



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES FUND

End of Year Report 2024-2025



Foreword

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This report marks the third year of the Connected Communities Fund, a programme that continues to grow in reach, impact, and ambition. At its heart, the fund is about enabling people to feel connected, valued, and supported within their communities. In working with local community organisations, we help create spaces and activities that reduce isolation, build confidence, and strengthen resilience across Oxfordshire.

This year, we have seen the fund make a real difference for older people and adults with additional needs. From coffee mornings and creative workshops to culturally inclusive exercise sessions, these activities are lifelines for many, offering friendship, purpose, and joy. The numbers tell part of the story: **73 funded groups** delivered **over 2,000 sessions**, supporting **more than 1,500 individuals** and recording **45,000 attendances** across the year. But behind every statistic is a human experience, someone who feels less lonely, more confident, and more connected because of these opportunities.

We have also deepened engagement with funded groups, with our community development team visiting a quarter of projects in person, supporting them with monitoring and evaluation and linking them into our wider infrastructure

support offer. This collaborative approach has strengthened relationships and improved the quality of data, giving us a clearer picture of who is taking part and the difference these activities make. The results speak volumes: **88% of participants told us attending made a positive difference to their lives and connections.**

None of this would be possible without the creativity and commitment of local organisations and volunteers. Their passion and resourcefulness continue to inspire us. At the same time, we recognise the challenges they face, from rising costs and transport barriers to volunteer recruitment and venue limitations. These insights will shape our conversations about future funding and support.

We hope this report gives you a sense of the incredible work happening across Oxfordshire and the impact of investing in community-based solutions. We thank Oxfordshire County Council for its ongoing commitment to this work and of course we thank every group, volunteer, and partner who has contributed to this journey. Together, we are building stronger, more inclusive communities – the very essence of the Oxfordshire Way.



Bloxham
Bowls



Kennington
Community
Larder



Ducklington
Warm Space

Laura Price

Chief Executive Officer,
Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action

Emily Lewis-Edwards

Co-Chief Executive Officer,
Community First Oxfordshire

Programme summary

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In its third year, the Connected Communities Fund continues to make a real difference, helping older people and adults with additional needs feel connected and supported in their community.

By widening the range of activities available, the fund enables people to stay active, build friendships, and maintain independence. This work reflects Oxfordshire's ambition for everyone to live well for as long as possible, supported by strong, inclusive communities.

This year, the fund deepened engagement with community and voluntary sector groups, strengthening connections between organisations and the communities they support. Simple but effective improvements to programme management were introduced, making processes easier and more responsive.

Throughout the year we visited 18 funded groups around a quarter of all projects to see activities in action, meet organisers and participants, and hear about both the highlights and the challenges. These visits, alongside ongoing guidance and shared learning, help build stronger relationships and give us a first-hand experience of the real impact these projects are making.

Thame
Friendship
Group



Art at Museum
of Oxford
Development
Trust

Great Company
Drama Group at
Chipping Norton
Theatre



Fund Application & Award Summary

.....

£183,500

Connected Communities Fund

Fund Increased by **4.6%**
from Previous Year

Funding requested
vs awarded was **39%**
oversubscribed
(based on approved groups)



Geographic Area

Support distributed across the county's five districts with focus on reducing isolation and promoting independence for Older People & Adults with Additional Needs

Applications Assessed

161

Projects Awarded

73

Applications success rate

45%

Average Award Per Project

£2,500

Categories

Projects across 5 key
community categories:

Community Socialising

Skills & Lifelong Learning

Health & Wellbeing

Arts, Culture & Creative

Green/Environmental & Outdoor

Total applications

amounted to

£560,674

which was

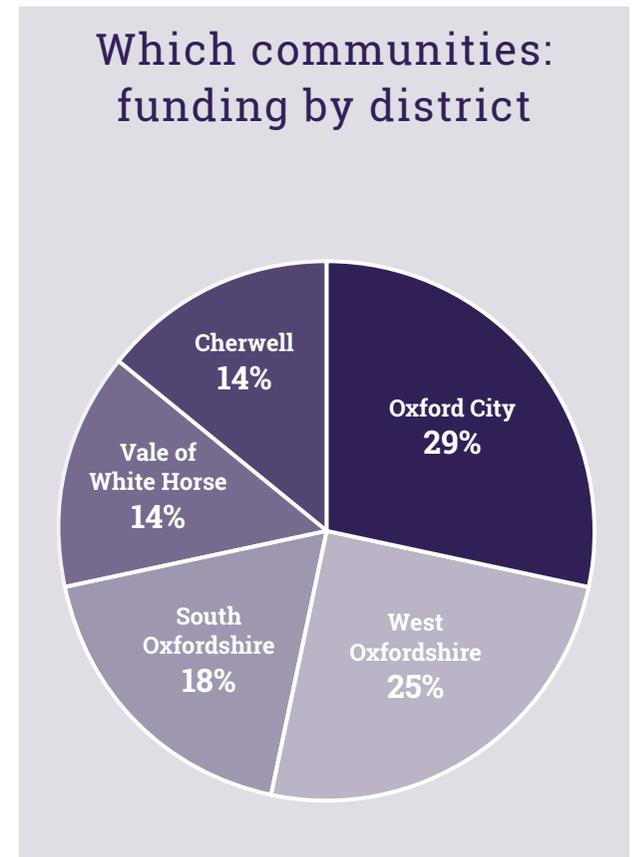
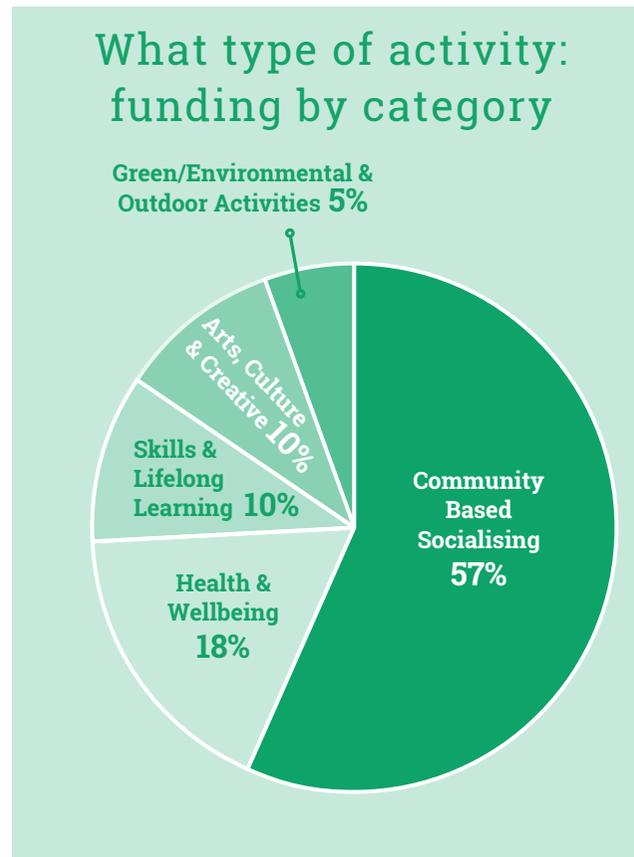
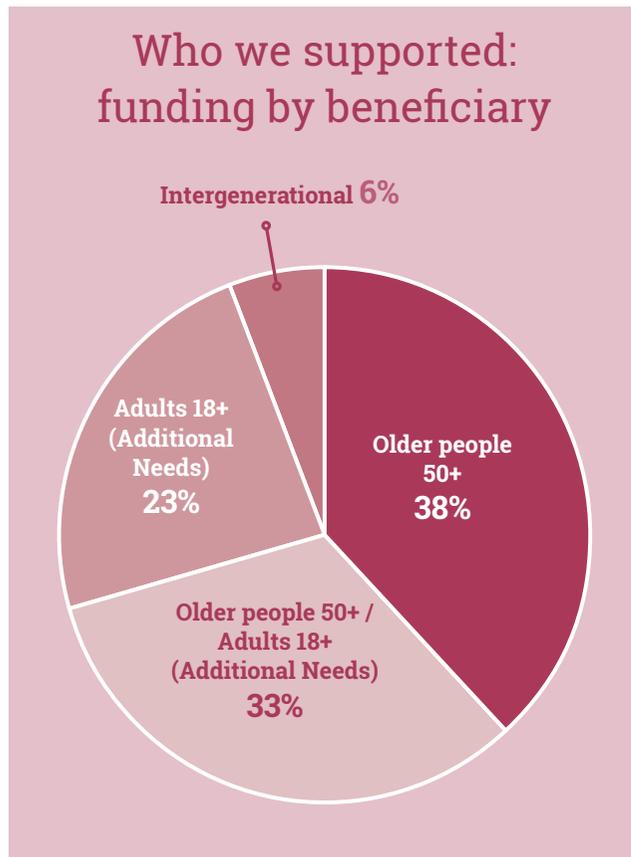
3 x

the available budget

Investing in Oxfordshire Communities: How the Funding was Distributed

The £183,500 Connected Communities Fund for 2024–25 supported 73 projects across the county, helping people stay active, reduce isolation, and build resilience.

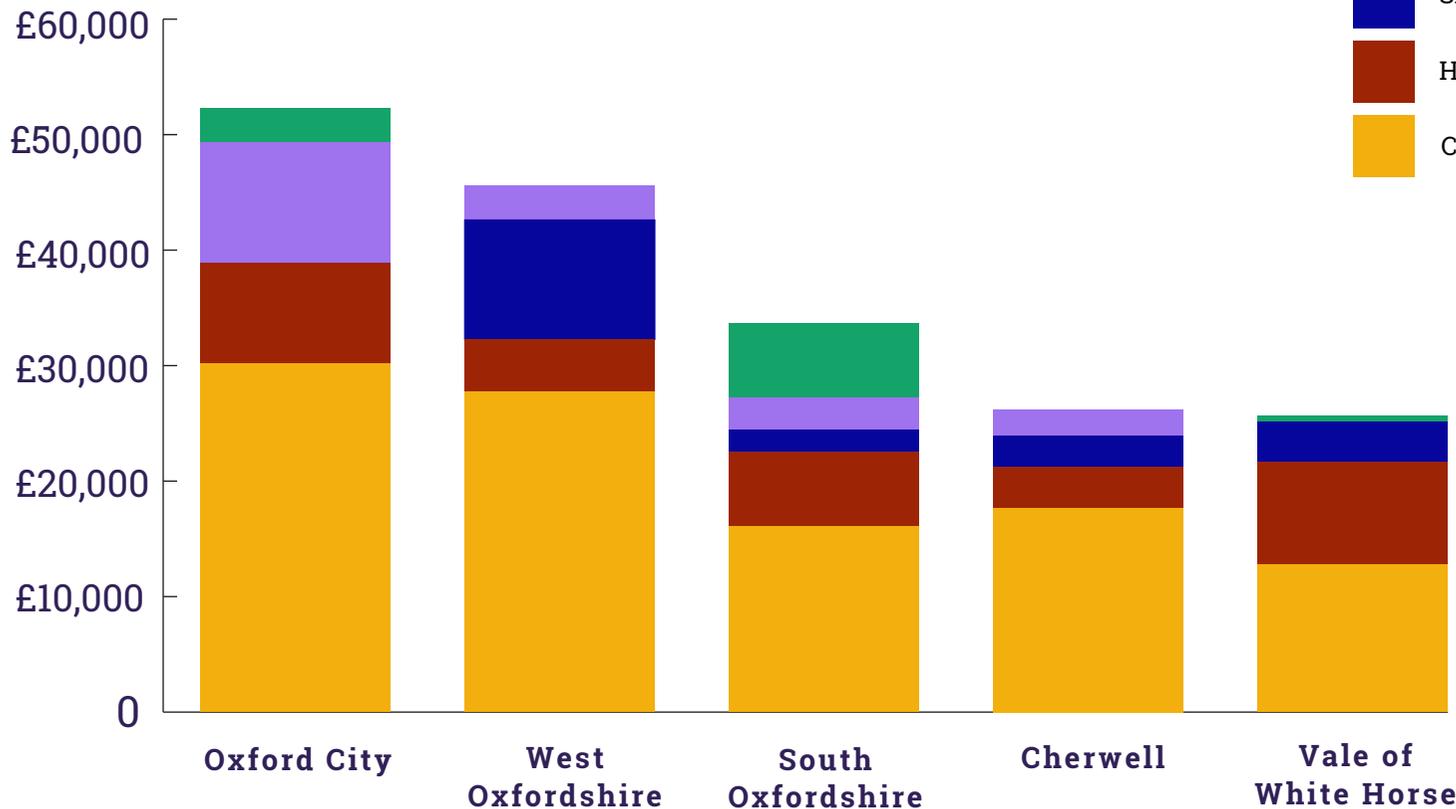
Here's how this year's funding was distributed across people, activities, and communities.



£183,500 supporting 73 projects

Exploring Activity Mix Across the Districts

This chart shows the types of activities funded in each district, highlighting variations that may point to different local needs or gaps. These patterns provide a starting point for deeper understanding and future planning considerations in communities.



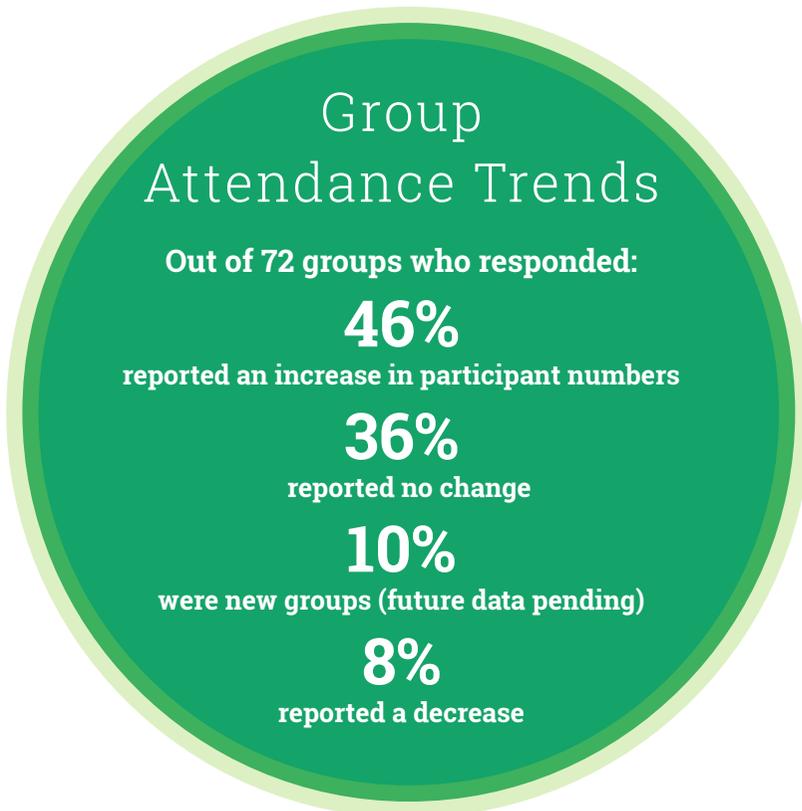
Programme Group Activity Summary

This year, 73 funded groups delivered 2,196 community activity sessions. In total, 1,518 individuals took part in at least one session, and when we count every attendance across all sessions, that adds up to an incredible 45,260 participations. Almost half of the groups (46%) reported an increase in attendance, 36% saw no change, 10% were new and still establishing their baseline, and 8% experienced a decrease.

73
funded groups
30
Average Sessions per Group
2,196
Total sessions delivered for the year
1,518
Total participants

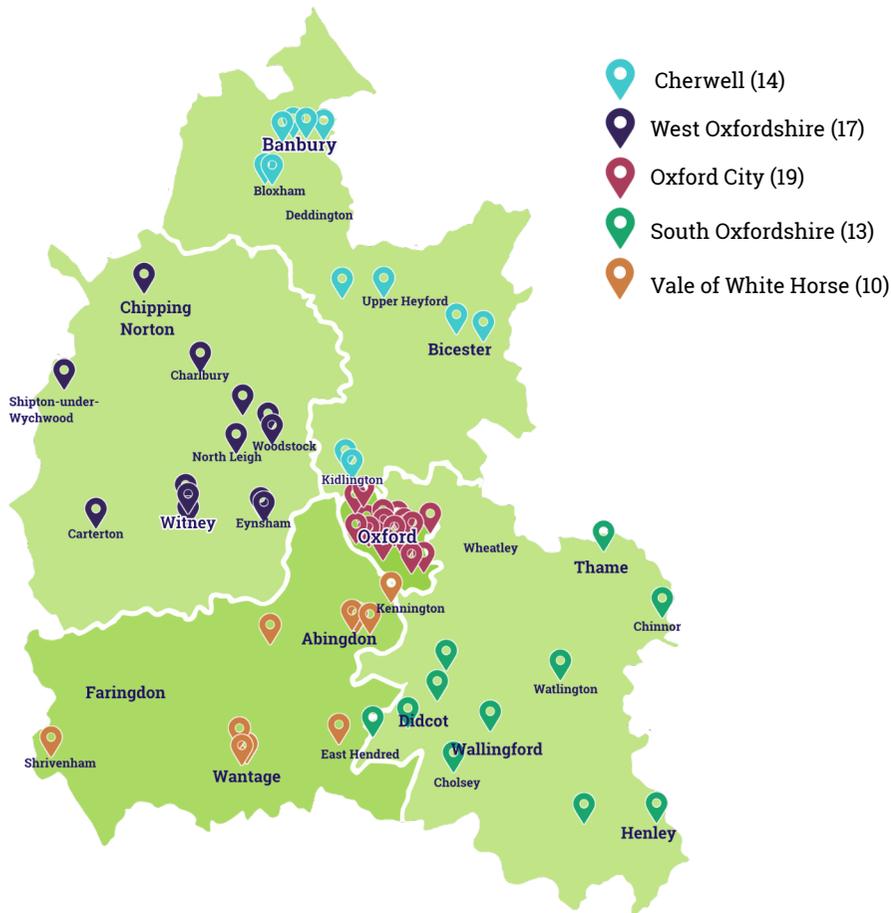
Volunteer support remains strong with 640 people giving their time, though ideally 748 would be needed to meet future demand and sustain the group and, importantly, its activities. Nearly every group (72 out of 73) submitted an End of Year Impact Report, and 65 groups contributed to the demographic survey, resulting in 970 responses an average of 15 per group.

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Total Participant Attendances across year | 45,260 |
| End of Year Impact Reports Submitted | 72 of 73 |
| Total Participant Demographic Surveys Completed | 970 |
| Current Volunteers across 73 Groups | 640 |
| Number of Volunteers Needed to meet future demand and sustain groups and activities | 748 |
| % GAP In Volunteers | 14.4% |
| Groups registered on LiveWell | 71 out of 73 |
| Team Visits to funded groups to see activities in action | 18 (25%) |



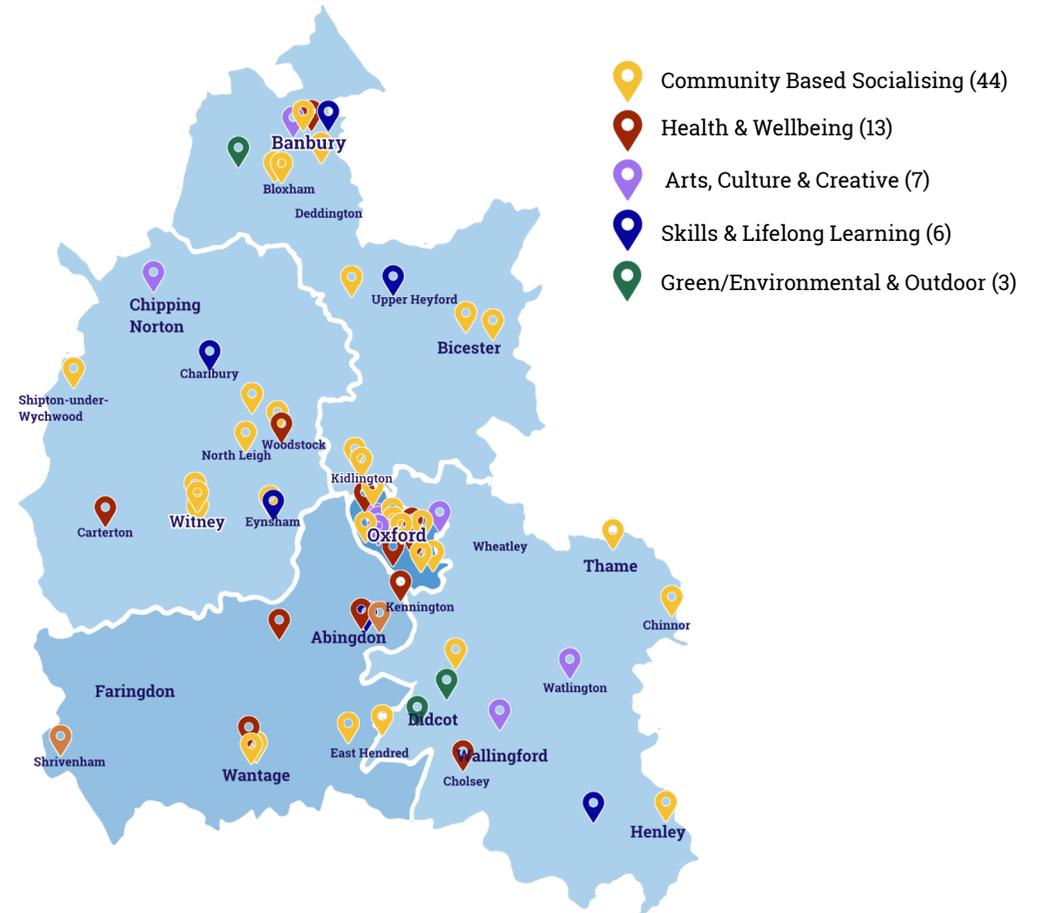
Strengthening Communities Across the County

This map shows the spread of 73 funded projects across Oxfordshire, highlighting the reach of the Connected Communities Fund.



Supporting a Diverse Range of Activities

This map shows the diversity of activities supported in local communities, reflecting the fund's commitment to helping people stay active, connected, and resilient.



Demographic Data

This year, the Connected Communities Fund worked with 73 local groups, supporting over 1,500 residents and recording more than 45,000 attendances across the year. What makes this year different is the depth of engagement: 970 people took the time to share their experiences in participant surveys, a record for the programme. For the first time, the dataset gives a clearer picture of who is taking part and the diversity within our community.

This improvement came from changing how we support groups with monitoring and data collection. In the past, the process could feel burdensome, and groups weren't always clear on its purpose. We addressed this by explaining why data matters, how it helps us understand impact and improve support, and by working more closely with groups through clear guidance and one-to-one help. As a result, 72 out of 73 groups submitted impact reports and 65 completed participant surveys, amounting to 970 responses. This fuller evidence base strengthening our understanding of community needs and outcomes.

The demographic data provides insight into the reach and inclusivity of funded activities, covering age, gender, ethnicity, disability, long-term health conditions, living arrangements, and caring responsibilities.

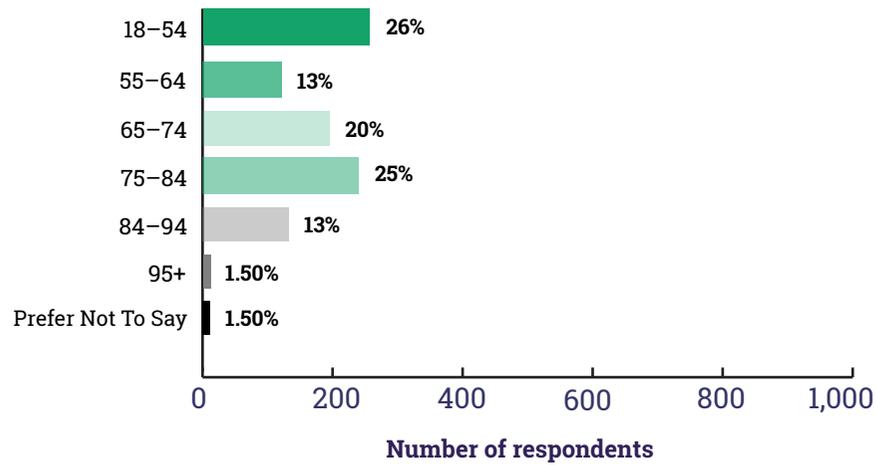
Duckington Warm Welcome Space



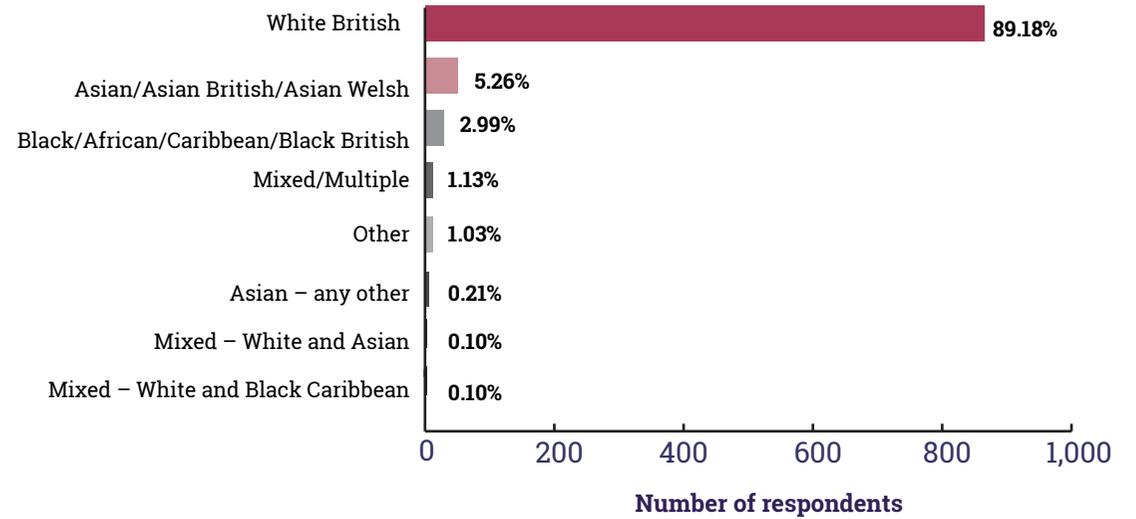
65 out of 73
funded groups
took part in
monitoring

Demographic Data (continued)

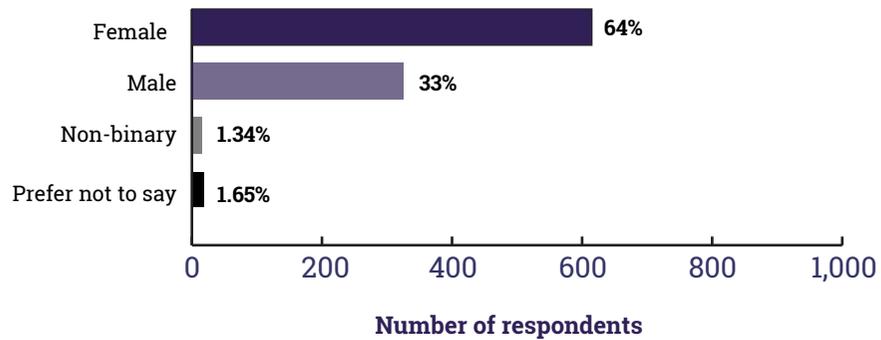
Age Range



Ethnic Group



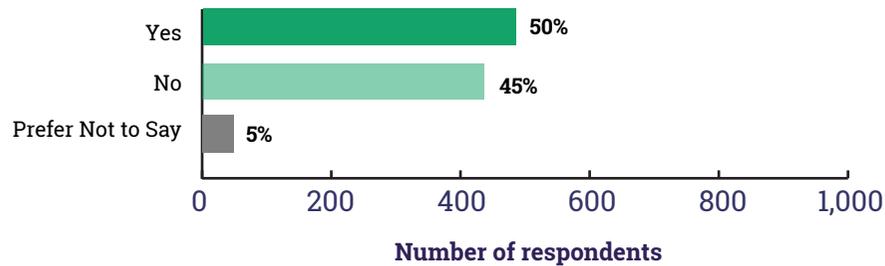
Gender



Demographic Data (continued)

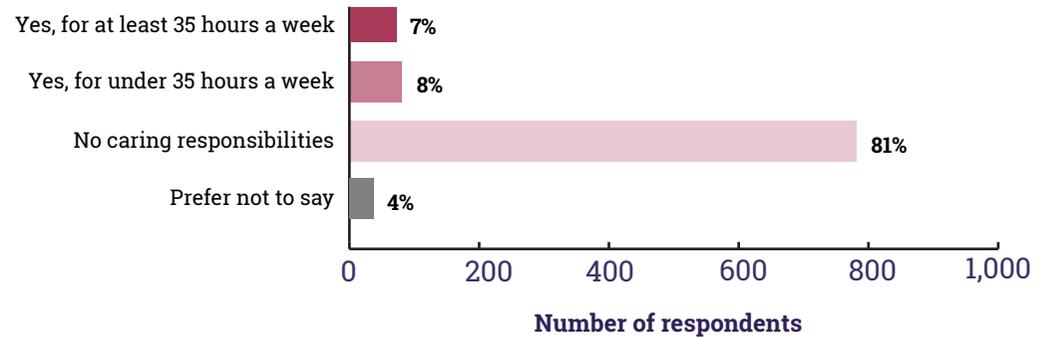
Disability & Chronic Long Term Conditions & The Impact

Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more?

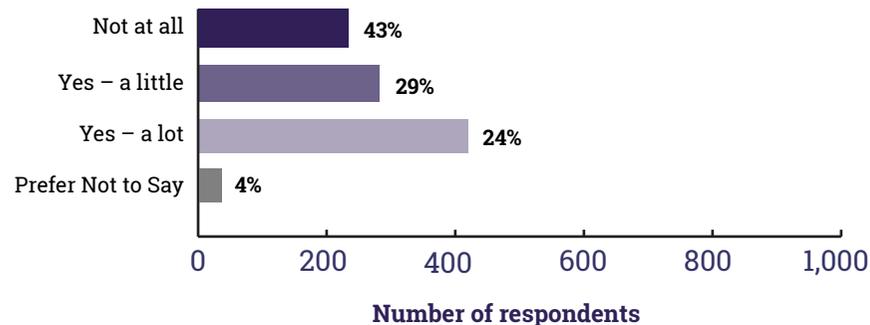


Caring Responsibility

Do you look after, or give any help or support to anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age?

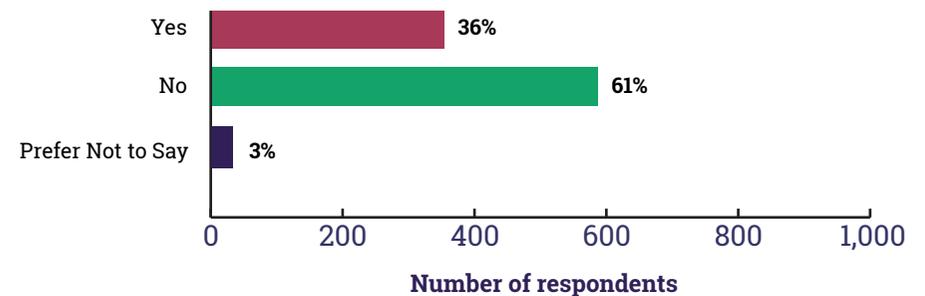


Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities?



Living arrangements

Do you live alone?



Wellbeing Measure – County Wide Impact

This year, we asked groups just one wellbeing measure question. This approach means we can show the impact across all the groups consistently. By focusing on a single measure, we've been able to reflect the overall difference these activities make to people's lives and connections providing a clear, county-wide picture of wellbeing improvement.

The results speak for themselves – 88% said they felt better. Demonstrating the vital role community-based activities play in reducing isolation, building confidence, and strengthening resilience across the county.



How do you feel attending this activity/group has made a difference in your life and your connections with others in the community?

88%
felt that attending made a positive difference

1,518
participants

45,000+
attendances

73
groups

10%
It has made a slight difference

88%
It has made a positive difference

2%
It has made no difference

920 survey responses

Impact on People and Communities

Terry described loneliness as “feeling like a prisoner in your own home... If it wasn’t for Archway holding their arms out and catching me, I don’t know where I’d be.”

Terry, Archway Foundation, Friendship Group Activities

Participant feedback shows how these funded activities are changing lives. They help people overcome isolation, regain confidence, and stay active. From dementia-friendly music sessions to inclusive arts workshops and welcoming community hubs, people talk about feeling reconnected, valued, and more resilient. Many describe these experiences as “lifesaving,” “the highlight of my week,” and “a light at the end of a dark tunnel.” This is the **Oxfordshire Way** in action supporting people to live well and independently within their communities, building resilience, and reducing reliance on formal care through community-based solutions.

Reducing Isolation

Feedback shows how these activities help people feel connected and part of their community again.

Eynsham Day Centre, Monday Club
"I have family in the village (one son) but still get lonely after my husband passed away. Monday Club gives me a lot of pleasure and I have made good friends here. The activities are fun and I enjoy the lunch too."



Brennan, T(ART) Productions, Raspberry Ripples
"I work full time, so it can be difficult to find disability groups outside of work hours. This group has been one of the only ways I have been able to connect with the community and I always feel welcomed with open arms. It is truly priceless to me."



Harvey, Volunteer, Henley YMCA
"This project has given me a space to share my experiences with others, and I feel I'm contributing to the community."



Anon, Carterton Welcome Hub, Carterton Community Centre, Coffee Morning

"I look after my grandson who has special needs. We regularly attend the coffee mornings as he likes to be served by the young people with special needs & he feels this is a safe environment. It is a lovely thing they are doing for the local community"

“After my husband died I was very lonely so a friend suggested I come along and now Elderberries is the best day of my week”

Anon, The Elderberries (Hanborough Day Centre), Social Group



Thame Friendship Group

“Another lady who has been attending since 2023 spoke for the first time today during and after the singing session”

Anon, Dementia Oxfordshire, Ampleforth Choir

Building Confidence

Participants describe renewed confidence, purpose, and wellbeing through engaging activities.

Frances, MuMo Creative, Dance for Parkinson’s

“PD MuMo Creative is a Ballet Dance Yoga Singing class, they have been a life saver for me as the wonderful creative trio shine with positivity encouraging laughter and fun in their classes each week. It is the highlight of my week.”

Caroline, Parkinson’s Disease Society, Banbury Branch, Support and Socialisation Activities

“I have had a rough time lately but thanks to this group I have been able to be me for a few hours without having to pretend my mental state is improving.”

Val, Ducklington Warm Space, Community Hub

“It gives me a focus for the week. I don’t go anywhere else on a Thursday now. I can go a week without seeing anyone if it wasn’t for Warm Welcome Space.”

ANON, Carterton Welcome Hub, Carterton Community Centre, Coffee Morning

“Since my husband died I have struggled to get out. But the coffee mornings have made such a difference to me as I now feel more confident meeting new people. Otherwise I would feel quite isolated.”

Remaining Independent

Highlights how people stay active, involved, and independent for longer.

Dave, Shedquarters, Woodworking and social

“Since losing my wife, I stayed at home a lot. I had visits from my daughter. I now visit The Shed 3 times a week – it’s really transformed my life. I love the “banter” and camaraderie. I feel much better about myself.”

Anon – Cuttleslowe Seniors – Outings, Activities, Talks

“These activities are a great way of socialising and making new friends. Living alone means it is very important to get out and meet people and keep your mind active.”

Anon, Mumo Creative, Dance for Parkinsons

“I feel I am holding back the tide, slowing progress of the symptoms... I feel I am doing as much if not more to help manage my condition than the medication I take is doing.”

Tina, Launton Village Chorus, Singing Choir

“I joined the rock chorus when I was a stay at home parent. It gave me a really positive boost in confidence and has been great for my mental health.”



These sessions have an holistic effect on society by keeping older people active which correlates to a healthier, less isolated population

Mark, Museum of Oxford Development Trust, Cyanotype, Crafts & Arts Sessions

Connected Communities in Action

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More than just words, the voices of our communities brought together in one powerful image. It shows what connection really means to people and how that spirit runs through the core aims of the fund.



Common Themes

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From the stories and reports shared by groups, clear themes and challenges have emerged that show the impact of this year’s Connected Communities Fund. Many of these echo last year’s themes and challenges, such as reducing isolation and supporting volunteers, while new insights reflect changing community needs and pressures.

Highlights – What’s working Well



Reducing Isolation & Building Community

Still a very dominant theme. Groups repeatedly highlight creating safe, welcoming spaces that help people feel less lonely and more connected. Coffee mornings, lunch clubs, exercise and creative sessions remain lifelines for many.

Volunteer Engagement

Volunteers remain the backbone of activities, as in 2023–24. This year, groups also highlight the sense of purpose volunteering brings and the positive impact of volunteer-led initiatives. Many offered training opportunities, such as first aid, craft facilitation, and counselling that not only supported delivery but boosted confidence and employability.

Diverse & Creative Activities

Crafting, music, drama, exercise, and cultural sessions continue to bring joy and foster engagement. Compared to last year, there’s more emphasis on health-focused, cultural and intergenerational activities.

Digital Inclusion

Alongside the established groups, a new area is beginning to emerge. A few groups introduced online participation options for those unable to attend in person something that wasn’t visible last year but is likely to grow as communities explore hybrid models and digital inclusion options.

Confidence & Wellbeing

A stronger theme this year. Groups report that regular participation boosts confidence, mental health, and physical wellbeing, something less visible in last year’s findings.

Community Partnerships

Groups formed links with local colleges, health services, and care homes, expanding their reach and resources.

Common Themes (continued)

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Challenges – What Groups Struggle with



Volunteer Recruitment & Retention

Continues to be key, but this year there's a stronger emphasis in reporting on recruitment challenges and the need for sustainable volunteer channels

Transport & Accessibility

Mentioned last year under "Accessibility", but this year transport barriers and rural isolation feature more strongly, limiting participation for those without easy travel options.

Venue Limitations

Small or unsuitable spaces continue to restrict growth and comfort of community activities, a recurring issue from last year that remains a barrier. This challenge was highlighted frequently in reporting, with over 40 mentions this year alone, underlining the need for more accessible and flexible venues.

Financial Sustainability

Rising costs and uncertainty about future external funding are recurring concerns. Many groups express gratitude for the fund but stress anxiety over ongoing financial uncertainty.

Publicity & Outreach

Still difficult to reach new participants beyond word of mouth, echoing last year's challenge of raising awareness.

Managing Growth

An interesting development from last year's "Limited Resources for Growth." While still an issue for some, others now face the opposite challenge: coping with increased attendance and adapting activities for diverse needs.

What's Changed Since Last Year

Reviewing two years of reports, we see continuity in priorities such as reducing isolation and volunteer engagement. However, financial sustainability and transport challenges feature more strongly this year, reflecting rising costs and rural access issues.

Last year's concern about continuity has evolved into managing growth for some groups, as demand for activities increases. Confidence and wellbeing also emerged as a clear theme this year, highlighting the wider benefits of community participation.

Connected Communities in Action: Qualitative Impact

Behind every statistic in this report is a story of connection, resilience, and community spirit.

At the heart is a shared goal: creating spaces and activities where friendships are made, confidence grows, and isolation is reduced. This year, the Connected Communities Fund supported 73 groups across Oxfordshire, enabling thousands of people to stay active, reduce isolation, and feel part of their local community. From coffee mornings to creative workshops, these initiatives show how local action builds confidence and resilience, strengthening the foundations of community life.

This is just a sample of the stories from the awarded groups, to read about the impact many groups are having across the county, [visit more stories here](#).

Ducklington Warm Space
Pet Therapy sessions



Memories Dementia Café

Heyford Makers Shed



Witney Town

Bringing Local News to The Visually Impaired

If you know someone who lives in West Oxfordshire, who is blind or visually impaired, there is a fantastic free service providing them with access to regular talking newspapers and magazines, offered by Witney Talking News. Listeners who sign up to the service can enjoy 30 minutes of an interesting variety of items, pre-recorded and posted through their letter boxes every week, enabling them to stay connected with what is happening in the local area and the world outside.

Part of a national network of more than 200 Talking News groups in the UK, the Witney Talking News has recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. Its establishment in 1975 came about thanks to a chance meeting of two members of the Inland Mail from Banstead and Witney when they were travelling on the train from London. Their idea of creating a talking newspaper for the West Oxfordshire area was passed to the Chislehurst Association for the Blind and Visual Services, with opportunities being open to all the blind and partially sighted people in the area. With approval from Inland, the Witney Talking News was established in 1975 and the first issue was produced. Initially there were 30 listeners which has grown over the years to a present total of around 70.

With progression from the Witney Talking News being an excellent opportunity for the visually impaired to be involved in the community. The charity need continue to be able to offer a service to their listeners which is as relevant as possible. In 2015, the charity was awarded a grant from the Connected Communities Fund to support the development of a talking newspaper service for the visually impaired in the area. This grant was used to purchase a professional recording studio and a professional recording engineer. The service is now available to all the visually impaired in the area and is a fantastic opportunity for the visually impaired to be involved in the community.

Witney Talking News, a free service offering access to talking newspapers for visually impaired people

Cotteslowe Seniors



About Cotteslowe Seniors

The Cotteslowe Seniors group was awarded £2,000 to provide twice monthly social activities and support services to older people in their community. A group that offers a welcoming space for people aged 60 and over to connect, learn and enjoy time together going from strength to strength, thanks to support from Oxfordshire County Council's Connected Communities Fund.

The group alternates between lively social sessions with guest speakers and activities, and outings to places of interest across the region.



How do you feel attending this activity/ group has made a difference in your life and your connections with others in the community?

All participants who completed the survey said attending had made a positive difference to them.

"We come because we feel welcomed, we get to see friends, and the outings are a real highlight. I feel so much more comfortable being part of a group." Maria

"We are so grateful – we simply couldn't carry on without the fund."

Coordinator Sylvia Barker, speaking of the impact the Connected Communities Fund has had

24 sessions
Average Attendance
15
Participants for
the year
360

"Got me out of the house and mixing with people, otherwise it would be lonely as my husband died"
Rita



Witney Community Meal



About Witney Community Meal

Every Thursday between 5–6pm at High Street Methodist Church in Witney, something special happens. The doors open to welcome anyone who needs a nourishing meal and genuine company, with no charge and no questions asked. What began as a simple community response has grown into something much more significant. Witney community meal is helping to tackle food poverty and social isolation with support from Connected Communities Fund. A £1,500 grant helps organisers sustain their weekly sessions, offering a vibrant space for shared meals and meaningful volunteering. Neurodivergent adults have also joined as volunteers, finding purpose and confidence.



How do you feel attending this activity/group has made a difference in your life and your connections with others in the community?

"I appreciate the meal. For anyone like me who lives alone it is a great thing. I like the food!"

All participants who completed the survey said attending had made a positive difference to them.

"This funding has been a lifeline. It's allowed us to keep the doors open and continue offering a space where people can share a meal and feel part of something bigger. For some guests, the meal is their only social contact all week."

Adam Noble, who helps run the initiative

23 sessions

Average Attendance

30

Participants for the year

690

"Grateful to this amazing community and the friends we have made"



North Leigh Community Café



About North Leigh Community Café

North Leigh Community Café were awarded £3,000 to fund a new weekly community café for Older People 50+. A new venture in North Leigh has hit the ground running and in just a few months a community hub has been established that is starting to create a real feeling of community spirit and cohesiveness. The idea came from conversations between a small group of local men, who knew from the Neighbourhood Plan and their own observations, that there were a lot of older single households who would like more social interaction. Although there were some well-established special interest groups including a gardening club, history society, and knit and natter group, there was no-where for people to gather informally, have a chat and enjoy a hot drink and a snack. A grant from the

Connected Communities Fund has enabled the idea of creating a community hub to become a reality.



How do you feel attending this activity/group has made a difference in your life and your connections with others in the community?

36 people responded to the survey: 34 positive difference, 2 slight difference therefore 95% of respondents said it had made a positive difference to them.

"Great place to go, I enjoy connecting with other people that otherwise I would be home alone."

"It has been remarkable to see people who have lived in the village for many years getting to know each other and making new friendships that extend far beyond the weekly get together. We are stitching things together by making sure people know about other local opportunities."

Founding organiser, North Leigh Community Café



50 sessions
Average Attendance
40
Participants for
the year
2,000

"It's significantly improved my life."

Mumo Creative

About Mumo Creative

Mumo Creative received £5,000 to provide creative dance sessions to promote the physical and mental health of older people living with Parkinson's. Dance for Parkinson's is a partnership between Mumo Creative, English National Ballet and Oxford City Council that offers creative dance sessions to promote the physical and mental health of people living with Parkinson's. Sessions are led by dancers and a musician with specific training in music and dance for people with Parkinson's. The class is extremely popular and currently oversubscribed. Mumo Creative was very happy to be awarded a grant from the Connected Communities Fund that has enabled them to cover their costs for the summer term.

10 sessions
Average Attendance
24
Participants for
the year
240

"The ballet group has enormously enhanced my balance and co-ordination. The people running it are considerate and helpful "



How do you feel attending this activity/group has made a difference in your life and your connections with others in the community?

All participants who completed the survey said attending had made a positive difference to them.

"I find dance for PD a very helpful activity in every way. For a hour and a half I feel that I do not suffer from PD. It's wonderful" Michael



"The creative element of dance can help maintain problem-solving and decision-making skills, and provides a way to express emotions and feelings, which is especially helpful when means of communication are impaired."

Roosa, one of Mumo's lead artists



Museum of Oxford Development Trust

About Museum of Oxford Development Trust

A grant of £4,938 was awarded from the Connected Communities Fund - to bring older people together through reminiscence, movement and creative art, the programme sparks joy and new friendships at the Museum. Each monthly session offers a welcoming space to share stories, learn new skills and discover inspiration from local heritage. Through the programme more than 200 participants have connected, created and felt a renewed sense of belonging in their community.



How do you feel attending this activity/group has made a difference in your life and your connections with others in the community?

27 people responded to the survey:
23 positive difference, 4 slight difference therefore 86% of respondents said it had made a positive difference to them.

"These sessions have an holistic effect on society by keeping older people active correlates to a healthier, less isolated population." Mark



"We pick activities where everyone can succeed... you don't need to be able to paint or draw and we make sure we give people time to finish each artwork so they have something to display."

Annabel, Movers & Shakers organiser

20 sessions

Average Attendance

25

Participants for the year

500

"It's great when people see what they've created if they haven't done artwork since school. They're shocked at what they've been able to do, 'I did that'. People help and encourage each other and friendships are created."



Chipping Norton Theatre



About Chipping Norton Theatre

Great Company Drama group received £3,000 from the Connected Communities Fund to expand drama sessions for adults aged 18+ who are neurodivergent or have learning disabilities. These sessions are more than theatre, they're life-changing. Participants grow in confidence, discover creativity, and form strong friendships in a safe, supportive space. The impact is often transformational: one member who barely spoke now performs on stage, while others have gained employment and wider community connections. This funding will reduce waiting lists, create smaller groups for more individual attention, and open places for new participants, helping more people experience the benefits of creativity and connection.



How do you feel attending this activity/group has made a difference in your life and your connections with others in the community?

All participants who completed the survey said attending had made a positive difference to them.

"I really enjoying coming to drama because it gives me the chance to meet my friends and it has helped me have more confidence in myself when performing " Eliza

"Our sessions develop confidence, movement and character, and have been truly transformative. We desperately wanted to open a second group to meet demand, Connected Communities funding has finally made that possible."

Vanessa Managhan,
Take Part Director

41 sessions
Average Attendance
12
Participants for
the year
492

"Matthew really liked the theatrical tightrope walking and the floating on water."



Café 103

Orchard Baptist Church



About Café 103

Café 103 is a welcoming space supporting people facing loneliness, mental health challenges, or learning difficulties. Twice a week, guests enjoy coffee, homemade cake, and a strong sense of belonging. This year, £2,000 of funding transformed the craft sessions from hesitant beginnings into lively hubs of creativity and friendship. Participants now rush in eagerly, sharing skills and laughter. From Easter bonnets to Airfix model kits, crafts have sparked confidence and connection, even among those who were once isolated. Friendships formed here extend beyond the café, proving that simple acts of making can rebuild lives. Café 103 is more than a drop-in – it's a community where creativity brings hope and human connection.



How do you feel attending this activity/group has made a difference in your life and your connections with others in the community?

All participants who completed the survey said attending had made a positive difference to them.

"At first most had to be coaxed to join in. Now everyone rushes in excitedly at the start of each session and have no hesitation about joining in."

"We're a place where "it's okay not to be okay," – where crafts and coffee spark real friendship. At first people were afraid to join in – now everyone rushes in with excitement."

Cathy, Café 103
organiser

61 sessions
Average Attendance
16
Participants for
the year
976

"Coming to the Café is something I look forward to."
Julie



Memories Dementia Café

Thame Friendship Group



About Memories Dementia Café

Memories Café who received £4,965 of funding this year, offers a lifeline for people living with dementia and their carers. Running every Monday morning in Thame, the café provides three hours of safe, stimulating activities led by a retired nurse, giving carers precious respite to shop, meet friends, or simply rest or join in. Guests enjoy conversation, entertainment, and tailored support in a warm, welcoming space. The café is more than a service it's a community hub, working closely with social prescribers and partnerships with Oxford University Hospital to host student nurses and occupational therapists. Plans are underway to expand to two mornings a week, doubling the impact. Memories Café transforms lives by reducing isolation, supporting carers, and creating moments of joy and dignity for those living with dementia.



How do you feel attending this activity/group has made a difference in your life and your connections with others in the community?

All participants who completed the survey said attending had made a positive difference to them.

"I like coming and meeting the lovely staff and other dementia people. I like coming to share experiences and chatting to the other carers." **Simon**

It is so lovely to hear we are making a difference to people's lives at the Memories Café. It's an amazing place to share worries and concerns but also to smile, laugh and have fun together!

Karen, Memory Café organiser



"A life saver, the only activity where carers can stay. A great forum." **Roger**

36 sessions
Average Attendance
20
Participants for the year
720

Conclusions/ Looking Ahead

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Key Achievements

Third year of Connected Communities Fund delivered £183,500 to 73 groups, supporting 1,518 participants via 2,196 sessions and 45,260 attendances; 88% reported positive wellbeing impact.

Impact

The fund has helped reduce isolation and build confidence for older people and adults with additional needs across Oxfordshire, with data from 970 surveys, showing we reached a wide and diverse range of people in different districts.

How we worked

We saw strong engagement and compliance from funded groups throughout the year, reflected in 72 out of 73 impact reports submitted and 18 support visits completed. The fund grew this year by 4.6%, allowing us to support more activity.

Challenges Ahead

Demand continues to exceed funding. Funded groups face ongoing challenges around volunteer shortages, transport and venue access, rising costs, and managing growth.

Looking Ahead

Continue and grow funding in line with the Oxfordshire Way, with a focus on digital inclusion, partnership working and support for hybrid models. We will also prioritise rural access and volunteer recruitment.

Implement an automated triage step early in the application process to filter or redirect ineligible applications. This will reduce unsuitable submissions and workload for both groups and assessors.

Make eligibility clearer, so applications better match the fund's aims and help reduce oversubscription, which was three times the available budget last year.

Provide more development support to funded groups and use our 2024–25 data to better understand where there are gaps in provision, so we can target under-served communities

Build on wellbeing outcomes, ensuring the 2025–26 programme continues to support older people and adults with additional needs, while tackling ongoing challenges around volunteers and transport.

Appendix

This section lists community groups awarded funding during 2024–25. For more details on the activities, [visit the Livewell website here](#).

Cherwell

Arts, Culture & Creative

Community Albums (OX16 0JJ) – Music Sessions for Males Over 50 – £2,300

Community Based Socialising

Bicester Open Doors (OX26 6JQ) – Weekly Community Lunch – £2,500

Bloxham Bowls Club (OX15 4LW) – Bowls Club – £900

Café 103 - Orchard Baptist Church (OX26 6JQ) – Café and Craft Activities – £2,000

Cherwell Collective (OX5 1EE) – Weekly lunch club – £1,750

Distraction Youth (OX16 1AT) – Intergenerational Cinema Socialising – £1,540

Kidlington Good Neighbour Scheme (OX5 1AB) – Good Neighbour Scheme – £1,500

Launton Village Rock Chorus (OX26 5EB) – Social Music Activities – £1,000

St Mary's Thursday Club (OX15 4ET) – Social activities & lunch club – £1,000

The Valentine Club (OX25 4SE) – Lunch Club – £2,500

Volunteer Driver Services (OX15 4DY) – Older People to Activities in Cherwell – £3,000

Health & Wellbeing

Parkinsons UK - Banbury Branch (OX16) – Social activities – £3,500

Skills & Lifelong Learning

Banbury Mosque (OX16 4RX) – Coffee Morning and Skill Based Activities – £2,200

Heyford Makers Shed (OX25 5BT) – Skills in Community Activities – £500

Oxford City

Arts, Culture & Creative

Beautiful Minds Drama Group (OX1 1SS) – Drama Group (Neuro Divergent Adults) – £2,500

Ampleforth Choir (Dementia Oxfordshire) (OX3 8HH) – monthly singalong sessions – £1,400

Museum of Oxford Development Trust (OX1 1BX) – Creative & Arts Sessions – £4,938

South Oxford Arts (OX1 4RP) – Art Sessions – £1,600

Appendix (continued)

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Community Based Socialising

Archway Foundation (OX4 1DA) – Friendship Group Activities – £4,000

Bullington Community Association (OX3 7HS) – Lunch Club – £1,254

Cotteslowe Seniors (OX2 7SX) – Social Activities – £2,000

Cuttleslowe Community Larder (OX2 7SX) – Weekly Lunch – £2,630

Florence Park Community Centre (OX4 3N) – Lunch Club – £3,500

Kennington Community Larder (OX1 5PL) – Larder and the community café – £1,500

OSJCT Longlands (Order of St John Care Trust) (OX4 6AJ) – Social Activities – £1,250

Oxford Community Action (OX4 1HU) – Community Hub and Exercise Group – £4,250

Oxfordshire Community Education Group (OX4 3TN) – Community Café & Meal Distribution – £3,923

Oxfordshire Older Chinese People Centre (Happy Place) (OX2 0BT) – lunch club - £3,485

Tandem Befriending (OX4 1YH) – Weekly Social Group – £2,400

Green/Environmental & Outdoor Activities

MyVision Oxfordshire (OX1 4XL) – Green Walks for Adults with visual impairment – £3,000

Health & Wellbeing

MuMo Creative (OX2 7NY) – Dance for Parkinsons Classes – £5,000

Syrian Community Oxfordshire (Syrcox) (OX4 3NH) – Zumba Initiative – £2,500

Family Arena Community Link Project (OX4 2ND) – Health & Wellbeing activities – £1,200

South Oxfordshire

Arts, Culture & Creative

Style Acre (OX10 8BA) – Creative & Exercise Activities – £2,766

Community Based Socialising

Berinsfield Day Centre (OX10 7LZ) – Twice Weekly Social Activities Group – £1,251

Chinnor Village Centre (OX39 4DH) – Dementia Café/Community Transport – £2,000

Harwellian Club (OX11 0LG) – Music for Memories - Dementia Activity & café – £3,710

Henley YMCA (RG9 1NZ) – Social Group and Outings for Neurodiverse Adults – £2,000

T(ART) Productions (OX4 1RE) – Social Group – £2,117

Thame Senior Friendship Centre (OX9 3WT) – Memories Dementia café – £4,965

Green/Environmental & Outdoor Activities

Sustainable Didcot (OX11 7NN) – Skill and Chill Session - Green Activity – £3,500

Wild Oxfordshire (Wild Didcot Project) (OX14 4RA) – Outdoor Activities – £3,000

Health & Wellbeing

Cholsey Pavillion Trust (OX10 9PT) – Activities Sessions – £2,200

Garford Common Good Trust (OX13 5PF) – Petanque & indoor bowls – £3,000

Watlington Bowls Club (OX49 5BU) – Short Mat Bowls – £1,200

Skills & Lifelong Learning

Shedquarters – Gallowstree Common (RG9 5JA) – Making and Mending things – £2,000

Vale of White Horse

Community Based Socialising

Carers Community Vale of the White Horse (SN6 8FS) – Adult Carers Support Activities – £2,000

Down to Earth Community Café(OX12 7AU) – Monthly Community Meal – £4,000

Golden Age Club (OX12 8LA) – Community Monthly Meet and Meal – £1,000

Hundreds Environment Group (OX12 8LA) – Community Cinema Nights/Matinees – £1,000

Vale Community Impact (OX12 8AE) – Good Neighbour Pop-Up cafés – £4,750

Green/Environmental & Outdoor Activities

Friends of Radley Large Wood (OX15) – Monthly Wood Walks and Workshop Sessions – £500

Health & Wellbeing

Grove Stroke Group (OX12 0PT) –Social and support activities for stroke survivors– £1,600

Oxford Head Injuries (OX1 5PL) – Wellbeing Activities/Social Group – £2,800

Survivors Space (OX14 1SY) – Monthly Social Group Activities – £4,500

Skills & Lifelong Learning

Oxford Wood Recycling (OX14 5JX) – Skills & Socialisation Activities – £3,500

West Oxfordshire

Arts, Culture & Creative

Chipping Norton Theatre (OX7 5NL) – Great Company Drama for NeuroDivergent Adults – £3,000

Community Based Socialising

Carterton Community Centre - Welcome Hub (OX18 1AX) –Community Coffee Morning – £2,200

Charlbury Community Centre - Thomas Gifford Trust (OX7 3PQ) – Friday coffee club – £2,248

Combe Mutual Aid (OX29 8NQ.) – Warm space meet up – £500

Ducklington Warm Welcome Space (OX29 7UA) – Warm Space /Activities/Support Services – £2,032

Eynsham Day Centre (OX29 4QW) – Lunch Club – £3,000

Fifield Parish Hall (OX7 6HL) – Social activities – £1,000

Guideposts Trust (OX28 4BH) – Friendship Group Activities– £4,951

Hanborough Day Centre - The Elderberries (OX29 8BJ) – Lunch Club – £2,280

North Leigh Community Café (OX29 6SS) – Community Café – £3,000

Stonesfield Lunch Club (OX29 8PP) – Lunch club – £5,000

Witney Community Meal (OX28 6HG) – Community Meal for All– £1,500

Health & Wellbeing

Treasures Bereavement Group (OX18 1AX) – Fortnightly Bereavement Café – £2,440

Witney Talking News (OX29 8DD) – Talking News Paper for Blind Community – £2,100

Skills & Lifelong Learning

Charlbury Community Workshop (OX7 3PQ) – Practical Craft Sessions – £1,875

FarmAbility (OX29 4TB) – Skills/socialisation activities – £4,995

Yellow Submarine (Witney Location) (OX28 4YA) – Weekly Social Club– £3,500