



Westgate Fund

**Three-Year Review
2017–2020**



We connect communities for a better Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF) works to improve the lives of our county's most disadvantaged people by unlocking the power of community. We tackle the most pressing social problems locally: homelessness, educational inequality and loneliness and isolation. By working in collaboration, we bring the best ideas to life, leading to sustained and meaningful improvements to people's lives.



Introduction

The Westgate Fund was established in 2017 with a £125,000 donation from John Lewis, and is held and managed by Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF).

The opening of the new Westgate centre in 2017 was an important moment in Oxford's evolution. However, the companies involved in the Westgate's development, and in particular John Lewis, acknowledged that the city had many unacceptable social problems that did not sit so easily with the launch of a sophisticated new shopping experience. For example, one in five children in Oxford is living in poverty, and it is one of the most unaffordable cities to live in in the UK.

The Westgate Fund was John Lewis's gift to Oxford, and during the past three years OCF has used the funds to enable 18 community initiatives, ranging from small but vital services for people in areas of deprivation around the city, to ambitious projects tackling the biggest problems faced locally.

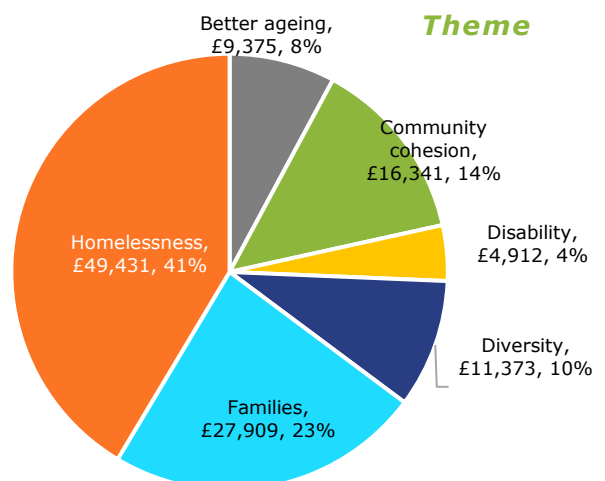
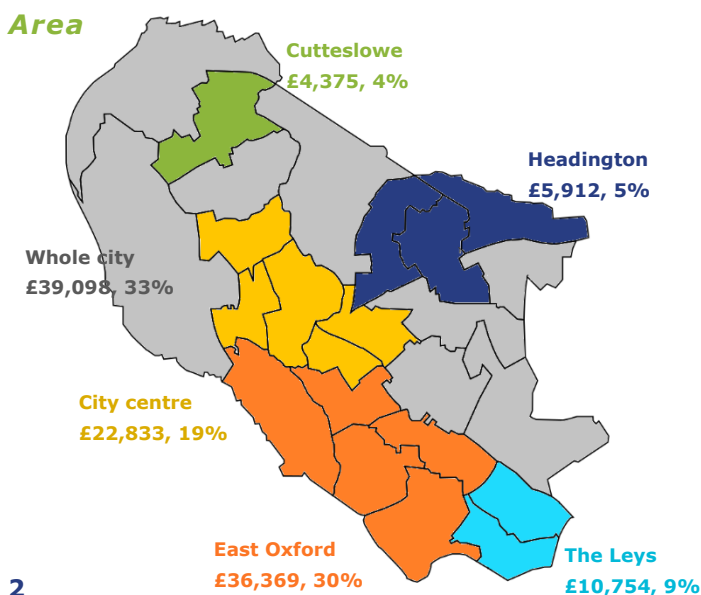
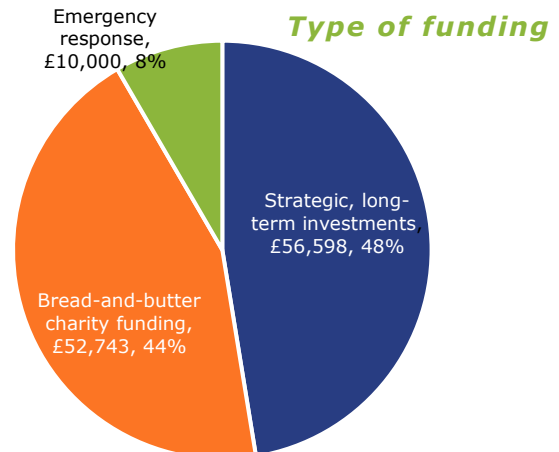
The fund has succeeded in being as diverse as the city itself, in terms of the variety of causes supported, the backgrounds of the beneficiaries and its reach into the areas of Oxford with the most need, as this report will show. It has also provided several match-funding initiatives, in the form of public Christmas appeals and the Government's #iwill programme, that meant OCF could raise even more money for communities in Oxford.

As the fund comes to an end in 2020, it leaves an important legacy for the city, having been instrumental in getting two major new collaborative partnerships off the ground: Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, which aims to make rough sleeping a thing of the past; and Growing Minds, which sets out to improve school readiness in disadvantaged communities. More information on these and all the fund's projects are outlined below.



John Lewis Oxford Branch Manager Julie Blake pictured with then CEO of OCF Jayne Woodley just before the opening of Westgate Oxford in 2017.

Achievements and performance 2017–20



Full list of projects funded

Date paid	Project funded	Amount	Project description	Primary beneficiaries
07/09/2018	Oxfordshire My Life My Choice Association	£2,500	Fifteen young champions with learning disabilities learnt to advocate for more paid work opportunities, developing influencing skills and creating their own campaign film.	People with learning difficulties
07/09/2018	Youth Challenge Oxfordshire	£2,500	A group of vulnerable young people were taken on a trip to carry out a charitable project in Kenya. This provided the confidence and skills to lead a different path on their return.	Children and young people
07/09/2018	Oxford Hub	£2,498	The Hub increased the number of male student volunteers on their Schools Plus pupil mentoring programme by 10%, bringing more male role models into disadvantaged schools.	Men
14/11/2018	The Parasol Project	£2,412	Over 40 new disabled and disadvantaged young people were given opportunities to volunteer in the community, giving them work experience and training for the future.	People with learning difficulties
14/11/2018	Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground	£3,909	Junior Leaders were trained to run activities for children at the playground, and a dedicated worker mentored them to think about their qualifications and careers.	Children and young people
21/01/2019	Barracks Lane Community Garden	£4,000	The garden became an alternative classroom for 25 Unaccompanied Child Asylum Seekers, who came every week to learn horticulture and cookery.	Refugees/asylum seekers/immigrants
21/01/2019	Clear Sky Children's Foundation	£3,000	Play and creative arts therapy was run for children suffering early trauma or disadvantage, with an 84% success rate in decreasing emotional, social and behavioural difficulties.	Children and young people
11/02/2019	Oxford Poverty Action Trust	£7,833	A match fund was provided for a 2018 Christmas homelessness appeal, resulting in public donations of over £43,000. Funds were distributed between nine delivery partners.	People experiencing homelessness
28/03/2019	Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre	£6,341	Community support, befriending and transport were provided to this village, where poverty and disadvantage are amongst the most acute in Oxfordshire, but people have become cut off from services due to the cancellation of the bus service.	Local residents
28/03/2019	Cuttesslowe Community Association	£4,375	A befriending and activity club was provided for vulnerable older people in this deprived estate in North Oxford. For some with mobility issues it was a lifeline after the bus service was lost.	Older people
28/03/2019	Leys CDI	£5,000	A development worker supported older, isolated people attending The Clockhouse day centre in this deprived Oxford estate, providing transport, help with benefits and events.	Older people
07/11/2019	Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground	£1,845	A Friday lunch club was started to bring together families from different ethnic backgrounds. Children were taught to cook for their families, introducing them to cheaper and healthier food.	Refugees/asylum seekers/immigrants
07/11/2019	Oxford Hub	£3,030	English language classes within the community were expanded to new areas and times to make them more accessible for people referred from asylum and family support charities.	Refugees/asylum seekers/immigrants
07/11/2019	Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support	£3,500	A new breastfeeding support session was started in Barton, to support parents in this area of deprivation and ensure they were connected with an array of other family support services.	Families/parents/lone parents
01/01/2020	Oxford Homeless Movement	£15,000	A match fund was provided for the 2019 Christmas homelessness appeal, resulting in public donations of over £75,000. Funds are now being used for move-on accommodation for rough sleepers during COVID-19.	People experiencing homelessness
01/01/2020	Growing Minds	£15,000	Funding has been provided to run OCF's second strategic partnership aimed at closing the educational attainment gap, bringing together charities and statutory bodies holistically.	Children and young people
31/03/2020	OCF Community Resilience Fund	£10,000	OCF's Community Resilience Fund has distributed over £600,000 in emergency grants in response to COVID-19, ranging from food distribution to moving vital services online.	Local residents
24/09/2020	Oxfordshire Homeless Movement	£26,598	The Westgate Fund's final grant will provide funding for a role that will ensure that people with lived experience of homelessness have their voices heard in local decision-making.	People experiencing homelessness
		£119,341	<i>As with all Donor-Advised Funds, OCF took a small contribution from the original donation to cover its own charitable costs (grant administration, project management).</i>	

Case studies

The voice of lived experience helps tackle homelessness

There are many people experiencing homelessness in Oxford, and dozens of organisations focusing on the problem. This diversity can be confusing for would-be volunteers and supporters. Oxfordshire Homeless Movement (OHM) was created to provide the clarity. The issues are complex, but some of the solutions can be simple, and our joint efforts can be life-changing.

One of the most important priorities of OHM was that people with real, lived experience of homelessness should be consulted about key decisions affecting the local homeless community, whether by local councils and charity services, or within the Movement itself. The Lived Experience Advisory Forum was established at the start of the partnership, and thanks to the Westgate Fund OHM is now able to invest in a paid role for a coordinator to amplify the voices of people accessing services.

The role will be hosted by OHM partner The Gatehouse. Service Development Project Worker Monica Gregory explains: "Sometimes people feel that they're not being listened to by the homelessness services. You need to treat everyone as an individual and work with the trauma before you can work on housing somebody. There is often a lack of trust. This forum bridges that gap."



Growing Minds

Children who struggle the most educationally in Oxfordshire are nearly two years behind their peers by age 16, with 17% of adults in the county having no qualifications at all. This gap starts before school, with children from disadvantaged backgrounds already 5.5 months behind when they join reception. Growing Minds is a new partnership of education and early years charities on a mission to close this gap.

The Westgate Fund has contributed to the first year of the project, which is offering to help more than 800 children in Berinsfield and Littlemore over seven years. Growing Minds will provide free books, family mentoring and group learning in a coordinated way, overseen by an OCF project manager.



Barracks Lane Community Garden

For young people who have had their lives disrupted by trauma, war, and migration, and may have had little formal schooling in their countries of origin, this project at Barracks Lane provides a real lifeline.

Some students have recently arrived in the UK and Oxford, often with minimal literacy in their native language, and no spoken or written English. The garden provides a different learning environment to the classroom. Students learn to grow and cook local vegetables and herbs, as well as sharing previous knowledge and skill about plants, food and cooking. This helps develop literacy, as well as promoting emotional and mental health and a sense of belonging.

