



Cost of Living Fund Donor Report

April 2023

Introduction

Summer 2022 saw the launch of our Cost of Living Fund, bringing local funders together to take action on this critical and urgent issue. Practical support for essentials such as food, heating and clothing were needed, alongside longer-term, preventative solutions, and investment in charities' running costs to enable them to continue their vital work.

Local donors have really stepped up to help OCF respond in an agile way. Alongside £100k we had already set aside for this cause, we have **raised nearly £200k** from our generous donors, statutory partners and funders since autumn 2022, meaning **we could award £286,167 in grants** to grassroots community organisations before Christmas.

What is more, Oxfordshire donors are part of a bigger movement tackling the cost-of-living crisis: community foundations across the UK have [collectively raised over £12.6 million](#) so far to fund charities dealing with this issue. We know people care.

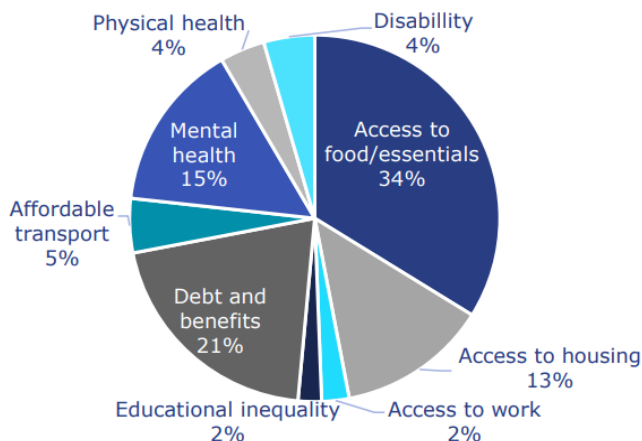
Sadly, since the opening of OCF's grant funding in September, the huge rise in energy and food costs continues to affect the most vulnerable in our community, who still need our help. Forty-year inflation peaks are ongoing, [with a rate of 10.5% in January](#). There was a near 17% increase in the price of food and non-alcoholic drinks over 12 months to December 2022, and a near 7% increase in costs for housing, water and energy bills.

Crucially, Oxfordshire has a precious network of grassroots organisations that are doing essential work to help people stay afloat in this crisis. However, these organisations are themselves at risk of going under. They are experiencing huge increases in the demand for their services, and have been facing rising costs which they cannot pass on to the people they help. Many are having to use up their reserves to keep going.

The Office for Budget Responsibility has said there is some hope on the horizon, with [inflation slowing to 3%](#) by the end of the year. If we let these organisations fail over the next nine months, it will take away an essential safety net that may not be replaced. We need to continue to offer support to stop a huge loss of social capital, and to preserve the investment made so far.

This is why OCF remains dedicated to raising awareness and funds around the cost of living locally, and is committed to giving at least one further round of grant funding during 2023. This report shares details of what has been achieved so far with the support of our generous donors and funders, and our plans for the coming months.

Biggest issues for Oxfordshire communities (OCF sector consultation, September 2022)



Oxfordshire households are expected to need more than

£200 extra per month

from April 2023

Source: [Comparethemarket.com Money Action Index](#)

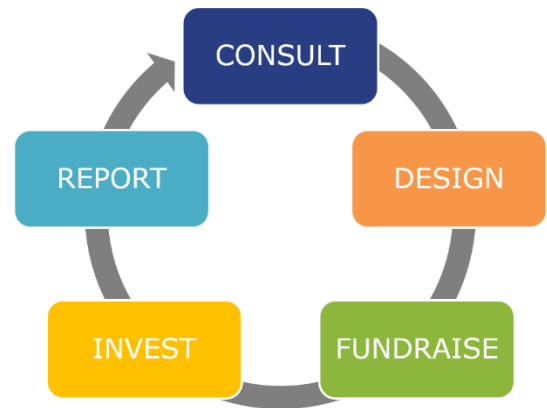


The process

Firstly, we **consulted** the charity sector to identify the biggest issues affecting Oxfordshire communities and the support charities needed.

Secondly, after listening to the views of stakeholders, we **designed** a grants round that met those needs. This focused on urgent work to provide food parcels, warm spaces and debt advice. It also supported running costs of the delivery organisations to help them continue to provide vital services in the long term.

We used our knowledge to **fundraise** from multiple sources, equipping us to **invest** nearly £300k in the first round of funding to charitable organisations. Funded organisations will be asked to **report** back on the outcomes of their grants six months after payment. This will enable us to monitor the impact and outcomes for each grant, as well as begin a new cycle of learning and consulting for the next round of grant funding.

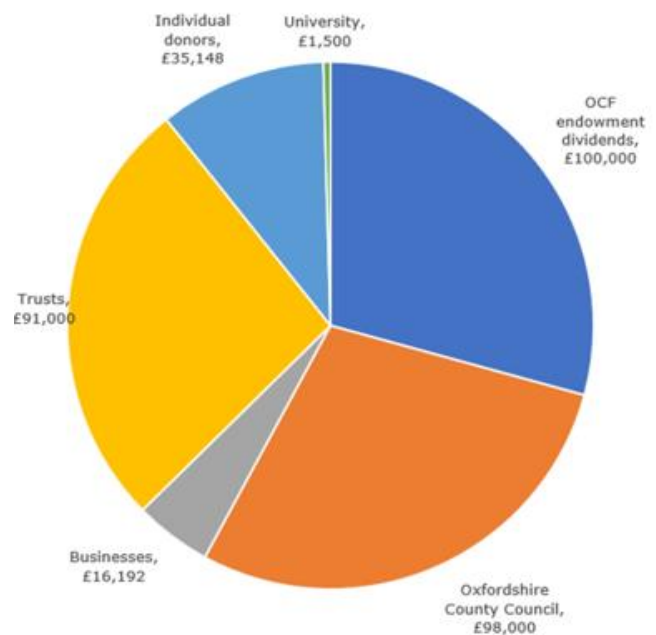


Fundraising

Early in 2022, OCF recognised the coming cost-of-living crisis and earmarked £100k of our grant-making budget for our response. This budget is partly determined by income from our invested endowment fund.

In autumn 2022, Oxfordshire County Council came on board with their own cost-of-living response budget. We are very grateful to them for their significant contribution.

OCF also ran a public fundraising appeal, working with existing donors, businesses and local trusts to leverage further funding. Through funds being pooled together, donors and businesses were able to have a larger, targeted impact by channelling their cost-of-living support through OCF. The power of our local philanthropic community working together means we can make a meaningful difference to more local people.



We would like mention the following funders in particular:

- The Tambour Foundation
- HDH Wills Charitable Trust
- Donors to OCF's [Collective Business Fund](#) (RWK Goodman, Prodrive, Wise Funds, Allen Associates, Olamalu and Mills and Reeve)
- The Brethertons Fund
- All Souls College
- Several significant individual donors who wish to remain anonymous.



Investment and results

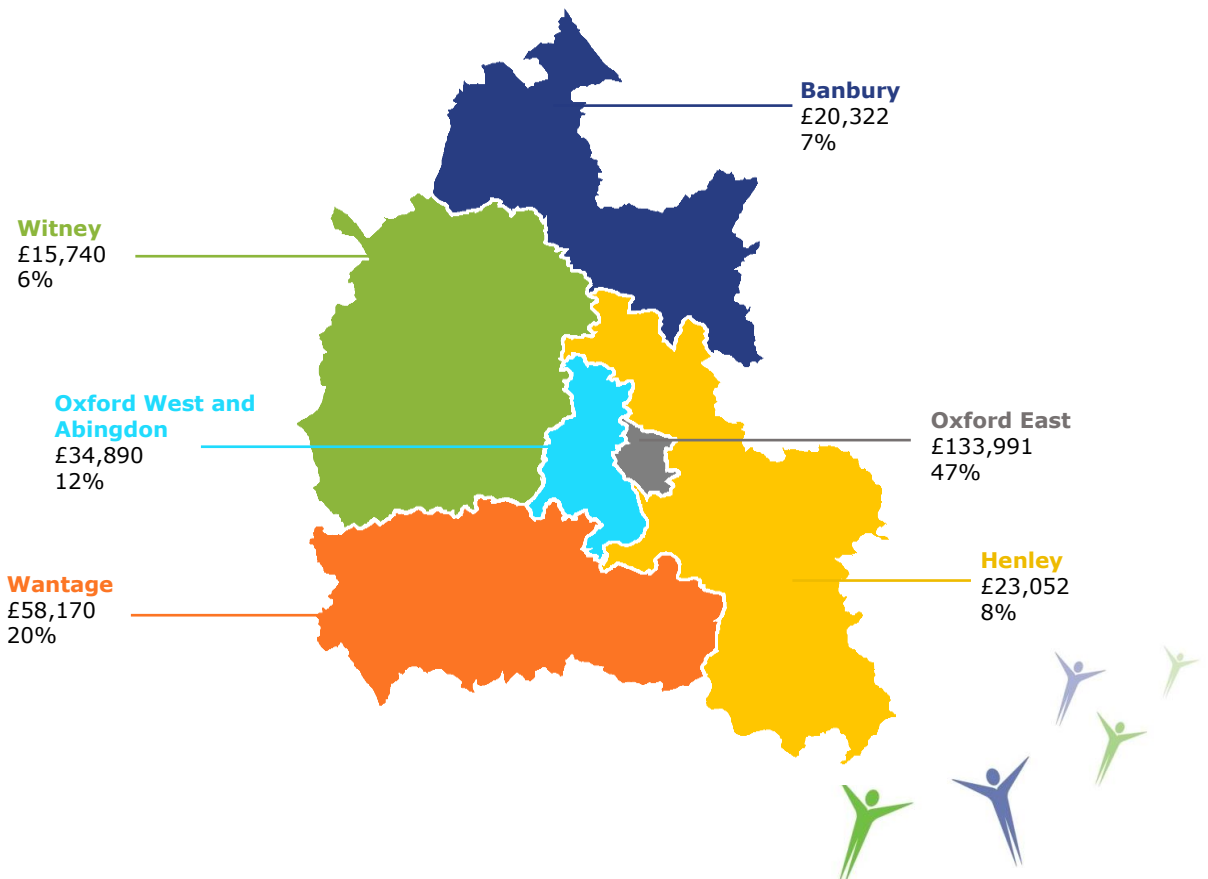
Grant applications were made by a highly diverse group of charitable organisations, such as churches, mosques, family support centres, and advice bureaux. Due to immense demand, OCF could only award grants to 50% of the charitable organisations that applied.

£286,167 in grants were awarded to 43 organisations in December and January, reaching around 24,000 beneficiaries across the county. A full list of the grants made in this round can be found in the appendix.



Our volunteer Grants Panel deserves particular recognition here. The panel is a diverse group of people with long experience of the charity sector, either as beneficiaries, staff or board members, and they bring financial rigour, subject-matter expertise and sheer hard work to the assessment and decision-making around OCF’s grants. This creates a level of due diligence that individual donors and funders may not have capacity for.

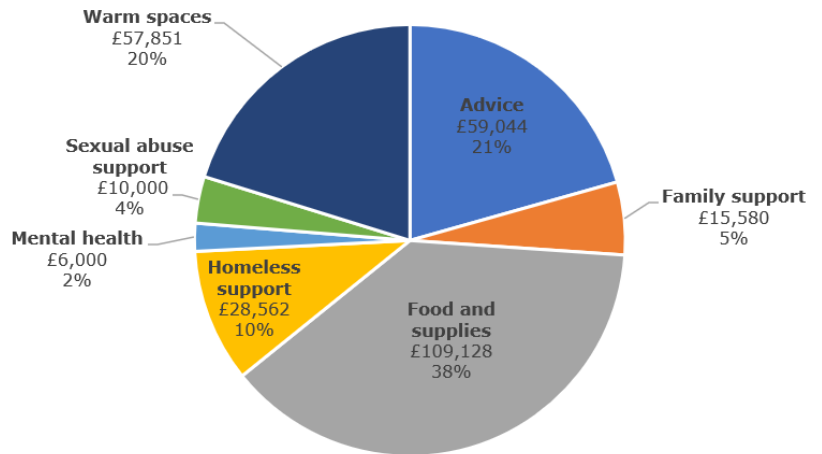
The map below shows grants awarded by parliamentary constituency. Oxford East, with the largest concentration of charities, received grants totalling £133,991 and accounted for 47% of the overall amount awarded. This area includes six of the most deprived wards in the county. The most deprived areas on the [Income Deprivation Affecting Children measure \(IMD 2019\)](#) are in parts of Blackbird Leys, Littlemore and Rose Hill and Iffley wards, which are all in Oxford East, and in Banbury Ruscote.



Key activities supported

Grants from our Cost of Living Fund are going towards food and supplies, warm spaces, family support hubs, mental health groups, sexual abuse support, homeless support, and many other services that people are relying on.

The pie chart shows the main issues supported. Funding for food and supplies was the most prevalent at 38%, followed by advice hubs (21%) and warm spaces (20%).



It is important to note that the majority of the 43 charities that received funding aimed to tackle more than one of these issues. For example, many food and supplies services were signposting to other support, such as mental health or debt advice. Charities are not just looking to manage their short-term crisis response, but are also thinking about long-term impacts and issues that are interrelated. The activity being funded acknowledges the longevity of this crisis.

More preventative solutions will take longer to create, and charities need investment to continue. Currently they need to offer heavily discounted or free services; their own costs are rising; there are fewer volunteers (as they have gone back to work post-pandemic, or cannot afford to help); and charities struggle to offer competitive salaried roles. Charitable organisations offer a lifeline to individuals and communities every single day and must be able to continue doing so.

Case study: Banbury Citizen’s Advice

Citizen’s Advice in Banbury are using their grant of £5,000 to create an online drop-in service for clients facing complex issues to access bespoke support quickly and easily. They explain:

“With rising debt problems due to the cost-of-living crisis, the debt advice we offer has become increasingly critical to those who are already disadvantaged. Receiving advice and prompt intervention could alleviate immediate problems as well as preventing a downward spiral of poverty and any deterioration of their mental health and their living condition.”

SMALLEST GRANT

£630

to Syrian Sisters

to buy ingredients for a lunch club for refugees and asylum seekers in Rose Hill

MOST TYPICAL GRANT

£6,750

to The Branch Trust

to deliver a budgeting service for low-income families within a local primary school

LARGEST GRANT

£10,000

to OSARCC

to support survivors of sexual violence struggling to escape abuse due to the cost of living



Case study: Oxford Mutual Aid (OMA)



OMA are using their grant of £9,980 to provide food and essential support to some of Oxford's most at-risk residents. Since January 2022, OMA has delivered a minimum of 14,876 parcels and provided weekly support to local community groups and charities, including Syrian Sisters and Oxford Asian Women's Voice. OMA's Managing Director Muireann Speed explains:

"Food shortages have rendered the landscape challenging. With prices skyrocketing across food, fuel and energy, OMA is more in demand than ever. This grant will provide resources to continue our vital work and also to expand it through more in-person wrap-around support. OMA is supporting increasing cases of complex need, so we will upskill staff/volunteers and add administrative support in this area."

Case study: The Porch

The Porch received a grant of £10,000 from the Cost of Living Fund. The Porch is a day centre in Oxford that provides a safe and welcoming space to the homeless and vulnerably housed. The cost-of-living crisis means they are seeing many new faces use their service in recent months, and the impact has been particularly high in the areas such as Blackbird Leys, Rose Hill and Barton. In their application they explain:

"This grant will help us provide crisis intervention and support to the most vulnerable people in Oxford, largely by extending our collaboration with our existing range of partners, and consolidation of a super hub of provision for those hardest hit by the extreme changes in the cost of living. We will work actively and individually with beneficiaries, planning with them on a support plan basis, seeking to be positive and realistic, in outlining appropriate short-term goals."



Case study: Riverside Counselling Service

Riverside Counselling Service supports mental health in Didcot and Berinsfield. They are using a grant of £6,000 from the Cost of Living Fund to cover the staffing costs of the Clinical Managers who lead their services. The Clinical Managers regularly engage with other local services, and these discussions inform day-to-day clinical operations: allocating the right number of counsellors to the area, with the appropriate skills and experience to support the mental health needs of adults and young people. Amanda Collins from Riverside Counselling says:

"We are already seeing how the cost-of-living crisis is impacting peoples' mental health, causing additional stress and anxiety, especially the most vulnerable or those with pre-existing mental health conditions. This is leading to uncontrolled low moods and, for some, more severe depression and panic attacks or increased use of alcohol or drugs, all of which affect relationships, family life and work or employment prospects. Counselling has a lasting impact on people's mental health and future life chances and provides a more preventative solution."

Next steps

Despite the success of our initial cost-of-living funding, we know that local charities and their beneficiaries continue to face issues that can seem insurmountable without philanthropic support. The cost of living remains prohibitively high for many families – but the charities that support them already have the skills and expertise to make a difference.

This is why OCF is committed to giving ongoing support to grassroots charitable organisations over the coming year, helping them to survive until the picture is more hopeful. These charities will continue to provide practical support to enable individuals to survive in the short term, alongside robust support structures and preventative solutions for them to thrive in the long term.

We will continue this work as follows:

- 1. CONSULT:** Refresh our understanding of the local charitable sector in the form of a second consultation (survey and workshop in April 2023)
- 2. FUNDRAISE:** Encourage more local donors, trusts and other institutions to contribute to our Cost of Living Fund, providing further budget for continued support
- 3. DESIGN/INVEST:** Open a second round of grant funding for grassroots charitable organisations in June 2023
- 4. REPORT:** Evaluate the success of the funding provided in our next impact report in autumn 2023.

What you can do

We would be incredibly grateful for the help and support of our generous donors in spreading the word about OCF's cost-of-living response, and, if you feel able to do so, in asking your own contacts to give as you have.

It is not easy to know what to do in response to the ongoing cost-of-living pressures; but we feel that by listening to the local sector and pooling our resources, we can truly make a difference.

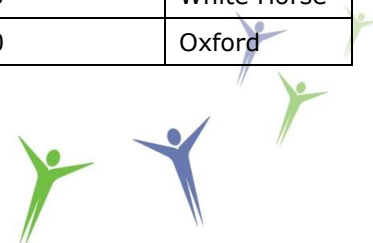
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**MORE ABOUT
THE FUND >>**



Appendix: Grants awarded from the Cost of Living Fund in December 2022

Organisation funded	Amount awarded	Type of activity funded	No of beneficiaries	Local authority
Banbury Community Church	£5,160	Warm spaces	40	Cherwell
Banbury Muslim Mosque Society	£6,199	Food and supplies	210	Cherwell
Barracks Lane Community Garden	£7,950	Warm spaces Food and supplies	75	Oxford
BeFree Young Carers	£10,000	Food and supplies Mental health	360	Vale of White Horse
Berin Centre	£9,618	Food and supplies Advice	150	South Oxfordshire
Bicester Foodbank	£3,333	Food and supplies	100	Cherwell
Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground	£10,000	Warm spaces Mental health	200	Oxford
Blackbird Leys Neighbourhood Support Scheme Ltd	£10,000	Advice	900	Oxford
Charlbury Parochial Church Council (PCC) St Mary's Church, Charlbury	£4,470	Food and supplies Mental health	95	West Oxfordshire
Cherwell Collective, CIC	£10,000	Food and supplies Warm spaces	3,000	Cherwell
Cholsey Day Centre Trust	£7,500	Advice Mental health	50	South Oxfordshire
Citizens Advice North Oxfordshire and South Northamptonshire (Banbury CA Bureau)	£5,000	Advice	300	Cherwell
Citizens Advice Oxfordshire South and Vale	£5,000	Advice	1,200	Vale of White Horse
Community Cupboard, Rose Hill Methodist Church	£8,000	Food and supplies	84	Oxford
DAMASCUS P.C.C.	£8,130	Warm spaces	300	Vale of White Horse
Didcot Community Partnership	£5,180	Warm spaces Food and supplies	350	South Oxfordshire
Donnington Doorstep Family Centre	£9,674	Warm spaces Food and supplies	300	Oxford
Down to Earth Community Cafe CIC	£2,480	Warm spaces Food and supplies	500	Vale of White Horse
Emmaus	£8,562	Homeless support	40	Oxford
Food for Charities / Oxford City Council	£2,780	Food and supplies	120	Vale of White Horse
Gatehouse	£10,000	Homeless support	250	Oxford



Organisation funded	Amount awarded	Type of activity funded	No of beneficiaries	Local authority
Grove Parochial Church Council, St John the Baptist Grove - GroW Families	£7,000	Food and supplies	350	Vale of White Horse
Home-Start Oxford	£10,000	Family support	450	Oxford
Leys CDI	£7,500	Food and supplies Warm spaces	130	Oxford
NOMAD	£5,000	Food and supplies	100	South Oxfordshire
Oxford Mutual Aid	£9,980	Food and supplies Advice	2,500	Oxford
Oxford Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre	£10,000	Sexual abuse support	127	Oxford
Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support	£7,110	Advice Mental health	648	Cherwell
Red Kite Family Centre	£750	Food and supplies	200	South Oxfordshire
Refugee Resource	£7,684	Advice Mental health	60	Oxford
Riverside Counselling Service	£6,000	Mental health	95	South Oxfordshire
Rose Hill Junior Youth Club	£8,300	Food and supplies	250	Oxford
Sunshine Centre	£8,587	Warm spaces Food and supplies	4,300	Cherwell
Syrian Sisters	£630	Food and supplies	150	Oxford
The Branch Trust	£6,750	Advice Warm spaces	300	West Oxfordshire
The Parasol Project	£5,580	Family support	200	Oxford
The Porch	£10,000	Homeless support	200	Oxford
The Wychwoods Day Centre Ltd	£988	Food and supplies	25	West Oxfordshire
Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall	£690	Warm spaces	50	Vale of White Horse
Waste2taste, Ltd	£9,580	Food and supplies	1,100	Oxford
West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice Bureau	£10,000	Advice	3,000	West Oxfordshire
Wychwood Baptist Church (outreach work now run through the 'Life Centre')	£5,000	Food and supplies Warm spaces	150	West Oxfordshire
TOTAL	£286,165		23,009	

