



IMPACT REPORT

2024



CONTENTS

Oxfordshire Youth	2
Vision, Mission, Values	3
Our Work	4
STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Supporting the Youth Sector	5
SPOTLIGHT: Centre for Youth Innovation - Improving Access to Resources and Safe Spaces	8
SPOTLIGHT: Youth Work Practitioners Wellbeing Project	9
STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Driving System Change through Strategic Partnerships	10
STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Supporting Young People	12
SPOTLIGHT: Young People's Supported Accommodation (YPSA)	16
SPOTLIGHT: YPSA Aidan's Journey	18
What's Next? Coming up in 2024/25	19



NOTE FROM OUR CHAIR

Oxfordshire Youth gets things done.

It empowers young people to use their voice to make an impact on their lives, their aspirations and their communities; it advocates for the importance of youth work in a system that often sees young people as makers of problems rather than the instigators of often innovative solutions; it brings organisations together to collaborate and co-create; and it works to provide direct support for those at risk of marginalisation.

Its staff and all who are associated with it are passionate, action-centred and utterly, utterly committed to doing the best for, and importantly with, young people. That's why I feel so fortunate, and not a little overawed, to have been asked to chair the trustees of this extraordinary charity. I have seen first hand the difference that great youth work and youth workers can make. They change lives for the better; they raise horizons and they help young people dream big – and realise those dreams.

Oxfordshire Youth is at the centre of making these things happen for the young people of our county – and its impact is nothing short of inspirational.



John May

NOTE FROM OUR CEO

2023 saw the launch of our new strategy, “The Power of Youth Work”. I am so proud of what we have managed to achieve in a world where it can feel as if everything is against young people and the charity sector. We are committed, passionate and action-focused when it comes to making a difference for the young people of Oxfordshire and beyond.

We wholeheartedly believe and know that we are stronger together. Our partnerships are integral to the outcomes we achieve. We love convening and we are good at it. We bring people together to be alongside each other, to hear from voices not heard, to upskill, and to challenge the status quo. Collaboration enables better outcomes for young people. We hope you enjoy hearing about some of our fabulous work.



Jodie Lloyd-Jones

OXFORDSHIRE YOUTH

Oxfordshire Youth is a dedicated and highly professional youth development charity working directly with young people aged 8-25, and the grassroots leaders, volunteers, and youth organisations that support them.

With over 75 years of expertise in youth work, we are doing whatever it takes to ensure that wherever a young person's starting point in life may be, or whatever the challenges are that they face, they have the skills, support, and connections to thrive.

We work directly with over 1800 young people, 1300 youth workers, and 150 organisations who collectively provide services for over 32,000 young people across the county. This provision is under-resourced, underfunded, and yet achieving small but mighty outcomes.



VISION

A future in which every young person has the skills, support and connections to thrive.

MISSION

Through the power of youth work we transform young people's lives, unite communities and tackle inequality of opportunity.



VALUES

- 1 We listen and respond to the wisdom of young people
- 2 We commit to anti-oppressive practice
- 3 We champion wellbeing
- 4 We prioritise reflection, learning and growth
- 5 We act with integrity and courage
- 6 We make space for innovation and fun!

We believe that youth work is for all.

We also recognise that there are many barriers placed on young people depending on intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, family dynamics, economic status, experience of trauma, and geographical location.

We will not stop until every young person has the skills, support and connections they need to thrive. For Oxfordshire Youth, this means that we will target some of our work to provide more equitable opportunities for young people.

OUR WORK

Our three strategic goals will address the problems we have identified through a series of programmes.



SUPPORTING THE YOUTH SECTOR

Goal 1 - Young people are accessing high-quality youth work and youth work practices that meet their needs

We provide essential convening, training and support to the vibrant, talented, under-resourced and hugely committed voluntary and community youth sector across Oxfordshire.



DRIVING SYSTEM CHANGE THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Goal 2 - Outcomes for young people are improved through meaningful cross-sector partnerships

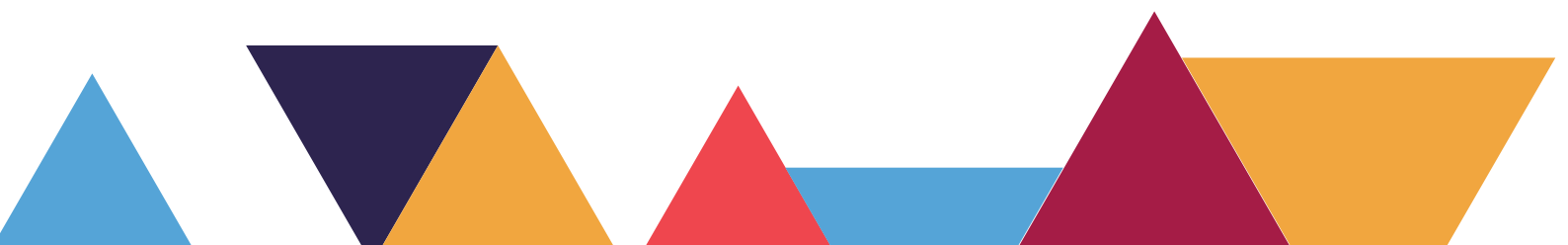
We bring diverse sectors and people together, transcending silos and barriers to challenge the status quo. Partnerships are central to sustaining and amplifying the transformative power of social impact.



SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

Goal 3 - Young people are actively engaged with their communities

We take a youth work approach to our youth forums, supported housing provision and youth development programmes. We provide youth leadership development, accredited opportunities and inclusive environments for young people to actively engage with peers and trusted adults, develop new skills, build confidence and lead well.





SUPPORTING THE YOUTH SECTOR

- Between 2011 and 2021, funding of youth provision declined by **64%** in real terms, from **£947m** in 2011/12 to **£341m** in 2021/22. Targeted youth work (for young people with additional or specific needs) has been prioritised over universal (open access) provision; funding for both declined by **57%** and **71%** respectively between 2011/12 and 2021/22.¹
- The number of youth clubs operating in local authorities nearly halved between 2011/12 and 2018/19.²
- The decline in youth service provision across the board has seen many leave the sector, increasing the pressure on the remaining services even further in the context of a mental health crisis among our young people and the lasting social effects of the Covid pandemic.
- **19 out of 25** youth centres operated by Oxfordshire County Council closed between 2011 and 2023.
- In 2021, it was estimated that recruitment of qualified youth workers had fallen to less than **300** a year for a system that is geared for an annual intake of up to **2,000** undergraduates nationally.³
- It is estimated **20,000** entry-level youth workers and trained volunteers are needed with Level 2 or 3 qualifications in youth work to meet demand.³

1. Abreu et al, 2024. *Trends in Funding Levels for Youth Services*, available at <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/>

2. Local Government Association, 2024, *Re-thinking Local: Youth Services*, available at <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns>

3. NYA & YMCA, 2021, *Times Running Out*, available at <https://nya.org.uk/>



“At a time when young people are facing severe challenges – to their mental health, employment prospects, hope for the future, even physical safety... youth work is a proven solution to the challenges young people are facing but it is being ignored. We cannot afford not to invest in youth work. Youth work is setting young people up for life.”

Jacob Diggle, UK Youth Chief Impact Officer





OUR WORK 2023/24

89
**specialised
training sessions**

for professionals across the youth sector, hosted online or in person at Oxfordshire Youth or onsite, and reaching

1421
**youth work
practitioners**

29
**youth workers
enrolled**

in training for a Level 2 award in Youth Work Principles, encouraging young people and people with lived experience to work in the sector.

37
**youth work
practitioners
and leaders from
the sector**

embarked on a groundbreaking programme to support the wellbeing of youth work practitioners.

82
organisations

across the county joined the Changemaker Network, benefitting from training, bespoke support, access to information about funding opportunities, advice on governance, job opportunities and DBS checks.



- **325** participants from teams working in the children and young people's workforce received Introduction to Adolescent Mental Health training (a fully funded 5-6 hour workshop).
- A Youth Sector Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) group was formed, bringing together youth work leaders from the global majority to enhance delivery of tailored support for organisations working with at-risk and under-served communities.
- We provided intensive support to help youth provision, particularly in rural communities and those led by the global majority, including community youth provision services in Charlbury, Banbury, Wolvercote, Wallingford, Chinnor, Thame and Blackbird Leys.
- We hosted the Youth Work Conference 2024, bringing together **59** youth work practitioners from **28** organisations.

"Most valued? The opportunities to ask questions, to reflect and develop skills"

Participant, Youth Work Conference

Training workshops provided:

- Emergency First Aid @ Work
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Suicide Prevention
- Reflective Practice session on the topic of engaging with young men
- Level 2 and Level 3 Safeguarding in partnership with OSCB
- Exploitation and Gang Associated Harms
- Cranstoun Drug Use Training for Professionals
- Being Funding Ready
- Impact of Social Media
- Introduction to Adolescent Mental Health workshops



Kay Rufai, S.M.I.L.E.-ing Boys Project, Keynote speaker at Youth in Mind 2024



OUR IMPACT

Youth in Mind brings together young people, representatives from the voluntary sector, local government, commissioners, education, independent practitioners and researchers to focus on improving outcomes for young people.

340 delegates participated in our annual Youth in Mind conference, hosted together with Oxfordshire Mind.

With the use of creative media, workshops, performances, panels and networking opportunities, this inspired and energised people to think about challenging the status quo.

91%
of delegates

at Youth in Mind 2023 said the workshops gave them tools to strengthen their work for positive change around children and young people's mental health.

100%
of participants

across all our sector support workshops and training activities said they felt supported in a peer to peer network which supports children and young people.

2993
youth work practitioners

have received the Introduction to Adolescent Mental Health training through Oxfordshire Youth since 2018.

100%
of participants

in our annual Youth Work Conference reported an increase of confidence in working with young people with complex needs and experiencing disadvantages.

"The workshops were hugely valuable with tangible information that can be used and applied immediately in my own practice. It [has] been wonderful to network and inspire each other."

Participant, Youth Work Conference

"I come to Youth in Mind to feel revitalised, it's like a wake up."

Participant, Youth in Mind



"Personally, as a researcher who really wants to do research that's meaningful for young people, it has given me an opportunity to speak about my research to the right stakeholders. It brings very high-level stakeholders and individuals who are delivering services on the ground together in a constructive forum."

Mina Fazell, Oxford University

"It's a really powerful thing, connection and collaboration. There's so much going on in Oxfordshire. I think it's very easy to keep your head down and focus on the work that you're doing. To get everybody under one roof was brilliant. And it allowed me to put together a mini directory of people that I could network with and then refer young people to services that I'd heard about. It was a really inspiring experience"

Nikki Smith, SOFEA

SPOTLIGHT



CENTRE FOR YOUTH INNOVATION - IMPROVING ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SAFE SPACES

In June 2023, Oxfordshire Youth moved into a new home on the ARC Oxford Business Park and established the Centre for Youth Innovation - a welcoming and accessible space where young people, sector partners and Oxfordshire Youth can learn and grow together.



Stu Allsopp, 'Uncaging our World' International Youth Theatre Festival 2024

"Mandala is a small local youth organisation with big ambitions. We are so grateful to have found a base with Oxfordshire Youth after being nomadic for more than eight years. We have had so much support from the Oxfordshire Youth staff - as a very small charity, to be hosted, promoted and spotlighted by Oxfordshire Youth has been very enabling."

Yasmin Sidhwa, Artistic Director,
Mandala Theatre Company

Since June 2023, the Centre for Youth Innovation

- hosted 40 workshops and training sessions for youth work practitioners across the sector..
- ..and 12 forum and partnership meetings involving more than 40 organisations from the voluntary charity sector, local government and statutory bodies (including Children and Young People's Forum, CYP Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership, and Charity Leaders Forum, the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board, Active Oxfordshire, Donnington Doorstep, and the Oxfordshire African Caribbean Multicultural Association).
- Provided emergency refuge to two partners (Oxfordshire Mind and One Eighty) whose offices were hit by floods, allowing them to continue their work without any interruption to their services.
- Became home to Mandala Theatre Company, providing affordable space for operations as well as rehearsal space for young people.
- Created the YPSA weekly youth club, a safe space for young people in YPSA to meet and connect with support workers and each other.



SPOTLIGHT



YOUTH WORK PRACTITIONERS WELLBEING PROJECT

In 2023, Oxfordshire Youth launched an innovative three-year programme, supported by the Prudence Trust, offering a comprehensive long-term wellbeing and professional development initiative for youth work practitioners.



"An amazing course and wonderful to meet like-minded people in a career space where you can feel isolated and on your own."

Participant, Leaders Retreat

Youth work practitioners that completed the eight week Wellbeing Generation Programme experienced a 17% reduction in emotional exhaustion, measured using an internationally validated Burnout Survey

The Youth Work Practitioners Wellbeing project had five elements in 2023/2024:

- 25 practitioners from diverse youth organisations embarked on an enriching journey to explore and enhance personal and professional approaches to wellbeing with the Wellbeing Generation.
- 46 hours of specialist skills training workshops, designed to help youth work practitioners respond to the increasingly complex needs presented by young people: mental health first aid, self-harm, suicide prevention, trauma-informed working, substance misuse, compassionate communication, and the intersection of social media and anxiety.
- Peer to peer groups to facilitate ongoing mutual support and partnership.
- A two day retreat for 15 senior leaders from the sector to engage in rest, reflection and to explore leadership themes in a safe and supported environment. Workshops explored systems change, vulnerability, boundaries and bravery in the context of leadership.
- Interviews and surveys among more than 55 youth workers and 10 sector leaders across the county as part of a study addressing recruitment and retention challenges. The report will be finalised and shared in the coming months.

"This is a fantastic programme led by a forward-thinking and passionate charity! Oxfordshire has such a rich pool of charities delivering fantastic work across the sector - none of this could be achieved without the dedicated hard-working staff teams. This really shows Oxfordshire Youth have got the finger on the pulse and you're really understanding the emerging needs in regards to sustaining and improving the outcomes for young people and staff!"

Participant, Wellbeing Generation peer to peer groups and specialist skills training



DRIVING SYSTEM CHANGE THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Bringing together diverse stakeholders, forging strategic alliances, transcending silos and organisational boundaries, leveraging complementary strengths, and aligning our collective vision - partnership is critical for catalysing systemic change.

PARTNERSHIP WITH STATUTORY BODIES

Our senior leadership team participate as members and representatives of the Voluntary and Charitable Sector (VCS) on a wide range of groups, boards and partnerships that play key roles in ensuring and improving access to crucial services for young people including:

- The Children's Trust Board
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (OSCB) Learning & Development Sub Group and Self Harm Network
- Oxfordshire Safer Communities Alliance (OSCA)
- Oxford City Council Youth Partnership Board
- Cherwell District Council CYP Play & Wellbeing Partnership
- Youth Focus South East
- Violence Prevention Partnership (Thames Valley Police)
- Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Steering Group
- YPSA Project Board
- Strategy to End Youth Homelessness - a partnership of organisations across the south to campaign on youth homelessness issues
- Thames Valley Police Violence Prevention Partnership



"Partnerships are the beating heart that sustains and amplifies the transformative power of social impact. It's been an exciting and enriching year for Oxfordshire Youth's partnerships with prominent businesses, strategic boards, and leading independent schools and we extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who are playing their role on this journey to creating a truly equitable future for every child and young person."

Emmy O'Shaugnessy, Deputy CEO and Head of Innovation and Growth





OUR IMPACT

AMPLIFYING THE VOICE AND INFLUENCE OF THE SECTOR THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

Oxfordshire Youth hosts and chairs the **Children and Young People's Forum (CYP Forum)**, a community of youth sector leaders from more than 60 organisations across the county.

The CYP Forum is a strategic forum for members of the voluntary and charity sector. Elected representatives from the Forum sit on strategic boards, such as the OSCB, enabling a collective voice to connect and influence policy, and keep the community informed of important developments and opportunities.

It is also an opportunity for important stakeholders to meet and interact directly with sector partners; in 2023, the Forum hosted representatives of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire (BOB) West Health Alliance responsible for collaboration with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) to meet members of Oxfordshire's youth sector and invite greater collaboration to deliver health outcomes across the BOB Integrated Care System.

In 2024, the CYP Forum will finalise a Sector Strategy for Children and Young People, which will strengthen the voice of the voluntary and community youth sector and deepen the relationship with local

authority partners.

In March 2024, Oxfordshire Youth helped convene leaders from philanthropy, education, business, and the voluntary and community sector to ignite new dialogues and action groups, paving the way for innovative solutions to close the inequality gap in Oxfordshire.

Independent Schools

Oxfordshire Youth led a powerful year of youth participation in fundraising with the team at St Edward's School and continued our multi-year partnership with Radley College, introducing youth work sessions into the offer of support to provide safe spaces for young people to understand the way in which privilege and prejudice shape young lives, and the difference social action can make in the local community.

Business

An active member of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economies (OIE) Partnership Steering Group, Oxfordshire Youth is advocating for the needs and issues of marginalised young people across the county and exploring how we can collaborate to remove barriers for these young people to enter the workforce. Oxfordshire Youth has recently signed the OIE Charter, pledging our support to be an inclusive employer.

ARC Oxford have generously provided us with a large headquarters space on their Oxford Campus, actively opening up new connections with businesses based in OX4 who are keen to leverage their resources to create positive outcomes for young people. This has significantly increased our capacity to scale our in-person training and convene cross-sector strategic leaders, as well as making youth work, young people, and issues of social inequality more visible.

Our long-standing partnership with Blenheim Palace continues, exploring ways to amplify youth voice and create inclusive opportunities for young people, and inviting young people to articulate their honest views about the history of Blenheim Palace and ideas for how to make it a truly inclusive environment for all children and young people through large-scale participatory youth arts projects. The leadership of the Blenheim Palace team responded with enthusiasm and integrity to the young people who participated.





SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

The effects of the losses in youth service provision have been felt disproportionately among young people living in the most deprived areas. While Oxfordshire Youth supports the sector across the county, we work directly with young people living in some of the most deprived areas in the UK.

- **36%** of young people always or often feel lonely.¹
- One in five young people said they have missed school or work in the past year due to their mental health and more than a third worry their mental health will stop them achieving their career goals.²
- **79%** (4 out of 5) of **18-24-year-olds** who are out of work due to ill health only have qualifications at GCSE-level or below, compared to 34% (one in three) of all people for that age group.³
- Young people leaving care, particularly young unaccompanied asylum seekers, have to make a rapid transition into adulthood facing an abrupt end of support from the state, without the support of family or other safety nets.
- **41%** of care leavers aged between **19 - 21** are not in education, employment or training compared to **12%** of the general population aged **18 - 24**.⁴
- **40%** of young people do not feel in control of their future; Less than a third of young people with mental health problems feel optimistic about their future employment prospects.³
- **32%** young people **18-24 yrs** said help with securing work experience or training would help them to achieve their career ambitions.²
- **18,200** children and young people in Oxfordshire (aged 0-19) were living in low-income families in 2022.⁵

1. UK Youth 2024, Belong Collective – tackling youth loneliness, available at <https://www.ukyouth.org/>

2. The Prince's Trust Youth Index 2024, available at: <https://www.kingstrust.org.uk/>

3. McCurdy and Murphy, 2024, *We've only just begun* Report by the Resolution Foundation

4. N Harrison et al., 2023. Care leavers' transition into the labour market in England. Report by the Rees Centre, University of Oxford. Available at: <https://www.education.ox.ac.uk/>

5. Oxfordshire County Council 2022. Needs Assessment for Schoolage Children in Oxfordshire. Available at <https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>



"My experience at Oxfordshire Youth was really eye opening as one of the youngest members on the board. I gained unique insight and access as to how a charity runs and what the rules and regulations are of operating. This helped me better understand why certain decisions are made and how effective but compassionate leadership is possible as I saw this modelled at Oxfordshire Youth. I have grown in confidence and have been able to transfer this confidence to other areas of my life as a now award winning political campaigner."

Emma-Jane Hampshire-Gill, Trustee





OUR IMPACT

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO LEAD

Oxfordshire Youth continues to provide young people with opportunities to lead in their communities and receive recognition for their contributions to society.

- **72** young people engaged in the Transitions through Leadership programme, supporting the needs of young people at increased risk of isolation or bullying in the transition into secondary school. The programme creates a safe space for young people to build confidence in themselves, feel more connected to their school and develop leadership skills.



76%

reported increased levels of resilience and coping skills.

74%

reported feeling more prepared for challenges that life might bring them.

- **10** young people on the newly formed North Wall Youth Board, aged **15-18**, received Youth Voice training to develop skills around communication, strategy and working as a team to meet their roles and responsibilities on the Board.

- **10** young people aged **14-21** completed their Level **2** Award in Leadership and Team Skills, accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM). The programme includes a two-day residential centred around reflective learning, jam packed with workshops, outdoor challenges and problem solving activities.
- **40** young people participated in the Youth in Mind conference - planning, performing, leading panel discussions and interviewing keynote speakers.
- **7** young people received training and one to one support as part of the Podcast Crew. They released **7** episodes of Oxfordshire Youth's podcast, 'Are You Listening?' and gained **3** AQA accreditations in Effective Communication. Episodes explored mental health, visible and invisible disabilities, neurodiversity and the education system.
- Young Trustees on the Oxfordshire Youth Board bring important vision and insights to impact the work of Oxfordshire Youth at the highest level and gain leadership skills and confidence from the experience.





OUR IMPACT

BUILDING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS AND IMPROVING WELLBEING

Youth work is based around building voluntary, trusted relationships to support young people's personal and social development and their mental and physical wellbeing.

The effects of the losses in youth service provision have been felt disproportionately among young people living in the most deprived areas. While Oxfordshire Youth supports the sector across the county, we work directly with young people living in some of the most deprived areas in the UK.

54
young people
in year 9 in four schools participated in the Building Resilience Programme

"It made school seem easier a bit"

Year 9 participant,
Building Resilience Project

The programme, taking a youth work approach, provides a safe space for young people who are struggling at school to talk with their peers about issues that are important to them, building self-awareness about mental health issues, new coping strategies for emotional regulation, and forming positive relationships with peers and trusted adults.

Students reported feeling a better connection to the school community, had better relationships with their peers and a greater ability to talk to others, including students and teachers, after attending the programme.

30
young people,

supported by a team of skilled and passionate youth workers, created a large-scale artwork that was displayed on hoardings during an important restoration project at Blenheim Palace. Supported by visual artist Katie Turnbull, the young people engaged with digital imagery, text, the spoken word and graphics, taking inspiration from their visit to Blenheim Palace, and exploring what heritage means to them, and the challenges of power dynamics and associated privilege symbolised by the history of the site.

"Helped me with better mental health and feel more focused"

Year 9 participant,
Building resilience

163
young people
aged 18-25 and at risk of homelessness were supported in our Young People's Supported Accommodation service.



Each young person in YPSA has a support worker called a Progression Coach who meets with them at least once a week and supports them in their journey towards independent living. Taking a youth work, trauma-informed approach, our progression coaches focus on building positive relationships with the young people they support, understanding their needs, their challenges and their ambitions, and enabling connections with other services and opportunities to help them develop and thrive. Progression Coaches held **7,016** one to one meetings, over **10,900** hours, with young people in YPSA over the year 23/24.

DEVELOPING NEW SKILLS

“Regardless of a young person’s background, youth services can help them harness skills to do better in education, improve mental wellbeing, and develop life skills to help them get the job they want, and make a positive contribution in their communities. Crucially, these services help young people to build a life-long belief in themselves.” (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2022)

- **19** young people in the Young People’s Supported Accommodation service achieved **95** AQA awards in the first six months of launching the “Move-on Programme” - a series of **34** modules, co-designed with young people, which offers a structure for young people to develop skills for independent living using the AQA unit award scheme.
- **28** young people participated in **24** skills building sessions across different youth engagement programmes, including the Young Leaders Programme, youth voice training and podcast planning and recording sessions.
- **31** young people aged **14-16** years participating in the Life Chances Programme in partnership with Project PT, Oxford Martial Arts Association and Oxford United in the Community were awarded **57** AQA Unit Awards as a result of their participation in the programme.

“I really enjoyed this course and I am glad Sue and Hayley organised this as I really wanted to do this course. I felt very welcome and safe throughout and loved the learning environment and would love to come again. I am proud to be getting an AQA.”

Young person in YPSA

“The Move-on Programme has provided a structure for young people to develop their skills for independence and using the AQA unit award scheme has allowed us to formally recognise their achievements and provide them with evidence of the work they have completed. This evidence can be used to demonstrate to the housing panels that a young person is ready to move into independent accommodation.”

YPSA Manager



SPOTLIGHT



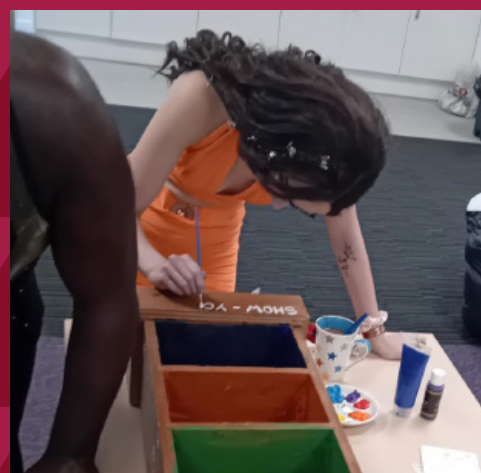
YOUNG PEOPLE'S SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

Commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council and in partnership with Response, Oxfordshire Youth supports young people aged 18-25 who are at risk of homelessness in shared independent housing across the county, this service is called Young People's Supported Accommodation (YPSA). Since 2019, we have provided support to 315 young people. Oxfordshire Youth Progression Coaches (support workers for the young people in YPSA) meet with young people at least once a week, helping to keep them and others around them safe, to build connections, to develop skills and confidence to engage in education, employment and training and to enable their transition to living in independent accommodation, or with family or friends. Where move on to independent accommodation occurs, continued light-touch outreach support is provided for up to a year to increase the likelihood of longer-term success.

In 2023/24, 163 young people aged 18-25 and at risk of homelessness were supported in our Young People's Supported Accommodation service. Over the year, 53 young people moved on from the service, 55% into independent accommodation (council flat/private rental/university), family or friends. This is more than three times the rate successful move on was before Oxfordshire Youth took on the service (17%)

Of the 60 young people who joined the service in 2023/24, 73% of young people were not in education, employment or training. 61% of these young people are now in work, education or training: of these, 42% are in further education and 42% are working either full time or part time.

Our partners, ASPIRE and SOFEA, have played an important role in supporting young people into employment and or education. 36 young people were supported by our partners in training, CV writing and interview technique workshops. 87% of young people working with SOFEA reported a positive impact on their self-esteem and wellbeing.



"Thank you so much for setting up the gym for me, I really enjoy going and it really helps me. I feel it helps me to keep fit and now I can attend with my friends."

Young person, YPSA

"It's been like a family, the family I needed. Thank you for everything - I couldn't have done it without you."

Young person, YPSA



In 2023, Oxfordshire Youth launched a number of initiatives specifically designed to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people joining YPSA, including Cosy Homes, Welcome Boxes and Positive Activities.

Positive activities included weekly group cooking sessions, fishing trips, bike rides, watching the Women's World Cup, picnics in the park, bike maintenance sessions, cinema trips, and gym memberships. These activities create an opportunity for young people to share new experiences with each other and trusted adults, strengthening relationships, learning new life skills, improving wellbeing... and having fun.

In the last six months of the year, 77% of young people in YPSA engaged in 609 meaningful activities with the support of their Oxfordshire Youth support workers. Young people have developed structure within their daily lives, with regular activities to look forward to.

"I had a lot of ups and downs whilst in the service, particularly with the complexity of my rent and being autistic. But my support worker helped me learn how to keep calm and begin to manage my mental health. I was working in a bar and my mental health was very fragile and I would self harm a lot. I have only had one or two incidents of self harm in the last 18 months, I have had lots of times I nearly did, but my progression coach has helped me learn how to manage those moments better than I used to. I now work for the NHS as a nursing assistant and have moved into NHS accommodation."

Young person, YPSA



SPOTLIGHT



YPSA AIDAN'S JOURNEY

Aidan joined the Oxfordshire Youth YPSA service in May 2023 after a breakdown in his relationship with his mum. He was arrested and sectioned after an altercation, and treated and assessed at the Warneford Hospital for two weeks before being released on bail conditions to the Oxfordshire Homeless Pathway.

When I moved into the Oxfordshire Youth Young People's Accommodation Service I was very shy with very little confidence. Ed, my support worker, sensed that I needed time to get to know him and trust him. Over time I was able to open up a bit more about what my mum had put me through, and I was able to start to ask for help a little bit. My whole life my mum had told me I wasn't capable. She did not allow me to get the assessments I needed for autism and ADHD that would have given me the support I needed. I developed OCD due to the trauma she put me through - the uncleanliness of the house I lived in and how damp the basement room that I lived in was... I would go to school in clothes too small for me and that smelt damp. In September 2023, four months after beginning to work together, Ed took me to Ruskin College to meet an old tutor of his and I signed up for a higher education course for Applied Social Sciences. A few months previous I would have been too scared to even think about this, let alone do it on the spot and take the risk of a lifetime. Since starting the course I have received

distinctions for some of my work, I have made some friends who I study with, and I now have offers from five universities around the country to go and study for a criminology and sociology degree. Ed came with me to my PIP assessment, and I scored so highly they awarded me PIP on the spot and have sent me a big backdated sum of money which will change my life, giving me enough money to live on while I finish off my course and leaving me some in the pot for my big move in September. When I thanked Ed the other day for all he had done for me, he said "Aidan, I didn't do anything more than put an arm around you and tell you for the first time in your life that you could do it after a lifetime of being told you couldn't." He said he took me to the door but I was the one that walked through it, and I realised in that moment just how far I had come and what I had achieved. I thank him and the YPSA for changing my life and giving me a future that a year ago I never dreamt possible.



WHAT'S NEXT? COMING UP IN 2024/25

Sector Support

In 2024, Oxfordshire Youth relaunched the **Changemaker Network**, a movement of organisations committed to tackling injustice and driving systemic change for young people. Driven by the Changemakers, upcoming priorities are: financial resilience, embedding equity, diversity and inclusion, and enhancing specialised training and support.

The **Youth Work Conference** in November 2024 focuses on "Youth Work towards Systemic Change."

As the region's main provider of the **NYA bursary scheme**, we are expanding Level 2 and 3 youth work training to 51 practitioners, supported by the NYA, Prudence Trust, and National Lottery.

The **Youth Work Practitioners Wellbeing Project** continues, with a wellbeing research report to follow.

Strategic Partnerships

The 2024 **Youth in Mind Conference** in May 2024 explores emotional, physical, and digital safe spaces for young people.

The **Children and Young People's Forum** is finalising the sector strategy to amplify the voluntary youth sector's voice and strengthen ties with local authorities.

The **Children and Young People Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership**, in collaboration with researchers and statutory partners, is focusing on demonstrating the impact and role of preventative, youth work-based approaches as a means to tackle the wellbeing crisis experienced by young people across the county.

Supporting Young People

Oxfordshire Youth is creating more opportunities for young people, promoting equity in apprenticeships, and enhancing our recruitment processes. The **Youth**

Voice Network will bring together young people and professionals to share best practices.

Two new young trustees will join our board, making four out of 12 trustees under 25.

2024 sees the launch of a series of new programmes as well as continuity in our work supporting young people, including:

Future Leaders Programme: together with the Lucy Group, the programme offers young people in the YPSA accreditations in leadership, employability training, and work experience.

Business Guardians: a coalition of industry leaders creating work placements, apprenticeships, and mentorship opportunities for youth facing employment barriers.

Youth 4 Youth Campaign: an empowering youth-led fundraising initiative in partnership with Radley College.

Young Women and Girls Programme: one-to-one and group support activities for young women and girls aged 11–25 at risk of exploitation and violence.

To achieve our goals, Oxfordshire Youth is committed to cultivating a culture of inclusion, innovation, and continuous learning. In 2024/25, we are developing an **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy**, creating a roadmap for fostering innovation and supporting staff to thrive. We will embed **neuroInclusive practices**, with plans to support other organisations in adopting similar approaches.

Finally, 10% of Oxfordshire Youth staff are pursuing professional qualifications through the **Apprenticeship Levy**, advancing our commitment to excellence in learning, development, and service delivery.





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HDH Wills Charitable Trust

Jim Cousins Trust

Lucy Group

Marsh Charitable Trust

Oxford Health Charity

Oxfordshire County Council

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

PF Charitable Trust

Pye Charitable Settlement

Radley College

St Edwards' School

Stanton Ballard Charitable Trust

Swire Charitable Trust

Thames Valley Police Violence Prevention Partnership

The Beeching Trust

The National Lottery Community Fund

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Wendys



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