



Cost of Living Fund Donor Report

March 2024

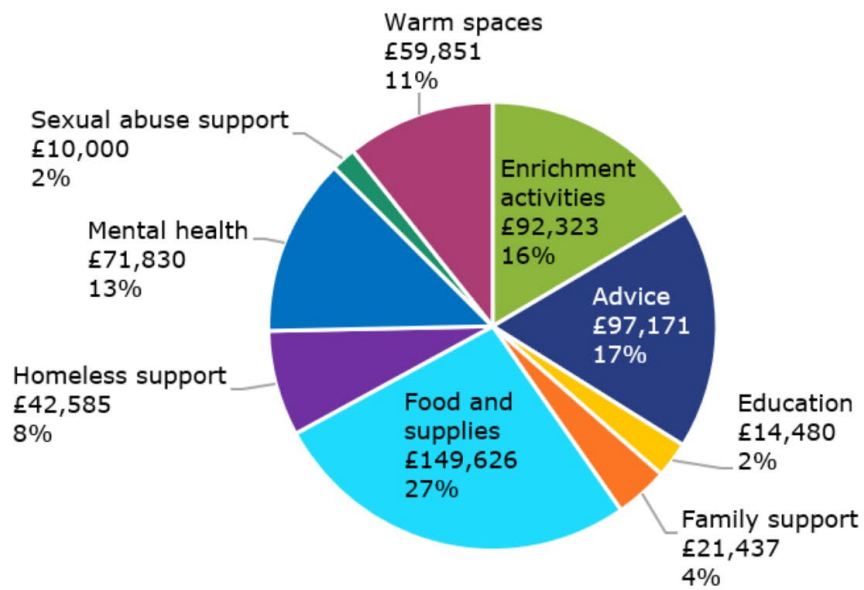
2022 and 2023 overview



£559k in all-time grants awarded to **77** organisations



49k direct beneficiaries



9* all-time themes funded

*Based on the one main theme supported by each grantee. The majority supported additional themes.



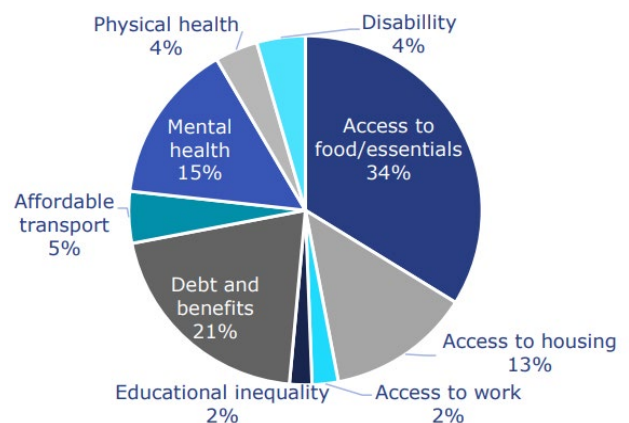
Introduction

In July 2023, the Cost of Living Fund awarded £273,000 in its second round of grants, reaching 35 local charitable organisations.

Building on the first round of funding in September 2022, this round focused on continued support to help community organisations tackle the cost of living and build more resilience. These grants were funded by OCF and a further £100,000 from Oxfordshire County Council, as well as a pool of other generous local trusts, businesses, Oxford colleges and members of the public.

In order to design this second round, we went back to our network for an update about the current critical challenges and [published a report](#) in May 2023 with our conclusions. The consultation showed that some charities were struggling to survive, let alone thrive. However, by continuing to support urgent needs, we wanted our grants to also offer ways to build more resilience in communities, by empowering the grassroots organisations that people really trust to offer additional services or make cross-referrals.

Biggest issues for Oxfordshire communities (OCF Sector Consultation, September 2022)



The continued need

In October 2022, inflation was at 11.1%, the highest rate in 40 years. Although it eventually [fell to 3.8%](#) by February 2024, years of increased costs have eroded individual and charity reserves. With state provision continuing to shrink, charities play a pivotal role in delivering vital services, but are finding it increasingly difficult to continue supporting vulnerable people. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) [revealed in November 2023](#) that with the funding they receive and the effect of inflation, **73% of charities can't meet current demand for the services they deliver**, putting many of them at crisis point.

Despite a new price cap from April 2024, energy bills still [remain 49% higher](#) than pre-energy crisis levels. Those on the lowest incomes are struggling with a burden of debt built up during the toughest times, and continue to be unable to pay for basic standard of living costs such as food or heating.

Persistent debt and poverty also have a knock-on effect on other issues, such as wellbeing and education. In March 2024 the [Department for Education](#) revealed that more than one in three pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds were persistently absent last year, and that absence levels are still more than double the level seen before COVID.

The same goods and services costing **£10,000 in 2021** now cost **£11,856 in February 2024**

The stats and stories in this report offer some hope for communities in Oxfordshire, showcasing the absolutely crucial work of our dynamic and resourceful local charitable sector.

This is why OCF remains dedicated to raising awareness and funds around the cost of the essentials needed for living locally, and is committed to another round of grant funding towards winter 2024. This report shares details of what has been achieved so far through our Cost of Living Fund with the support of our generous donors and funders, and what we plan next.



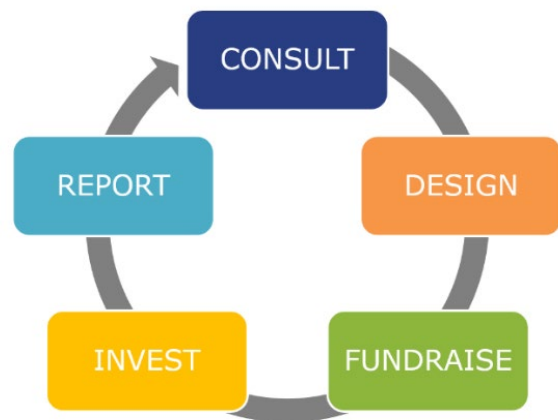
The process

As with our first round of funding in 2022, we **consulted** the charity sector again for an update on the current issues affecting Oxfordshire communities and the support charities needed.

Secondly, after listening to the views of stakeholders, we **designed** our 2023 grants round that met those needs. This round had a particular focus on:

- Urgent work to provide essentials such as food, clothing and accommodation
- Support for mental and physical health
- Building employment and financial capability such as debt advice and digital skills support
- Funding running costs and adjustment/extension of services for the delivery organisations to help them continue to build resilience in the long term.

We used our knowledge to **fundraise** from multiple sources, equipping us to **invest** £273k in the second round of funding to charitable organisations. Funded organisations are asked to **report** back on the outcomes of their grants six months to a year after payment, enabling us to monitor the impact of each grant, as well as begin a new cycle of learning and consulting for the next round of grant funding in 2024.



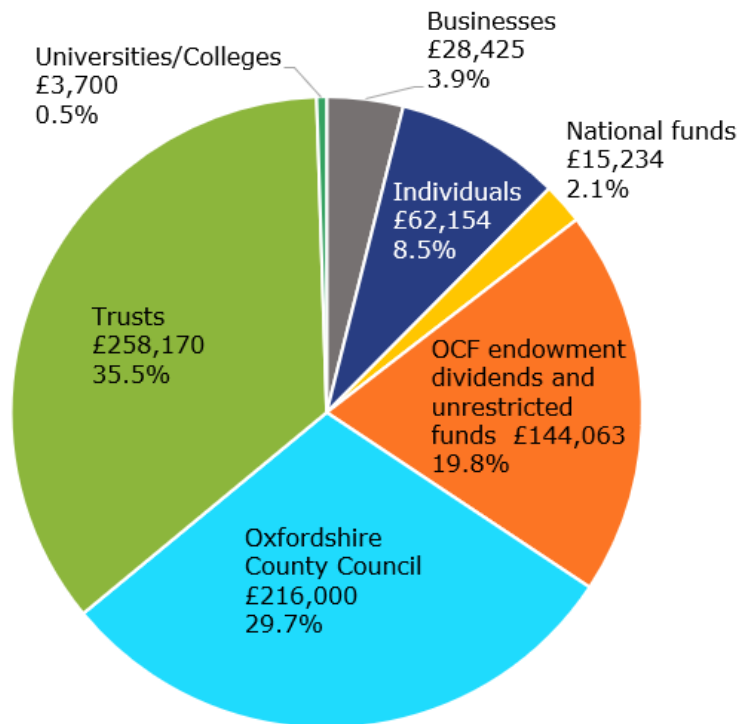
Fundraising

In 2023, **Oxfordshire County Council** provided a second donation of £100k from their own cost-of-living response budget. We are very grateful to them for their significant contributions.

OCF also worked with existing donors, businesses and local trusts to leverage further funding, and contributed a portion of our own unrestricted funds. By pooling these funds together, donors were able to have a larger, targeted impact.

We would like thank the following funders in particular:

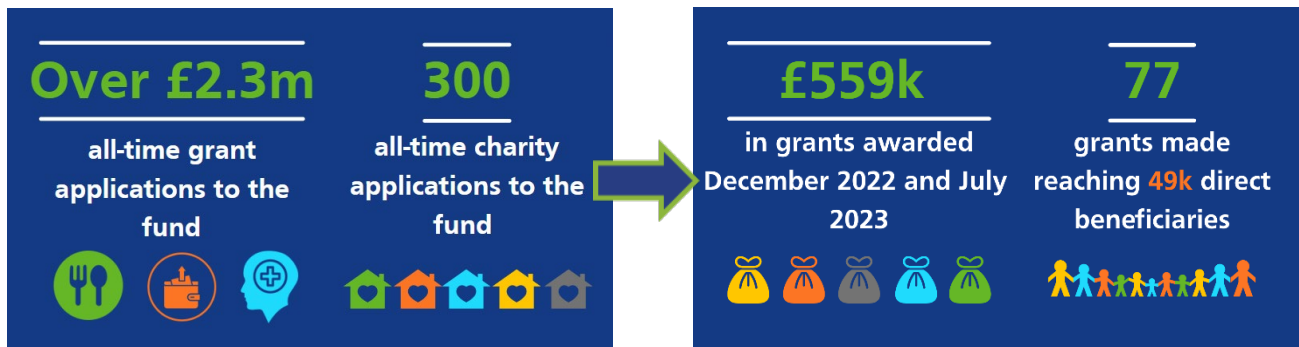
- The Tambour Foundation
- HDH Wills Charitable Trust
- The John Laing Charitable Trust
- The Ian Mactaggart Trust
- The Beeching Trust
- Champriss Charitable Trust
- UK Community Foundations
- Donors to OCF's [Collective Business Fund](#) (RWK Goodman, Prodrive, Wise Funds, Allen Associates, Olamalu, Mills & Reeve and Oxford Pharmagenesis)
- The Barnsbury Charitable Trust
- The Bristol & West '97 Endowment Fund (via Quartet Community Foundation)
- The Brethertons Community Fund
- Saunders Family Fund
- Sovereign Network Group
- All Souls College
- Exeter College
- New College
- Brasenose College
- Christ Church
- Several significant individual donors who wish to remain anonymous.



Investment and results

During the second round of cost-of-living grants, OCF proactively reached out to charitable organisations that were less well known to us, and simplified the application process to increase accessibility. As a result, grant applications were made by a highly diverse group of charitable organisations, including grassroots community hubs, advice centres, food banks and churches.

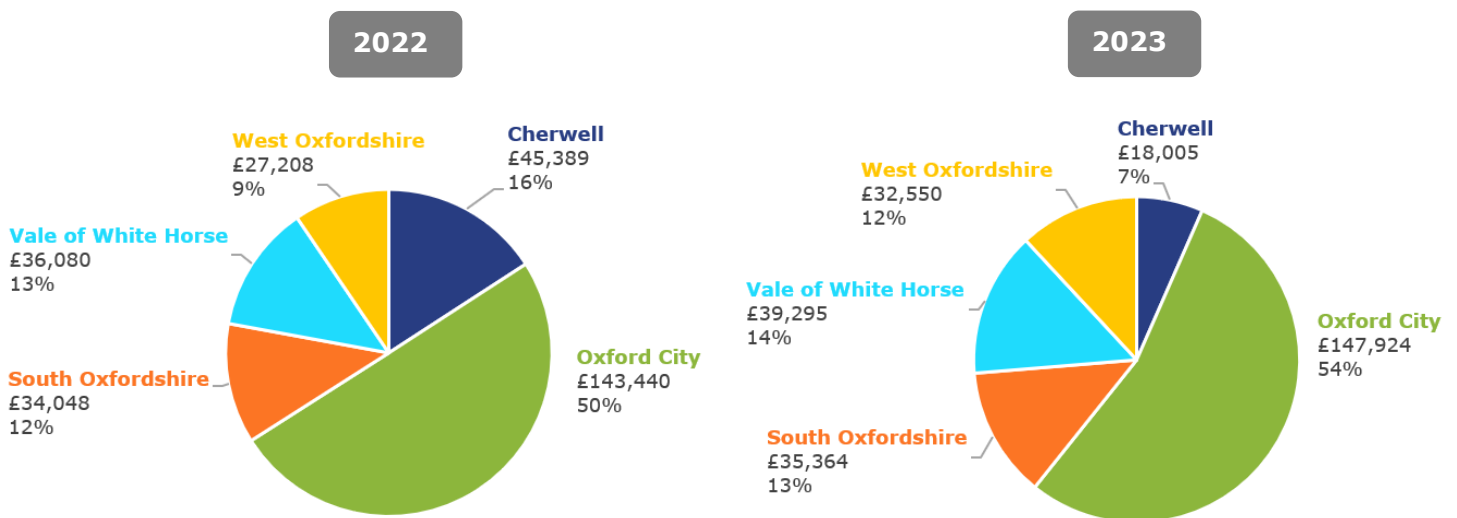
Since December 2022, £559k in grants have been awarded to 77 organisations, reaching nearly 50,000 direct beneficiaries across the county. A full list of the grants made in each round can be found in the appendix.



Once again, we would like to thank our volunteer Grants Panel. The panel is a diverse group of people with long experience of the charity sector, either as beneficiaries, staff or volunteers, 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.

Geographical spread

The pie charts below show grants awarded by local authority for 2022 and 2023.



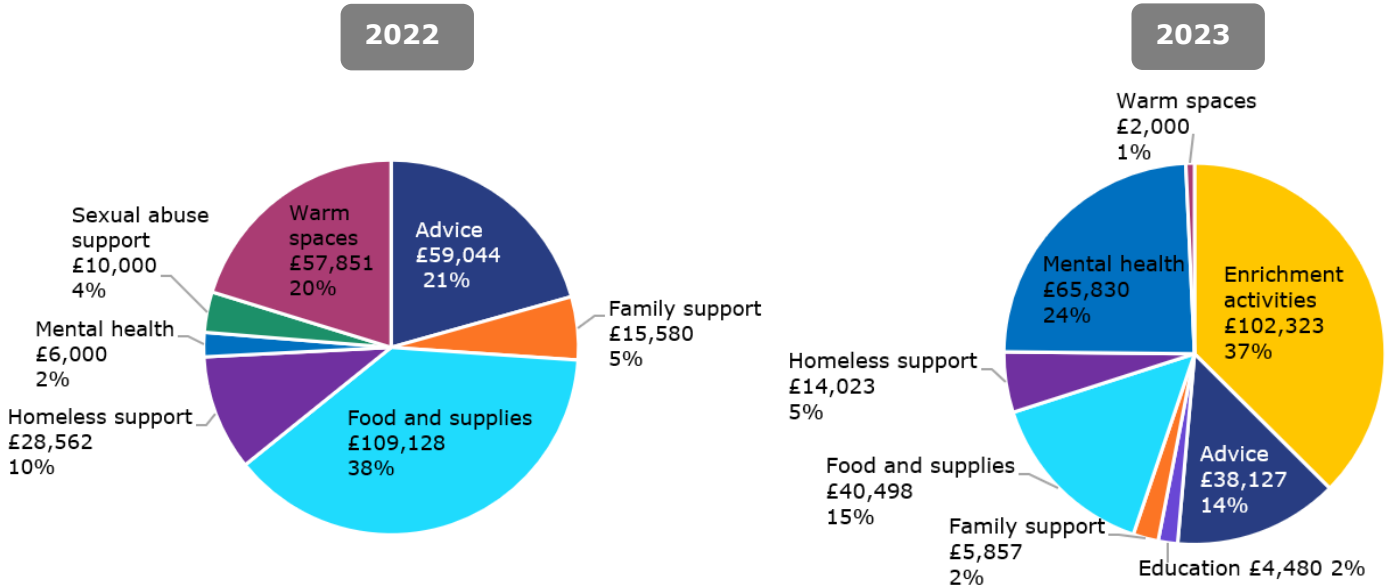
Oxford City contains 24 wards within its boundary, and has the largest concentration of charities. This area includes six of the most deprived wards in the county. The most deprived areas on the [Income Deprivation Affecting Children measure](#) (IMD 2019) are in parts of Blackbird Leys, Littlemore and Rose Hill, and Iffley wards, which are all within the Oxford City boundary.



Key activities supported


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

Funding in 2022 focused on grantees providing immediate, practical support for essentials such as food and clothing. Funding in 2023 had a greater focus on long-term wellbeing, with grantees helping people to not only survive but thrive by building more sustainable habits. Round 2 of funding was delivered at the start of summer 2023, compared to round 1 in December 2022, so the need for warm spaces was less, but enrichment activities for the holidays were essential (including sports and physical activity, arts and crafts, clubs, training courses, and workshops). The pie charts show the main themes supported in 2022 and 2023.



It is important to note that the majority of the 77 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 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.

SMALLEST GRANT	MOST TYPICAL GRANT	LARGEST GRANT
 <p>£1,000 to Kidlington Good Neighbour Scheme to provide advice, information and personal support to residents</p>	 <p>£7,794 to Mill Stream Day Centre to support wages, energy bills, cleaning, and meals for beneficiaries</p>	 <p>£10,000* *£10,000 awarded to 7 charities in 2023 to Oxford Winter Night Shelter to maintain and expand their services to homeless and vulnerable people</p>



2023 case studies

SYRCOX

Food and supplies

Syrian Community in Oxfordshire (SYRCOX) are using their grant of £10,000 to deliver emergency food parcels every Thursday to disadvantaged people in Oxfordshire. The food parcels contain ingredients and recipe cards for specific dishes around the world, with different cuisines introduced regularly. The parcels teach families how to cook healthy and nutritious meals that are affordable and help break them out of a cycle of bad health and reliance on expensive ready-made meals. The food parcels give families hope for a better future by alleviating hunger and poverty, leading to improved mental health. They also help build relationships between people in the community.



The Living Room

Homeless support

The Living Room is a day centre where people experiencing homelessness in Oxford receive hospitality and compassion. As the cost of living has increased, there has been a higher demand for this service, with more and more people struggling to make ends meet. A grant of £4,023 from OCF is being used to continue to provide a safe space for everyone who needs it. Facilities include a hot shower, the ability to wash clothes, use of laptops and supportive company. Since its inception in 2021 the Living Room has served 70 rough sleepers and vulnerable people, of which 46 have subsequently been housed. Many of these guests are coming in to have support with things that build resilience such as combatting loneliness, receiving help with life administration like bills and forms, as well as having food if they are short on money.



Didcot Community Partnership

Advice/education

Didcot Community Partnership brings together local voluntary groups and helps them build their capacity, whilst filling gaps in provision of services that benefit children, young people and families in Didcot and the wider community. The charity's Our Patch family centre acts as a community hub, offering a diverse a range of activities such as first aid courses, activities and hot food for families in school holidays, workshops on mental health, and monthly networking meetings and hosted events. Didcot Community Partnership is using their grant of £8,960 to increase opening hours, range of services and communications, building towards a centre that provides open access drop-ins in the mornings, more formal learning activities in the afternoon and is available for other community groups to use in the evenings. Having the capacity to open the family centre more frequently will provide a space for people struggling with anxiety, isolation and/or mental health concerns to come on a regular basis.



Mental Health Natters CIC

Mental health

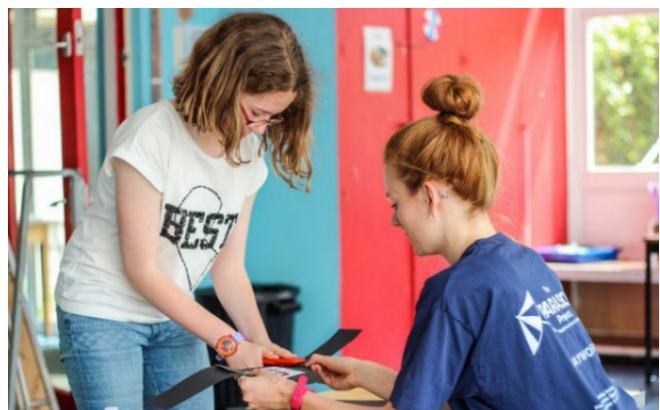
Mental Health Natters CIC are using their £9,980 grant from OCF to develop specialised support of vulnerable children and young people in Abingdon who are struggling with their mental health in the fallout of the cost-of-living crisis. In many cases, children have missed years of school due to ill health, have no friendship groups and are also likely to have undiagnosed special educational needs. The grant will enable consistent morning and afternoon 121 sessions, developing positive relationships with both the young people and their parents and carers. An expert practitioner helps young people therapeutically, restoring their self-belief and trust, so that they can gradually implement a return to class.

The Parasol Project

Enrichment activities

The Parasol Project supports disabled and disadvantaged children and young people experiencing, or at risk of, social exclusion, which has become more acute as cost-of-living pressures rise. The charity is using their grant of £7,608 to upgrade their kitchen to ensure they can continue to effectively support the children that visit them.

They run a children's holiday play scheme in Northway with hard-to-access activities that give children the opportunity to develop through free play, such as bushcraft, arts and crafts, sports, sensory play and fancy dress. The Parasol Project also runs a teenage activity programme where teenagers can get involved in activities like film-making, cooking sessions and kayaking. These inclusive activities have huge benefits for disabled and non-disabled children and young people to build long-term resilience – new friendships are formed, social skills are developed and a level of sensitivity and awareness surrounding disability is established.



Next steps

Our recently published research [Oxfordshire Uncovered](#) reveals that too many of Oxfordshire's residents are facing a daily struggle to provide the basics for living a stable and safe life – or what we have called in the report **unaffordable essentials**.

Rental prices in the county are 31% higher than the national average, and 8% of households are living with fuel poverty. On any one night in Oxfordshire, it is estimated that there are over 400 homeless people across the county, including 160 children. Not being able to afford the essentials can lead to a spiral of instability, debt, ill-health, isolation and lack of opportunity.

In addition, OCF could only award grants to 26% of the total 300 charitable organisations that applied to the Cost of Living Fund in 2023. The need is clearly still great, and Oxfordshire's communities still need our help to build resilience to these pressures and to and future crises.

This is why OCF is committed to giving ongoing support to grassroots charitable organisations that are providing practical support to individuals in the short term, but combining this with robust support structures and preventative solutions for them to thrive in the long term.

To reflect this focus, we have decided to refresh the name of our Cost of Living Fund to be called the **Living Essentials Fund** as we move forward.

What you can do

Thank you so much to every one of the donors and funders who has supported our work in this area since 2022.

As we take forward our Living Essentials Fund, the number one action you can take to support us is to give again to the fund. Donations of every type and level help, as it is through the combined power of local authorities, philanthropists, businesses and trusts that we can make bigger difference.

We would also be incredibly grateful if you, our generous donors, would share the fact that you have supported this work, and encourage your own networks to join you by giving what they can to OCF's Living Essentials Fund.

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**MORE ABOUT
THE FUND >>**



Appendix: Grants awarded from the Cost of Living Fund

December 2022

Organisation funded	Amount awarded	Type of activity funded	No of direct beneficiaries	Local authority
Banbury Community Church	£5,160	Warm spaces	40	Cherwell
Banbury Muslim Mosque Society	£6,199	Food and supplies	215	Cherwell
Barracks Lane Community Garden	£7,950	Warm spaces Food and supplies	80	Oxford
BeFree Young Carers	£10,000	Food and supplies Mental health	430	Vale of White Horse
Berin Centre	£9,618	Food and supplies Advice	183	South Oxfordshire
Bicester Foodbank	£3,333	Food and supplies	50	Cherwell
Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground	£10,000	Warm spaces Mental health	210	Oxford
Blackbird Leys Neighbourhood Support Scheme Ltd	£10,000	Advice	1,000	Oxford
Charlbury Parochial Church Council (PCC) St Mary's Church, Charlbury	£4,470	Food and supplies Mental health	25	West Oxfordshire
Cherwell Collective, CIC	£10,000	Food and supplies Warm spaces	9,442	Cherwell
Cholsey Day Centre Trust	£7,500	Advice Mental health	40	South Oxfordshire
Citizens Advice North Oxfordshire and South Northamptonshire (Banbury CA Bureau)	£5,000	Advice	438	Cherwell
Citizens Advice Oxfordshire South and Vale	£5,000	Advice	659	Vale of White Horse
Community Cupboard, Rose Hill Methodist Church	£8,000	Food and supplies	125	Oxford
DAMASCUS P.C.C.	£8,130	Warm spaces	300	Vale of White Horse
Didcot Community Partnership	£5,180	Warm spaces Food and supplies	820	South Oxfordshire
Donnington Doorstep Family Centre	£9,674	Warm spaces Food and supplies	300	Oxford



Organisation funded	Amount awarded	Type of activity funded	No of direct beneficiaries	Local authority
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	350	Vale of White Horse
Gatehouse	£10,000	Homeless support	147	Oxford
Grove Parochial Church Council, St John the Baptist Grove - GroW Families	£7,000	Food and supplies	985	Vale of White Horse
Home-Start Oxford	£10,000	Family support	789	Oxford
Leys CDI	£7,500	Food and supplies Warm spaces	156	Oxford
NOMAD	£5,000	Food and supplies	1,303	South Oxfordshire
Oxford Mutual Aid	£9,980	Food and supplies Advice	1,879	Oxford
Oxford Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre	£10,000	Sexual abuse support	1,886	Oxford
Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support	£7,110	Advice Mental health	267	Cherwell
Red Kite Family Centre	£750	Food and supplies	234	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	362	Oxford
Sunshine Centre	£8,587	Warm spaces Food and supplies	4,235	Cherwell
Syrian Sisters	£630	Food and supplies	76	Oxford
The Branch Trust	£6,750	Advice Warm spaces	361	West Oxfordshire
The Parasol Project	£5,580	Family support	200	Oxford
The Porch	£10,000	Homeless support	474	Oxford
The Wychwoods Day Centre Ltd	£988	Food and supplies	30	West Oxfordshire
Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall	£690	Warm spaces	50	Vale of White Horse
Waste2taste, Ltd	£9,580	Food and supplies	368	Oxford
West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice Bureau	£10,000	Advice	40	West Oxfordshire



Organisation funded	Amount awarded	Type of activity funded	No of direct beneficiaries	Local authority
Wychwood Baptist Church (outreach work now run through the 'Life Centre')	£5,000	Food and supplies Warm spaces	120	West Oxfordshire
TOTAL	£286,165		29,364	

July 2023

Organisation funded	Amount awarded	Type of activity funded	No of direct beneficiaries	Local authority
Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground	£9,610	Activities	200	Oxford
Citizens Advice North Oxfordshire and South Northamptonshire	£7,537	Advice	560	Cherwell
Citizens Advice Oxford	£9,735	Advice	320	Oxford
Collinwood Road United Reformed Church	£2,000	Warm spaces Activities	50	Oxford
Dance Creative	£8,910	Activities Mental health	150	Oxford
Didcot Community Partnership	£8,960	Mental health Activities Education	250	South Oxfordshire
Didcot TRAIN Youth Project	£8,776	Mental health Activities Education	45	South Oxfordshire
Donnington Tenants and Residents Association	£4,456	Activities	80	Oxford
Grandpont Nursery School and Childcare	£7,900	Activities Education Advice	2,000	Oxford
Grove Parochial Church Council, St John the Baptist Grove - GroW Families	£9,222	Activities Education	400	Vale of White Horse
Ikkaido	£4,480	Education	100	Oxford
International Teams (operating as One Collective UK)	£10,000	Activities	3,500	Oxford
Kidlington Good Neighbour Scheme and Information Centre	£1,000	Advice	167	Cherwell



Organisation funded	Amount awarded	Type of activity funded	No of direct beneficiaries	Local authority
Marston Community Gardening	£9,963	Activities	1,000	Oxford
MEET in Oxford	£9,680	Mental health	50	Oxford
Mental Health Natters CIC	£9,980	Mental health	500	Vale of White Horse
Mill Stream Day Centre	£7,794	Activities	100	South Oxfordshire
MyVision Oxfordshire	£9,955.47	Advice	956	Oxford
Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support	£5,857	Family support Mental health	429	Oxford
Oxfordshire Discovery College	£9,834.12	Mental health	60	South Oxfordshire
Oxford Winter Night Shelter	£4,023	Homeless support Activities	70	Oxford
Restore	£10,000	Mental health Activities	202	Oxford
Root and Branch	£8,600	Mental health Activities	65	Vale of White Horse
South Oxford Community Association	£3,747	Food and supplies Warm spaces Activities	150	Oxford
Stonesfield Village Hall	£5,000	Activities	200	West Oxfordshire
Sunshine Centre	£9,467.50	Activities	5,400	Cherwell
Syrian Community in Oxfordshire SYRCOX	£10,000	Food and supplies	800	Oxford
Syrian Sisters	£10,000	Activities Food and supplies	200	Oxford
The Cedar Community Club	£1,592.51	Food and supplies Activities	50	Vale of White Horse
The Parasol Project	£7,608	Food and supplies Activities	500	Oxford
The Porch	£10,000	Homeless support Activities	248	Oxford
Transition Chipping Norton	£10,000	Activities	250	West Oxfordshire
Vale Community Impact	£9,900	Advice	750	Vale of White Horse
Witney Baby Bank	£7,550	Food and supplies	100	West Oxfordshire



Organisation funded	Amount awarded	Type of activity funded	No of direct beneficiaries	Local authority
Wychwood Baptist Church (outreach work now run through the 'Life Centre')	£10,000	Food and supplies Activities	200	West Oxfordshire
TOTAL	£273,138		20,102	



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