



# YOUR IMPACT 2025

30

Our 30th year of building thriving communities



Oxfordshire  
**Community  
Foundation**

*celebrating 30 years of impact*





# About Oxfordshire Community Foundation

For 30 years Oxfordshire Community Foundation has worked to improve lives and tackle inequality by investing in Oxfordshire's dynamic charitable sector.

By championing grassroots organisations across Oxfordshire, we've helped hundreds of thousands of people overcome hardship, find hope and build brighter futures – all thanks to the generosity of our community of funders.

Since 1995, we have  
**awarded over  
£20 million  
in grants**  
supporting over  
**2,000**  
local organisations



## Thoughts from our Chair and Chief Executive

**As we mark 30 years of service to Oxfordshire, we remain deeply committed to ensuring everyone in our county has a fair chance to thrive.**

Our role is to connect generous donors with grassroots organisations who are making a tangible difference in their communities – often under the radar and against the odds. Oxfordshire may be known for its wealth and beauty but inequality persists, worsened by the long tail of the pandemic and stubbornly high operating costs. Despite being the beating heart of our communities, small charities are stretched further than ever.

Nonetheless, this report is full of stories of hope, and not just from 2025 but looking back over 30 years of results and growth. We are inspired daily by the creativity and compassion of the charities and donors we serve; it's a privilege to work alongside such dedicated people. OCF itself is just one example of a new idea proposed by some bold people which has since flourished into an Oxfordshire institution. We are delighted that 2025 was a record-breaking year of £2.5 million in grants awarded. We are excited about the difference that philanthropy will make to our local community over the next 30 years and beyond.

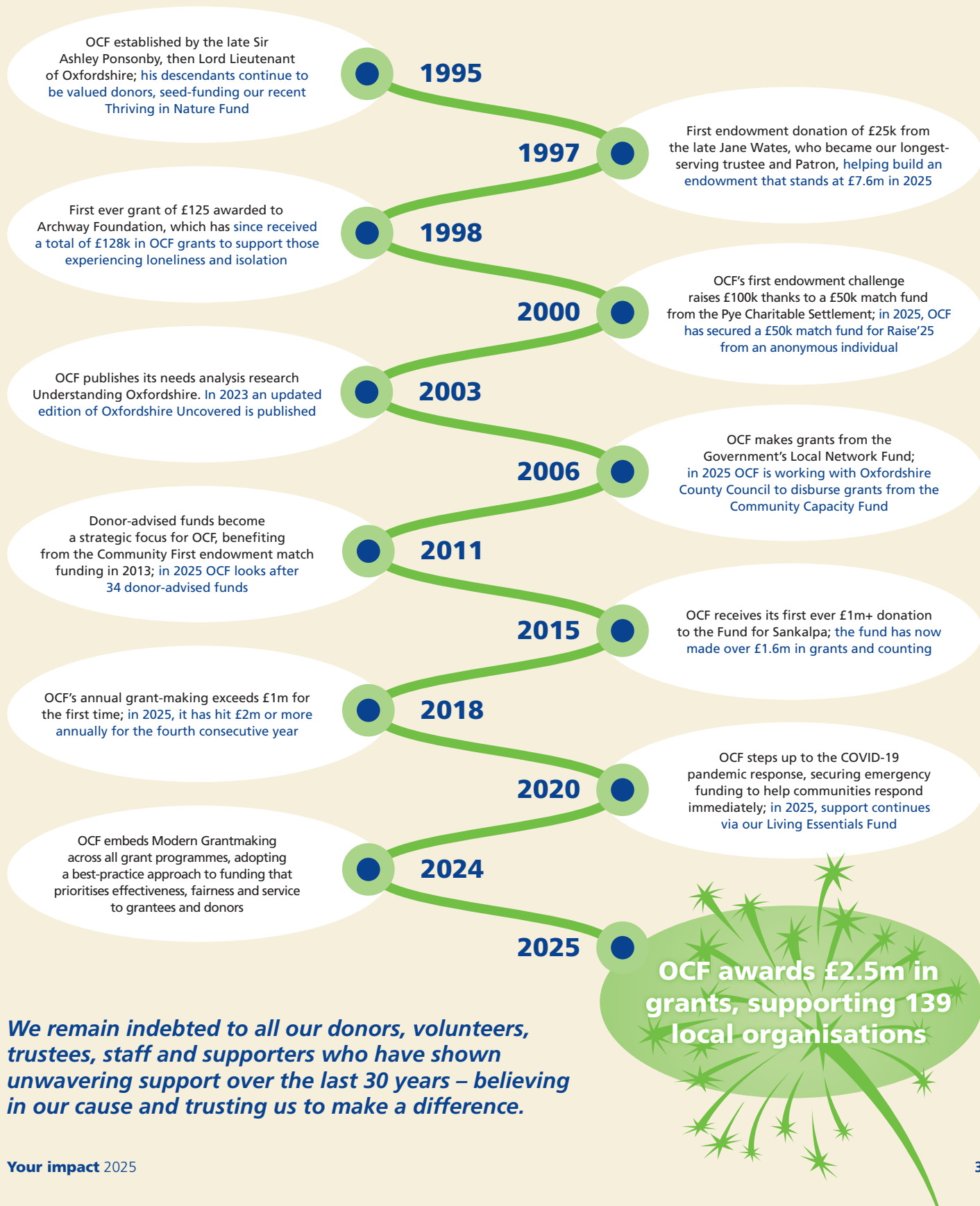
**Ian Busby, Chair**  
**Zoe Sprigings, Chief Executive**

KEEN



# 30 years of empowering Oxfordshire's charities

From the humble beginnings of a few hundred pounds to today's multi-million-pound grant-making, OCF has remained focused on its core purpose: championing the smaller community groups and grassroots local charities.



*We remain indebted to all our donors, volunteers, trustees, staff and supporters who have shown unwavering support over the last 30 years – believing in our cause and trusting us to make a difference.*



# Supporting the **backbone** of local communities

Our grant-making focuses intentionally on Oxfordshire's smallest charities. These organisations are often the linchpin of thriving communities, working tirelessly at the heart of neighbourhoods, despite facing funding challenges.

OCF is proud to prioritise charitable groups with an income under £1 million, with the vast majority of our grantees bringing in less than £500k annually. We have always believed there is something special about small grassroots charities, and recent research quantifies this. They deeply understand local issues because they are run by local people; they welcome people in without form-filling and means-testing; they are at the frontline of addressing emerging social needs; they treat people holistically, even if someone comes in needing food but also needs help with their health; and they can be entrepreneurial and make

quick decisions thanks to flat hierarchies. All of this means that they have the trust of the people they serve and are the first place people turn to.

What's more, these groups offer incredible value for money because they rely so much on volunteers. However, they may not have the skills they need in marketing, fundraising and governance, and they are the least likely to access government contracts. This is why OCF champions philanthropy for these groups – supporting them towards sustainability and growth.

*Small and medium sized charities represent 96% of charities, but receive a 19% share of income*

(NCVO, UK Civil Society Almanac 2024)

*Average expenditure for small charities has risen by almost 12% post-pandemic, compared with a 3% rise in income*

(The Charity Commission)



## STORIES OF HOPE:

**Northway Together** brings people from the Northway estate together to help each other. A first-time grant of £9,600 helped them run a successful kitchen and café – feeding local residents free hot meals with locally grown and surplus food. Trish, a single mum of four, first connected with the organisation through the food bank, and now regularly attends the kitchen café. She says that the café sessions have given her a lifeline, in terms of relief and respite from stress, loneliness and depression.



**The Cornermen** uses exercise to provide mental health support for men in the Didcot area. A grant of £21,000 from OCF helped the group to cover running costs, helping them give one-to-one support to vulnerable men. Mark started visiting The Cornermen when he had to take a break from employment due to anxiety, low self-esteem and depression. Following 15 sessions he is now back in work. He said that being able to openly talk about things with someone who had no investment in any outcome was really helpful.



*"Being able to have an honest conversation about how we are using the grant is working really well. The fact that the grant is not restricted to specific project items is brilliant for grassroots charities."*

Long Mead Foundation



*Claire Hughes, Head of Grants and Inclusion at one of our charity funding advice sessions held around the county*

# Committed to excellence in grant-making

We strive to be a gold-standard grant-maker, working to break down barriers so that funding makes the most impact. Our grant-making is fair, transparent and supportive, guiding even the smallest groups to realise their potential and strengthen local communities.

## Community outreach

Our Grants team runs funding sessions across all five districts of Oxfordshire, connecting with lesser-known groups and hearing about local needs. We guide applicants through our funding opportunities and other sources of support.

## Accessible applications

From drop-in sessions to a simple two-stage process, flexible formats and clear guidance, we make applying for funding as straightforward and inclusive as possible.

## Fair assessment

Applications are assessed with care, using clear criteria and a consistent scoring process to ensure fairness and transparency throughout.

## Feedback

We offer constructive feedback to all unsuccessful applicants, helping them strengthen future applications –

whether to OCF or other funders – and build their capacity for success.

## Access to multiple funders

When a group makes an application to one of our open grants rounds, we go out of our way to secure a grant for them from our whole community of funders, proactively match-making groups with donors based on our knowledge of their philanthropic interests.

For example, we arranged for a grant application from **Nai's House**, a mental health and suicide prevention service that applied to an open round, to be jointly funded by Public Health and the High Sheriff Sally Scott. The grant is supporting young people to build peer-led mental health resilience and prevent suicide.

*Thriving in Nature Fund donors and grantees coming together at a celebration and learning event.*





# Funding priority #1

## Tackling unaffordable essentials

in  
2024  
-25

OCF's Living Essentials Fund helps people with the absolute basics of living a safe and decent life, such as a warm home and food on the table.

OCF's focus in the winter of 2024–25 was to help the most disadvantaged in our county who are struggling to make ends meet. OCF made grants to charitable organisations working with people for whom essentials such as housing, food and heating have become unaffordable, leading them into debt. This collective fund enabled us to bring together funding from a wide range of institutions, trusts and foundations, businesses and statutory organisations.

### Living Essentials Fund

**£270,000** distributed to **33** charitable organisations

*The number of Oxfordshire households living in fuel poverty has increased by 7% in one year since 2024.*

(Oxfordshire JSNA)

*The number of households in Oxford facing the threat of homelessness has doubled since 2024.*

(Homeless Oxfordshire)



### STORIES OF HOPE:

A grant of £10,000 has enabled **Faringdon Food Bank** to increase the size of their food parcels and allow more flexibility in where they obtain their supplies. One family with five children had been placed in sheltered housing with no provision for bedding or cooking equipment. Going beyond their normal remit, Faringdon Food Bank sourced mattresses, pots, dishes and cutlery from other charities and local shops. This enabled the family to establish a minimal but decent standard of living.



**Witney CAP Debt Centre** received a grant of £8,565 to cover part of a Debt Coach's salary, extending their reach to provide debt advice in Woodstock, and offering three Life Skills courses per year. Their work is helping people like Sarah, a young single mum. When CAP visited her at home, they found out that her washing machine had been broken for a number of months and she was hand-washing all their clothes in the bath, using cold water because she couldn't afford to run the hot tap. They were able to purchase a new washing machine, which immediately made a huge difference. CAP assisted Sarah to clear her significant debts and manage them long term.



# Funding priority #2

## Addressing poor health

in  
2024  
-25

Through our Thriving in Nature grants and Better Mental Health funding, OCF is tackling physical and mental health challenges that limit the chance to work and be independent.

Now in its second year, the Thriving in Nature Fund aims to help more people prosper by engaging with green spaces and the rural environment. The focus is on improving health and wellbeing, and nurturing work opportunities, by supporting charitable organisations to unite people with nature. This innovative fund has been OCF's first opportunity to implement the latest best practice in trust-based grant-making, with multi-year funding, grantee-led impact measurement, relationship-based support, and introductions to expert mentors.

### Thriving in Nature Fund

**£494,000** distributed to **14** charitable organisations

### Better Mental Health Fund

**£210,000** distributed to **8** charitable organisations

During 2024-25, OCF also worked in partnership with Public Health Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire District Council to deliver mental health funding. It targeted people who are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues, in particular pregnant women and new mums; autistic children and young people; LGBTQ+ young adults; and men in midlife, especially those facing relationship challenges.



### STORIES OF HOPE:

A grant of £9,884 has enabled a two-year partnership project between **21st Century Thame and Her Land**, improving the mental and physical health of women and girls by connecting them with nature and the land. Up to 120 women are taking part in activities such as tree planting, land restoration, and establishing a walled garden at a derelict farm in Oxfordshire. Additionally, the project will ensure that the site's unique heritage assets become accessible, inclusive, valued spaces for the community now and in the future.



**Home-Start** provides emotional and practical support to parents with young children. A grant of £36,761 has allowed them to enhance their offer for pregnant women and new mothers, including their families, by providing enhanced Perinatal and Infant Mental Health training to volunteers as well as 1:1 home-visiting support for new parents. One mum commented: "I was referred to Home-Start and was not happy about it. I didn't want someone in my home or life as I thought they would be like social services. The day came and I had the pleasure of meeting the most wonderful woman I ever met. My volunteer, Helen, helped me go from a depressed, angry, unorganised teen mum to the mum I wanted to be. Most of all, I gained companionship, a friend, and someone I could look up to, and was able to beat my depression."



# Funding priority #3

## Alleviating loneliness and fear

in  
2024  
-25

Our Community Capacity grants help adults be more connected to people and support in their area, thanks to funding from Oxfordshire County Council and other donors.

Local community organisations play a huge role in supporting people to thrive in their neighbourhoods, improving their quality of life and meaning they are less likely to turn to government services. This fund reduces isolation and loneliness, increasing people's resilience, particularly within under-served communities that struggle to find support through traditional services.

OCF was able to give a 20% uplift to the funding provided by the County Council by matching grant applications with some of the named funds we hold on behalf of donors.

### Community Capacity Fund

**£417,000** distributed to **30** charitable organisations



### STORIES OF HOPE:

A grant of £20,000 has helped **Maymessy** to collaborate with a Wantage GP practice to provide social prescribing activities for groups of older men who are widowed. The sessions offer cooking advice, recipes and a much-needed opportunity to reduce social isolation. Participants have learned how to batch-cook fresh meals, are now more confident in the kitchen, and crucially, have made new connections and built their resilience.



**Oxfordshire Volunteer Befriending Service**, based in Banbury, received a grant of £8,920 to improve the lives of unpaid family carers by offering regular respite breaks. One lady who cares for her husband with severe heart problems and dementia was referred by her GP after feeling depressed and lonely. She said: "For four hours each week I can forget about my caring role and get some exercise, and then share coffee, cake and a laugh with my friends. My anxiety hasn't completely gone, but I feel more able to cope with my husband."

**FLAG DV** offers free family law advice and support to victim-survivors of domestic abuse in Oxfordshire, supporting them with legal cases such as divorce, separation, finances and child protection. They received a £7,500 grant to recruit a dedicated staff member, as well as ongoing running costs to deliver their services. Rachel contacted FLAG DV after emerging from an abusive relationship. They connected her with a volunteer solicitor who advised her how she could proceed with divorce proceedings. Rachel said: "FLAG DV was a real beacon of hope when I needed it."



# Funding priority #4

## Countering lack of opportunity

in  
2024  
-25

Grants from several of our named funds are supporting young people to improve their long-term life chances, building resilience and bolstering their engagement with education.

**Named funds**  
**£658,000**

distributed to  
**25** charitable  
organisations  
with a focus on  
education and  
employment

Despite Oxfordshire being home to some of the world's leading educational institutions, too many of our children are faced with challenges that limit their academic and career opportunity. Several of our fundholders direct their grants to tackle this issue head on.



### STORIES OF HOPE:

The **Abingdon Bridge (TAB)** supports young people to build resilience, strengthen their sense of belonging, and take positive action in their lives and communities. Grants from The Didcot Powerhouse Fund and the Step Change Fund, totalling £55,000, have helped them reach more young people by recruiting a skilled Community Engagement Manager.

*"When I first came to the charity, I was lost, I didn't believe I had a voice or a place where I belonged. The free counselling gave me the strength to open up, to heal, and to see that it mattered. Now, as a youth ambassador, I'm proud to give back to the same community that helped me. This charity didn't just change my outlook, and help me recover, it gave me hope, purpose, and a place of belonging I never knew I needed."*



OCF has been proud to champion the work of **One-Eighty** since its early days as a start-up in 2011. The organisation helps young people and their families to improve mental health and re-engage with education. This year a grant of £11,740 was awarded thanks to the Taylor Family Fund to continue a long-term partnership between Abbey Woods Academy in Berinsfield and the charity. This preventative initiative supports year 6 pupils to focus on mental wellbeing and resilience as they face a range of different challenges ahead in the transition to secondary school. One parent said: "Before, when picking my son up from school, he would always say he was sad and upset, but now he tells me how happy he is."

**Challow and Childrey Cricket Club** received a grant of £2,500 from The Beard Charitable Foundation, matched by £2,500 from the Oxfordshire Lieutenancy, to develop youth cricket at King Alfred's Academy School in Wantage. Funding has contributed to the employment of a cricket coach to improve the cricket facilities and provide opportunities for children from challenging backgrounds who may not otherwise have the chance to participate in the sport.



# Long-term impact, together

Collective giving allows multiple donors to pool their funds around a particular theme or focus, investing across a portfolio of charities and making a bigger difference together than they could alone.

The combined power of donors' funding, as well as their passion for the issue, means these funds have great momentum and can make a long-term positive difference to our communities.

**in 2024-25** **£1.4 million**  
distributed in grants through  
six collective funds

Now in its 11th year, the **Step Change Fund** is our biggest collective giving fund, having awarded around £2.5 million in grants since its inception. This fund supports medium-sized social organisations in Oxfordshire that are already making a positive difference, awarding substantial grants to strengthen them over the long-term. The Step Change Fund invests in back-office systems and processes, physical spaces and upskilling of staff that underpin the charity's core mission.

OCF is also proud to hold the **Didcot Powerhouse Fund** and the **B4 Raise Fund**, both of which empower local corporate donors to support charities that mean something to their founders and employees.



## STORIES OF HOPE:

**Yellow Submarine** is an award-winning Oxfordshire charity that believes people with learning disabilities and autism deserve to live life to the full. OCF provided Yellow Submarine with their first ever grant, or as their founder calls it, "a vote of confidence". Since then, OCF has worked closely with the charity with funding and advice, in particular via three grants from the Step Change Fund. Their traineeship programme builds workplace confidence and helps trainees secure employment.

Kate Sankey of Yellow Submarine says: "We have been so very grateful for the support of OCF, it has enabled us to develop opportunities which have been life changing for Yellow Submarine and our members. Including most recently, their support of our new bakery, which has allowed us to increase the capacity of our Life Changing Bakes production whilst supporting more trainees."



**Flo's The Place in the Park** is a community hub in Florence Park, east Oxford. Established in 2018 following a successful campaign to keep the former children's centre in local use, it now serves as a vibrant anchor organisation including family health, food injustice, nurseries, a café and refill shop. Alongside numerous grants from OCF, the Step Change Fund has been particularly instrumental in Flo's growth – firstly with a grant of £55,000 in 2021, which established a new 'Flo's Trading' subsidiary and reduced the reliance on grant funding; and again in 2024 with a grant of £28,650 to maximise their income-generating spaces more effectively, enabling profit to be reinvested into its social mission.

*"Social anxiety and isolation have had a big impact on my life. I first got involved at Flo's when I started volunteering and I now have a paid role front of house in the café. My life has changed for the better very quickly. Now, everywhere I look, I see opportunities."*



# Help us to shape the next 30 years of impact

If any place can truly tackle the inequalities it faces, it is Oxfordshire: where we benefit from a wealth of intellectual and financial potential, and an incredible range of community groups.

Over the next 30 years, our county is set to witness game-changing growth and development projects, from cutting-edge science and technology innovation, to vastly enlarged energy and transport infrastructure across the Thames Valley and beyond.

OCF is committed to building thriving communities in the face of change, ensuring that no-one in Oxfordshire is left behind. We have the networks and expertise to make sure that every local neighbourhood has what it needs to face the future.

## Here's what you can do to help:

### Personal giving

Tailor your local philanthropy to your personal interests or those of your family

- Set up a named fund
- Leave a legacy in your will
- Become a Patron or Friend
- Transfer shares or property

### Collective giving

Give with others who share your philanthropic interests

- Donate to our Living Essentials Fund
- Join our Thriving in Nature Fund
- Contribute to Step Change or Didcot Powerhouse

### Corporate giving

Support your organisation's CSR objectives or local grant-making strategy

- Get involved with B4 Raise
- Set up a community benefit fund
- Consider our grant-making services

*FarmAbility*



# A huge **thank you** to our supporters from the past year!

## Fundholders

B4 Raise Fund  
Beard Charitable Foundation  
The Bob and Alison Michael Memorial Fund  
Brethertons Community Fund  
David and Claudia Harding Foundation  
The Daymark Fund  
Didcot Powerhouse Fund  
Fund for Sankalpa  
The Harriet Ryley Foundation  
Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee Legacy Fund for East Oxford  
High Sheriff of Oxfordshire's Charitable Fund  
High Sheriff John May Fund  
Jane Wates Patron Fund  
J B Crawford Estate Fund  
Komorun Nessa Fund  
The Maggie Evans Fund  
Meech Centenary Trust  
Midcounties Co-operative Community Fund  
Ocean Empower Fund  
OYAP Legacy Fund  
Ponsonby Family Fund  
Relate Oxfordshire Trust  
RWK Goodman Community Fund  
Saunders Family Fund  
The Scott Fund  
Snyder Moon Family Fund  
Step Change Fund  
The Taylor Family Fund  
The Tim Stockdale Foundation

## Our Patrons and Friends

*Many of our donors and funders choose to remain anonymous, and we are incredibly grateful to them too.*

## Corporate sponsors

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## Statutory funders

Oxfordshire County Council  
Oxfordshire Public Health  
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West Oxfordshire District Council

## Trusts and foundations

The Beeching Trust  
Champriss Charitable Trust  
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HDH Wills Charitable Trust  
Helianthus Charitable Trust  
Ian Mactaggart Trust  
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