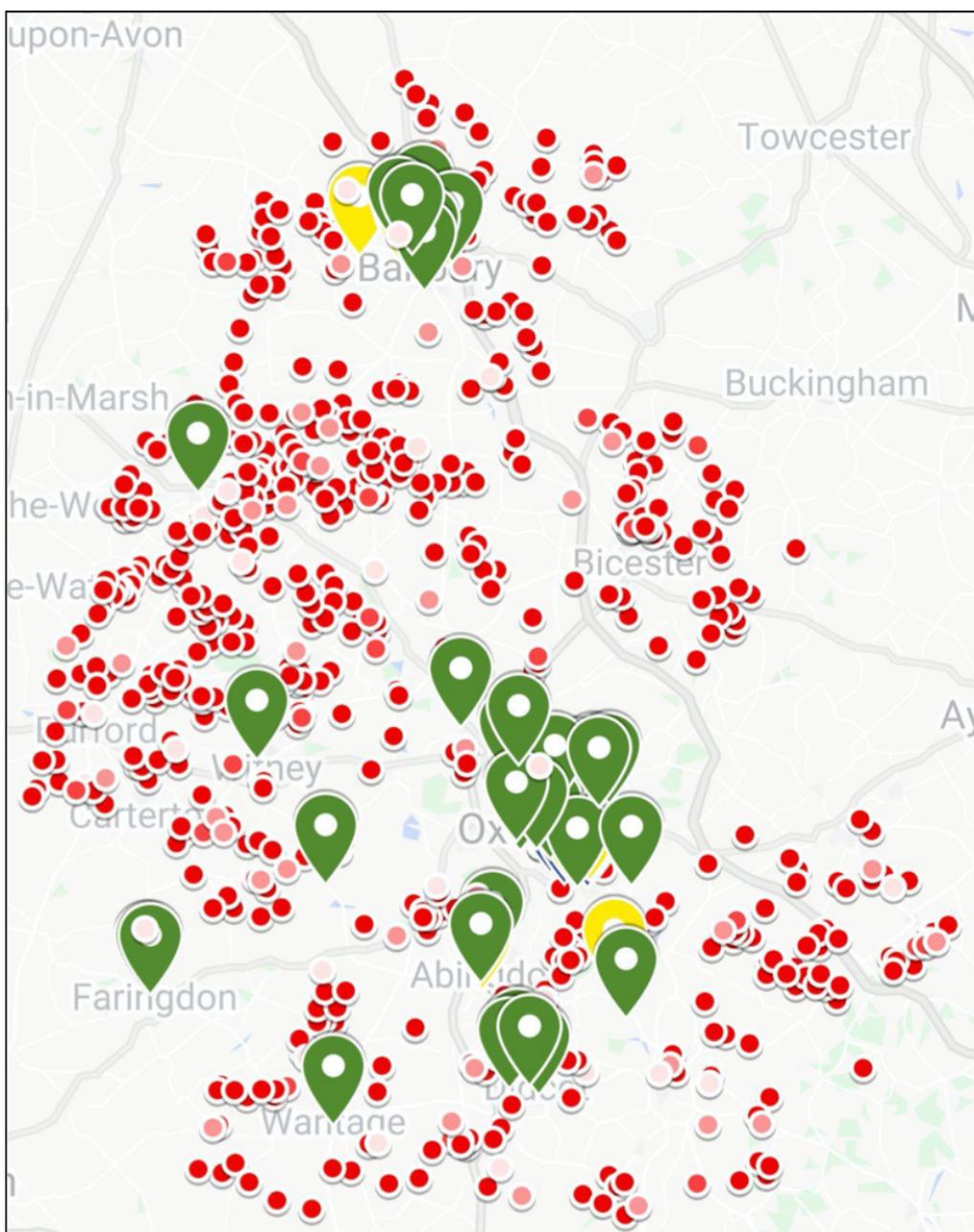
District Council	Percentage of Postcodes with no premises with access to USO level internet (%)	Percentage of schools with Deprivation Index between 3-5 (%)
Oxford City	5.4	50
South Oxfordshire	16.1	10.9
Vale of White Horse	9.7	9.4
West Oxfordshire	41.4	4.7
Cherwell	28	23.4

Specific details on the name and location of schools can be accessed in a Google Map here:

https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1omqKODDHOVUh-vIY-G_xmJnoq0MUWIqn&usp=sharing

*Deprivation is based on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) 2015. The deprivation of a provider is based on the mean of the deprivation indices associated with the home postcodes of the pupils attending the school rather than the location of the school itself.

Figure 3. Distribution of primary and secondary school with high Deprivation Index (3-5) vs postcodes where >50% of premises cannot access USO level internet



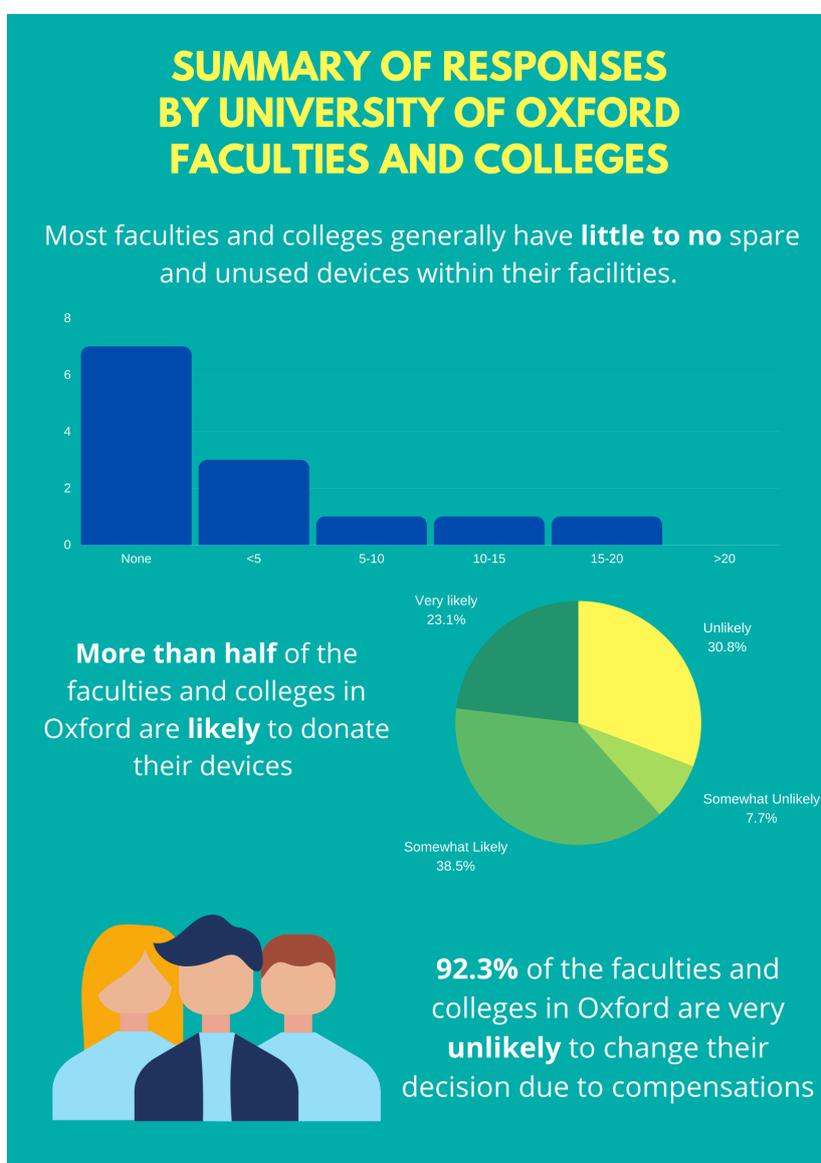
	Deprivation Index 3	Neighbourhoods in oxfordshire are ranked from Most Deprived (5) to Least Deprived (1). Index 3 - 40%-60% most deprived Index 4 - 20%-40% most deprived Index 5 - 20% most deprived
	Deprivation Index 4	
	Deprivation Index 5	

3. The Device Donation Pipeline

3.1. Potential Sources of Donation

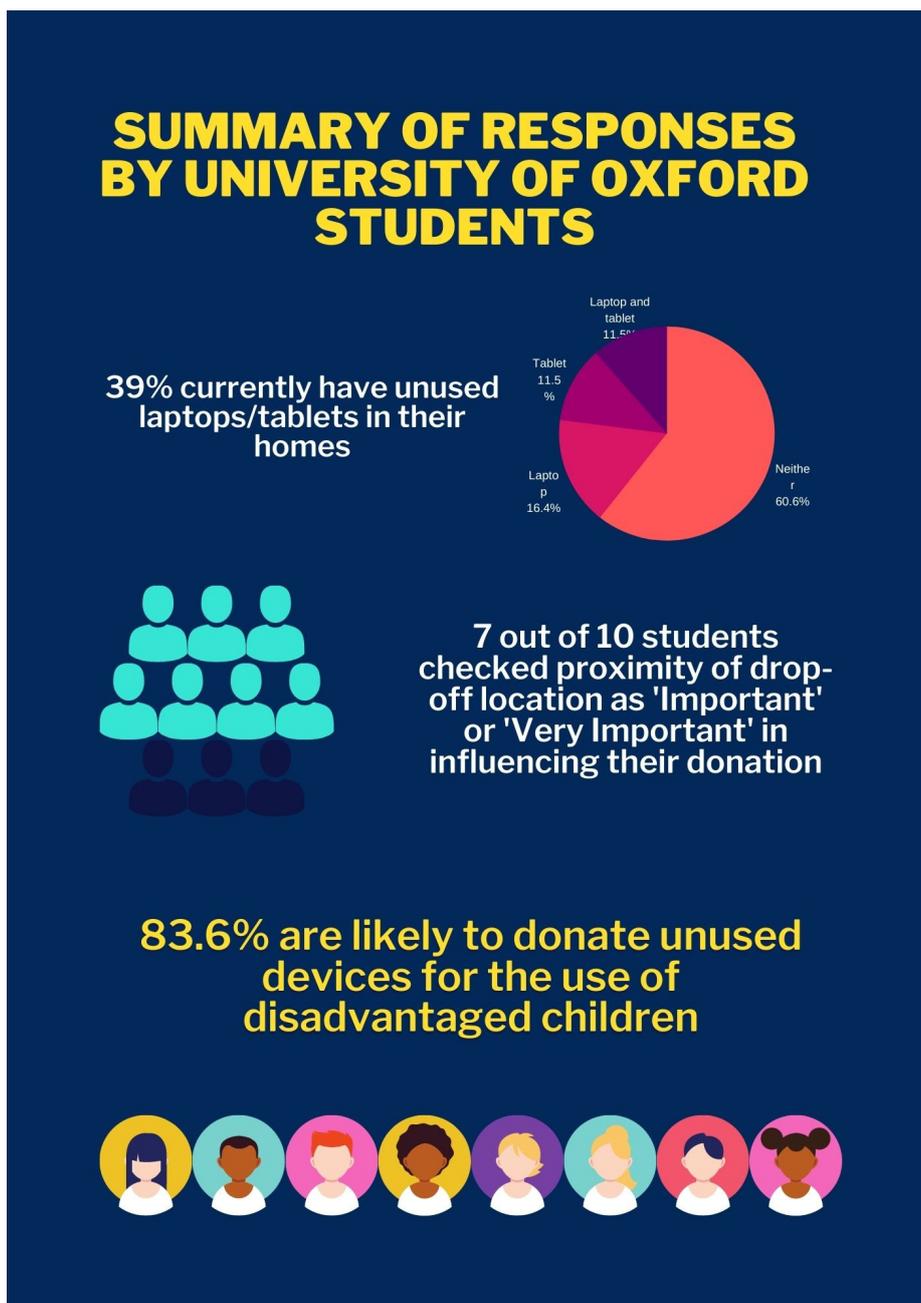
3.1.1. Responses from Faculty and College Offices

This infographic summarises how 13 faculties and/or colleges have responded to the prospect of donating devices to disadvantaged students. Although most faculties and/or colleges had little to no spare and unused devices within their facilities, some of the few that did possessed a high quantity of devices, with one respondent claiming between 15-20 devices. **Consequently, it may be beneficial to the OCF to investigate colleges and faculties as potential sources of donations.**



3.1.2. Responses from University of Oxford Students

This section summarises the responses received from 61 anonymous undergraduate students currently at the University of Oxford. Students generally show an enthusiasm for donating used devices, however only 39% of students surveyed own a used tablet or device. The support expressed by students surveyed for the 'Get Oxfordshire Online' initiative means that **they could potentially help supply the donations pipeline and also assisting with fundraising and publicity campaigns.**



The Impact of COVID-19 on Children's Charities in Oxfordshire

Some charities have described having to move their services online due to the lockdown

"As soon as lockdown hit we took all of our services online and continued to support children and families via 1:1 and group work sessions on Zoom"

While some expressed facing difficulties to continue their usual services

"We have been unable to visit families, schools or to run groups in our usual way".

"Online learning would be a huge step for us ... in terms of quickly getting up to speed with new software and training our remote teaching team."

Which have cut off some beneficiaries from receiving support

"In 2019-2020, we were due to teach approximately 250 children. Just under 50 had their programmes cut short ... and just over 60 were unable to start their sessions at all.

As a result, most of the charities we talked to expressed plans to expand on their online services

"We are considering further developing our online content - e.g. instructional video clips of how to play specific games"

"To enable the families that we support to access our online groups and support we ran an appeal for donations of second hand laptops."

4. The Refurbishment Process

4.1 Technicalities of Laptop and Tablet Refurbishment

A discussion with Thrive North Oxfordshire, an organisation that has been refurbishing devices exclusively in the OX7 area, has shown that the process itself is rather straightforward, meaning that it could be taught with relative ease to new volunteers around different areas of Oxfordshire.

A brief summary is provided below:

Refurbishment process	
1. Evaluate the laptop's capabilities	What will the laptop's functions be when it is repaired
	Note laptop specifications (CPU, GPU information)
2. Evaluate the laptop's physical condition	Noting that condition must be still useable
	Booting to BIOS to check functionality of screen
3. Acquire tools and parts needed	Drain all the power from laptop
	Check that laptop has a hard drive caddy
	Check that computer uses a SATA connection
4. Put the parts into the new laptop	Clean laptop (with canned air to remove dust)
	Put the new parts into it
	Insert new RAM chips and hard drive
5. Install/update operating system	Use appropriate Operating System
6. Test the new and improved laptop	Check functionality of laptop

The above process outlined is limited to Windows laptops. It is important to note that some charities currently working with refurbishing products (such as Thrive NorthOx) are unwilling to accept Apple products for refurbishment.

4.2 Potential Drop-Off Points and Storage Centres

The Online Centres Network runs two online centres in Oxfordshire. Both are located within the OX1 postcode. We would recommend reaching out to both centres for support with the project. We believe that they could support the ‘Get Oxfordshire Online’ project in potentially three different ways.

1. As **drop-off sites for devices**, and potentially as **storage sites** depending on their capacity.
2. As places where **volunteers** for the device refurbishment process could be sourced.
3. As safe spaces in which families with low **digital literacy** can seek **support** getting online

Oxfordshire County Library

Address: Westgate, Oxford, OX1 1DJ

Phone: 01865 815509

Email: county.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries-and-information>



Aspire Oxford

Address: St Thomas School, St Thomas Street, Oxford, OX1 1NJ

Phone: 07800 564 884

Email: nikki@aspireoxford.co.uk



We also believe that the **Oxford Hub** could be a useful centre for donations as it bridges the gap between the university student body and Oxfordshire residents. Schools Plus, an initiative run by the Oxford Hub where university students tutor children in local schools, has expressed a willingness to publicise OCF’s ‘Get Oxfordshire Online Initiative’ among the student body, as well as a willingness to offer their facilities as drop-off sites or storage centres for devices. If donation boxes for devices were set-up in each Oxford college, a charities rep, could be responsible for transporting them to a central donations centre at the Oxford Hub:

The Oxford Hub

Address: 36 Little Clarendon St., OX1 2HU

Phone: 07384 718332

Website: <https://www.oxfordhub.org/>



For less central areas of Oxfordshire, we would recommend contacting local churches, mosques, community centres or local businesses as potential drop-off points for donations.

5. Recommendations Moving Forward

5.1 Reaching out to Local Businesses

Local businesses have proved unresponsive to our attempts to reach out to them over the past week; however, discussions with representatives from local charities have highlighted the potential that local businesses have as donors for the project, with Thrive (North Ox) receiving 40 laptops in a bulk donation from an anonymous local business. Research shows that most businesses update their laptops every 2-3 years, with the implication that OCF could source a large number of devices from this sector of the community.

5.2 Reaching out to Oxford University

In our survey 61.6% of colleges/faculties responded that they are likely to donate unused devices, making them a useful source from which OCF might supply laptops and tablets. While the majority stated they had little or no unused devices at their facilities, one of the six that did have unused devices claimed to have between 20-25, making them a source from which bulk donation of devices could potentially be sourced. It is also worth noting the limited coverage of this survey, due to time constraints, and the possibility that similarly large quantities of unused devices are available for donation from Oxford's faculties and colleges.

We also believe that colleges could help in a financial capacity, with most colleges allocating an annual amount of their budget to charitable spending. We recommend that OCF makes contact with student charity representatives from each college, and fosters an engagement within the student body in order to raise awareness of the scale of digital exclusion in Oxfordshire.

Reaching out to the student body would also potentially provide a greater number of device donations, as our survey of 61 students shows that 83.6% of students expressed a willingness to consider donating unused devices. We would recommend attempting to establish drop-off points within college common rooms (in a similar fashion to clothes/donation points), as a means of encouraging donations from within the student community.

Further recommendations regarding relations with the student body would be to reach out to the Oxford SU, in order to further publicise the need for donations, and to partner colleges with charities that are already refurbishing laptops, to train students themselves in the refurbishment process. Electing a student volunteer to lead internal communications could prove useful in the long-term.

5.3 Partnership with Local Charities

Collaboration with other charities would reflect OCF's aim of unlocking the power of community to help disadvantaged communities.

Collaboration would improve different charities' organisational effectiveness by connecting them with a greater number and wider range of beneficiaries. Similarly, charities might be able to garner more collective support from donors and increase the range of publicity opportunities. This could potentially lead to increased funding, and a greater public awareness of the problem of digital exclusion in schools. .

Since 'Get Oxford Online' is a relatively new initiative, OCF might be able to learn from charities who have been helping similar beneficiaries prior to its launch, so that they might be able to produce new and improved ways of working. Large and small scale charities would then reach a symbiotic relationship, wherein larger foundations would use the expertise of smaller charities and the smaller organisations can benefit from the capacity, reach and number of volunteers found in the larger organisations.

5.3.1. Deciding the level of collaboration between charities

There are 2 levels of collaboration that could be adopted by the OCF and their partner charities:

Informal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - borrowing/lending equipment - Networking groups - Joint training events - Information and expertise sharing - Membership of associations/groups/federations
Formal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High profile joint fundraising events - Shared back office services - Shared accommodation - Vehicle lease/rental agreements - Joint employment of staff - Joint building projects - Shared service provision - Consortium bidding for service delivery projects

OCF might consider establishing a rapport with the potential charity collaborators by initiating informal collaboration. This might be done through the lending of equipment to charities or provision of other resources.

5.3.2 Choosing a structure of collaboration for the charity

There are 4 main types of collaboration, each with their respective merits.

Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each organisation maintains its own identity and independence, although the collaborative activity itself may have a joint name - A lead or accountable body is appointed - jointly access funding
Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distinct and well-established form of working together - Enable charities to fulfill common purposes over a wide area
Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two or more separate charities come together to form one organisation - One or more charities transfers its assets to another with similar purposes
Merger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two or more separate charities come together to form one organisation

Given OCF's previous collaborative efforts, such as the Oxford Homeless Movement and the Growing Minds Project we believe that colatition would be the best strategy for OCF to adopt for the 'Get Oxfordshire Online' campaign.

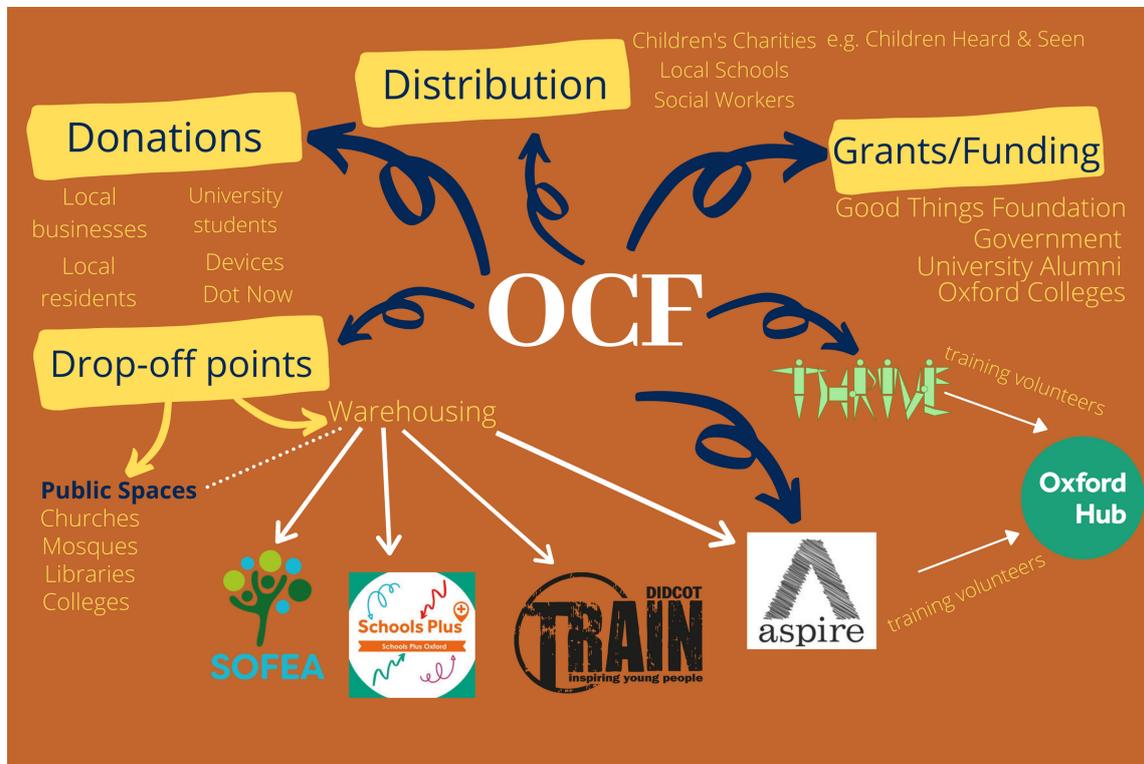
5.3.3 Potential Charities OCF Could Partner With

Trustees should frequently consider how different aspects of their work might be delivered better when in partnership with others. For OCF specifically, one might consider pairing up with charities that are already trying to bridge the education gap between children of different socio-economic backgrounds.

- **The Good Things Foundation/Devices Dot Now:** A nationwide partner initiative supporting digital inclusion. They offer support and training to improve vulnerable people's digital skills and look to partner with a range of community organisations. Devices Dot Now focus specifically on providing devices for disadvantaged people.
- **Oxford Hub:** An organisation that bridges the gap between the student community and local Oxfordshire communities. Their office on Little Clarendon Street could be used both as a drop-off point, and as a centre in which new volunteers could be trained.
- **Thrive North Ox:** A small scale charity that provides laptops for one school in Chipping Norton. They have expressed an interest in teaching volunteers how to refurbish old devices.
- **Children Heard and Seen:** A charity that could potentially help with distribution and share information about areas in which devices are most needed. Their volunteers also have already supplied disadvantaged families with laptops during the pandemic and have expressed enthusiasm for helping with storage capacity and distribution.
- **Aspire Oxfordshire/Didcot Train/SOFEA:** Organisations that work with vulnerable members of the community to make a positive difference. They could potentially help train volunteers, provide warehousing facilities or help transport devices from drop-off points to refurbishment centres and/or beneficiaries.

5.4 Potential Network of Organisations

Below is our proposed network of organisations that might be helpful for collaborations.



Our team places OCF in a coordinating role, connecting different organisations together to maximise the efficiency of the distribution process.. In order to acquire funding needed for the ‘Get Oxfordshire Online’ project, we propose asking the Good Things Foundation for a grant during the initial stages. Upon gaining more public appeal, it might be possible to secure a government grant. Oxford colleges may also be able to provide funding, which could be accessed through making contact with charities reps at specific colleges.

Based upon evidence from our surveys and interviews, we recommend that OCF attempts to source donations of devices from Oxford's colleges and faculties, local businesses, university students and residents of Oxfordshire. Current and graduated students might also be further involved within the project by helping to fundraise and raising awareness of the initiative.

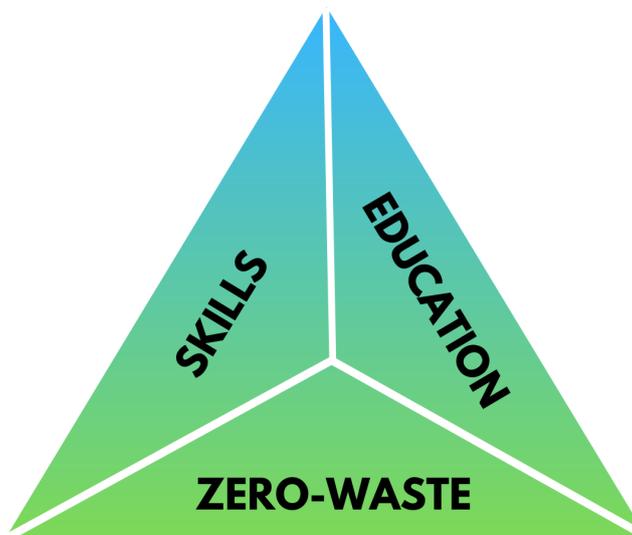
OCF could potentially consider liaising with other charitable organisations to further encourage locals and students’ participation. Organisations like Thrive North Ox and Aspire could also provide opportunities to connect individuals with expertise with organisations with a larger capacity and a larger number of volunteers, thereby potentially enlarging the scope of OCF’s operations.

Distribution to beneficiaries would be aided by contact with local schools, children’s charities, such as ‘Children Heard and Seen,’ and social workers, all of whom would provide valuable insight into the areas in which devices are required, and help transport distribute them to beneficiaries.

5.5 Proposed Business Model

The business model we are proposing would be modelled in a similar fashion to SOFEA's Trainee Trifecta, and would be structured around three core aims:

1. To help vulnerable adults more skills through learning how to refurbish laptops/tablets
2. Supply disadvantaged students in school with repurposed devices so that they can participate in online education.
3. Reduce the amount of unused tech being sent to landfill in line with zero-waste economy aspirations



- Vulnerable adults that are supported by organisations such as Aspire could potentially be sourced as volunteers for the refurbishment process and transportation of devices. Volunteers would thereby gain skills that may help them become more employable in the long-term.
- Disadvantaged school children would be supplied with devices that would allow them to participate in online learning. They would ideally be supported using these devices through online centres and volunteers.
- The refurbishment of laptops and tablets would prevent them from being sent to landfill, with the result that the project would incorporate a zero-waste economy into its operation.

6. Conclusion and Closing Statement

We firmly believe that the project has the potential to succeed. We recommend a business model that collaborates with existing charities, local businesses and Oxford University to formulate a strategy to help minimise the extent of digital exclusion in Oxfordshire.

In summary we would recommend that OCF:

1. Involves student volunteers from Oxford University. This is to foster an interest in the project among the student body, encouraging them to donate devices and seek funding from their colleges.
2. Creates a network of organisations in Oxfordshire. Implement a businesses model that connects those with the knowledge of the refurbishment process with organisations that recruit volunteers from different sections of the local community.
3. Mobilises existing charities with suitable capacity. Partner with charities that run delivery services and have warehousing capacity to assist with the storage and transportation of devices.
4. Makes contact with school authorities and children's charities in High Deprivation areas. This will be helpful to assess the need for devices within specific districts of Oxfordshire and ensure long-term support is available for the beneficiaries.

We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work with Oxford Community Foundation and have enjoyed working together to help formulate a solution to the challenges faced by your organisation. We hope that our findings will prove useful to the future project manager and wish you all the best of luck with the 'Get Oxfordshire Online' Initiative.

7. References

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- <https://understandmedia.com/journals-a-publications/student-journal-of-media-literacy-education/51-sjmle-vol-4-spring-2012/225-how-does-the-digital-divide-affect-education-in-poorer-neighborhoods>
- <https://rebootproject.uk/helpful-resources/>
- <https://www.ons.gov.uk>
- Percentage of nursery and primary pupils with free school meals in Oxfordshire. <https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/lgastandard?mod-metric=2173&mod-period=1&mod-area=E10000025&mod-group=LAsByTypeAndCountry&mod-type=comparisonGroupType>
- Department of Education(2017) Maintained schools and academies inspections and outcomes as at 31 December 2017. <https://www.gov.uk/education/inspection-of-maintained-schools-and-academies>

8. Appendix

Transcript of an Interview with ‘Children Seen and Heard’

1. Do you have a rough estimate as to the number of children who have been excluded from education because of the shift to online learning?

No

2. How many beneficiaries do you help?

165

3. Where are you based in Oxfordshire? How many bases do you have?

Based in East Oxford, however since lockdown our work has predominantly been online.

4. What has been the impact of the pandemic on your charity?

We have been unable to visit families, schools or to run groups in our usual way. The majority of our work is person-facing so we had to adapt our service to make sure we could support the families accessing our services. As soon as lockdown hit we took all of our services online and continued to support children and families via 1:1 and group work sessions on Zoom. We put on a number of new groups to meet children and parent's needs and were running at least 10 groups per week online, whereas before we ran 3 groups a week. We also took all our 1:1 support for children online. From March to September we ran 240 online groups for children, ranging from arts & crafts sessions, fire safety, youth advocates, fitness groups and more. Our groups were accessed by 102 children who between them attended groups 1429 times. We also provided 75 1:1 sessions for children per week on average.

To enable the families that we support to access our online groups and support we ran an appeal for donations of second hand laptops. We had a volunteer who was able to wipe the data from these laptops so we could give them to families restored to factory settings and with the latest operating system and Zoom access. We hit a stumbling block early on that many of the laptops being donated either did not have a webcam or were so old they were unable to support current operating systems. However, so far have given 40 laptops/tablets to families across the country to access our online groups and 1:1 support.

5. Would you consider partnering with OCF’s initiative to help supply disadvantaged children with laptops/tablets.

Yes

6. Would you potentially be able to store laptops/tablets in any of your Oxford facilities, or assist in the transportation of laptops/tablets from drop-off points to refurbishment centres?

We would be open to storing laptops as we are already storing ones that have been donated directly to us. However, we are currently looking for office space and would not be able to store laptops until we have found new premises.

7. Would you potentially be able to highlight children who need laptops/tablets and help OCF help provide for the vulnerable children you work with?

Yes

Transcript of an Interview with ‘Thrive North Oxfordshire’

1. How does Thrive help the local community?

Thrive is a local company that supplies to one school in Chipping Norton. In total, we have supplied 72 devices in the past six months. We supply roughly 11-15 devices per month.

2. How many volunteers or paid staff do you employ?

Thrive consists entirely of volunteers. Three people are involved in the refurbishment process.

3. What is Thrive’s warehousing capacity, and how do you pick up devices?

Thrive’s warehousing capacity is minimal, as we only have one drop-off point, the Co-Operative Food Supermarket (OX7 6JH). Apart from drop-off points, we also collect from donors houses, or have donors come round to our house to drop-off devices.

4. Where do most of your device donations come from?

Most of our devices come from one-off donations from members of the local community. The exception was a time that we received a one-off donation of 40 laptops from an anonymous local business.

5. What are the main challenges faced by your charity?

Our main difficulties are a lack of publicity, and having to collect devices from far away.

6. Would you consider partnering with OCF in the future to help with their ‘Get Oxfordshire Online’ Initiative?

Thrive would be happy to partner with OCF, and would be happy to offer training to volunteers in other parts of Oxfordshire.

Transcript of an Interview with ‘Quest for Learning’

1. Will you be available to answer some questions about how the shift to online learning prompted by covid-19 has resulted in the digital exclusion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We are happy to help if we can, but just to let you know we have not been doing any online learning during lockdown

2. Why have you not been conducting learning online?

Partly because we are a very small charity and the shift to online learning would be a huge step for us, even before you take into account the disruption of the lockdown in terms of quickly getting up to speed with new software and training our remote teaching team.

3. We were due to begin teaching a new group of children after the easter break, for this to have happened virtually the school would have had to put us in direct contact with parents as we do not hold contact data.

The children we work with range from 6 to 11 years old, which means that many of them would have needed a parent to attend their sessions with them. Most significantly, the children we work with predominantly come from disadvantaged backgrounds, meaning their access to suitable technology and adequate internet can often be limited. This is before taking into consideration parental engagement, which can be lower than for children from less disadvantaged backgrounds.

4. Can you please provide a rough estimate on the number of children you would usually work with (assuming non-COVID-19 scenario) and possibly how many of them are unable to access education because of the pandemic?

The number of children we teach varies from year to year. In 2019-2020, we were due to teach approximately 250 children. Just under 50 had their programmes cut short because schools closed early in the second half of spring terms and just over 60 were unable to start their sessions at all.

5. Would you be open to collaborating with OCF (who plans to work on an initiative to refurbish old devices) to potentially move parts of your teaching schedule online?

We don't have any plans to move our current teaching model online in the foreseeable future. We are considering further developing out online content - e.g. instructional video clips of how to play specific games, tutors reading specific texts, tips for parents to help them with their child's learning, etc. but not direct teaching sessions. The online content, combined with the hard copies of activities that can be printed by the school and given to parents or alternatively emailed to them, will be part of our contingency if children are required to isolate at home.

6. Once offices and public locations open, are you considering conducting lessons in a socially distanced manner?

All of our lessons are delivered in schools during the school day. Our next session will be starting again over the next few weeks in all of our schools.

