Oxfordshire Works: our plan for an inclusive labour market

A Local Get Britain Working Plan

Contents

Version Control

Shared Intelligence QA	First draft	23.09.25	LMc
OCC Review	First draft	25.09.25	NG
Shared Intelligence Update	Second draft	26.09.25	LMc
Partner Review	Third draft	TBC	TBC
OCC Moderated	Third draft	TBC	NG
Shared Intelligence Update	Final copy	TBC	LMc
OCC Sign Off	Final copy	TBC	NG

1 Background and labour market context

Summary overview

Oxfordshire's plan covers the county council footprint, combining urban growth centres, traditionally affluent, and commuter labour market types. The county's strengths include high employment levels (above the national target), world-class innovation sectors (life sciences, clean energy, advanced manufacturing), and a strong potential for partnership and place-based working. However, structural challenges persist: high housing costs, poor rural transport connectivity, inequalities across and within districts, and shortages in key sectors (health, care, logistics, construction).

The formation of the Plan has been led by Oxfordshire County Council, with collaboration from DWP/JCP and the lead from the Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and West Berkshire ICB, supported by broad stakeholder engagement. The plan aligns with national Get Britain Working ambitions, but targets pockets of need rather than headline employment growth given the county already outperforms the 80% national target. Future reform (e.g., local government reorganisation, devolution opportunities) will further shape delivery as the Plan matures.

The geographic area covered by the plan

The Oxfordshire Local Get Britain Working Plan covers the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) geographical and administrative footprint. OCC is an upper tier authority which covers 1,000 square miles and is home to around 760,000 people. The county is centred around the city of Oxford but also includes smaller towns such as Banbury and Bicester and a significant rural footprint.

Labour market typologies

Oxfordshire's labour market predominantly centres around the city of Oxford. According to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Labour Market types, the Oxfordshire economy can be characterised by three different socio-economic typologies:

- High Growth Centre – Oxford

- Traditional Affluent – Cherwell and South Oxfordshire

- Affluent Commuter Belt – Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire

However, these typologies mask pockets of inactivity, deprivation and inequality in Oxfordshire. The availability of jobs, the skills they require and the earnings they command, vary substantially across Oxfordshire.

Overview of Oxfordshire's strengths, challenges and opportunities

Oxfordshire has many strengths and is well place to lead in contributions to national employment, skills and growth ambitions:

- Oxfordshire is a net contributor to the UK exchequer and the county's employment rate (83.9%)[1] is the highest in England y, already surpassing the government target of 80% of working aged people in employment.[2]

- Oxfordshire is a hub for innovation in a variety of industries identified in the UK Industrial Strategy including life sciences, clean energy and advanced manufacturing. This includes a strong SME, start-up and spin-out base.

- DWP partners in Oxfordshire have several years of experience using place-based plans. These involve understanding specific problems of a place and developing place-based solutions. Here, local Job Centre Plus (JCP) offices work collaboratively with the districts and boroughs to agree priority areas.

However, Oxfordshire also faces macroeconomic, structural and place-based challenges that need to be addressed to improve employment outcomes, including:

- High housing costs, with house prices 61% higher than the England average[3], hinder recruitment and retention, particularly for key workers.

- Poor connectivity and public transport options from rural areas to employment hubs and vocational training. This limits labour market mobility, especially for young people and lower-income residents.

- Significant local inequalities both between rural and urban areas, and within urban areas in Oxford.

- There is a mismatch between the skills people in Oxfordshire currently have and the skills that employers need in a fast-changing labour market, leading to persistent shortages in sectors such as health, care, logistics, and construction.

- Limited availability of ESOL training and support for Oxfordshire's non-native English speaking communities.

There are clear opportunities to build on strong local assets, growing sectors and collaborative structures to deliver lasting impact through the Oxfordshire local Get Britain Working Plan:

- Strong growth in emerging sectors identified in the UK industrial Strategy including but not limited to life sciences, clean energy and advanced manufacturing.

- Sector-based work academies through JCP which combine training, work experience and guaranteed interviews.

- Oxfordshire as a Marmot Place, partnering with UCL Institute of Health Equity, signals a commitment to addressing social determinants of health and health inequality by working with partners across the system.

- OCC as the first county council to be awarded Local Authority of Sanctuary status, demonstrating its commitment to supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

---

[1] DWP has recently published an employment rate of 83.9% for Oxfordshire. In this Plan, however, we reference a more up-to-date figure of 82.4%. While the difference is relatively small, the decline is noteworthy and should be monitored closely.

[2] Guidance for Developing local Get Britain Working plans (England) - GOV.UK

[3] Health and wellbeing strategy - 2024-2030

- Existing joint commissioning between health and local authorities with a budget of over £500m that enables coordinated delivery.

- A renewed focus on social value creating an opportunity to utilise spending power to support Oxfordshire's business and residents.

The national context and government ambitions

The development of this plan aligns with the UK Government's Get Britain White Paper, which sets out national ambitions to reduce economic inactivity and improve employment across the country. The white paper also aims to improve integration employment, health and skills initiatives.

The headline national ambition is to raise the UK's employment rate to 80%. This refers to the proportion of working aged people who are in work. We note the content of the local Get Britain Working Plan Guidance relating to the working age definition and we consider the impact of this in more detail in Section 2. As of 2025, Oxfordshire's employment rate already exceeds the target of 80% meaning that the plan is targeted at specific pockets of need among cohorts and geographies across the county.

Oxfordshire County Council, as accountable body, commissioned Shared Intelligence to support development of the plan. The work has been overseen by an officer and an official group comprising Oxfordshire County Council, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB). Alongside this, a wide range of local partners have been engaged through one-to-one interviews and stakeholder engagement across the system.

Local government context

The Oxfordshire County Council area currently operates under a two-tier system, with service delivery split between the county council and each of the 5 city and district councils. These are Cherwell, Oxford, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire is a candidate for the process of local government reorganisation, outlined in the English Devolution White Paper. The White Paper outlines the government's strategy to replace two-tier systems with unitary authorities, consolidating county and district council functions into a single governance body.

Oxfordshire submitted a single response to local government reorganisation setting out three possible options for reorganisation. The county will also want to maintain close ties to future strategic authority to coordinate policy areas such as transport, housing and economic development across the Thames Valley, potentially matching the footprint of the ICB.

Although Oxfordshire was not selected as one of the areas to be involved in the government's Devolution Priority Programme, there is still a strong local appetite for devolution in Oxfordshire. This would see more funding and decision-making power moved from Whitehall to the devolved area. In turn, the county can better support progress on national growth objectives by leveraging its high-value industries, research institutions and innovation-led economic strategies.

Integrated Care Board structure in Oxfordshire

The Oxfordshire Integrated Care Board operates on a different geography, covering local authority areas of Oxfordshire as well as neighbouring authority areas of Buckinghamshire and West

Berkshire. The ICB was formally established as a statutory body in July 2022, replacing the three clinical commissioning groups across the area. As a result of its geographic remit, the ICB will have a stake in the development of other GBW plans in neighbouring areas. However, this plan is designed to reflect local needs.

The Integrated Care System brings together the NHS, local government, and voluntary sector partners across the region and is responsible for developing and owning the Integrated Care Strategy covering Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West.

2   Labour market analysis

Summary overview

- Overall, Oxfordshire is outperforming the South East and England in employment rate, with a rate above DWP's target of 80%.
    - However, there is a large disability employment gap. Those with disabilities have a disproportionately higher chance of unemployment relative to the South East or England.
    - There is also a gender gap, with men having higher rates of economic activity than women by 4 percentage points.
    - Additionally, there is a high number of vacancies, indicating a tight labour market and a skills mismatch all contributing to employer difficulties in filling jobs.

- High levels of SOC 1-3 occupations and low levels of SOC 7-9 occupations, as well as consistently high earnings indicate strong job quality. This is reinforced by the relatively low proportion of jobs (8.4%) paying less than Living Wage.
    - However, there is a gender disparity, with females more likely than males to be in low-quality occupations, other than process, plant and machine operatives.
    - Additionally, many homeless applicants are in employment, education or training (EET), which may reflect high levels of in-work poverty, financial insecurity and high housing costs.

- Oxfordshire's overall strong performance means this plan needs to focus less on driving employment numbers, and instead on targeted support for individual cohorts who face particular barriers.
    - One cohort who face particular barriers is refugees. Local support may currently be limited and ESOL provision doesn't meet demand.
    - Care leavers also face barriers to employment and are much more likely to not be in education, employment or training than those who are not care-experienced.

- The largest group of those economically inactive are those who are looking after home or family.
    - However, the number of people who are economically inactive for any reason is decreasing, apart from those who are students, and those who are long-term sick or disabled. These cohorts are growing slightly.

- There is substantial variation in employment between districts, with Oxford and Cherwell having high levels of economic inactivity.
    - However, Oxford's high level of economic inactivity is driven by its large student population.

Labour market

This section provides an analysis of Oxfordshire's labour market, including employment, unemployment, economic activity and inactivity as well as time-series trends. It explores skill levels and earnings, split by demographic characteristics where available. It also provides a district-level analysis to show variations of each indicator across Oxfordshire to support a greater understanding of where action should be focused.

Economic Inactivity

There is a distinction between an individual classified as economically inactive and active, importantly official Census definition classifies unemployed individuals as economically active rather than economically inactive. Figure 1 depicts the relative position of the economically active and inactive groups within Oxfordshire's overall population. Importantly, individuals classified as unemployed are within the target group of Get Britain Working, therefore have been integrated in the economically inactive cohort. Due to the volatility and uncertainty in the Annual Population Survey (APS) and its assessment as statistically unreliable due to the low response rate, the Census (2021) has been used to populate figure 1.[4]

To note, those individuals in the total economic inactivity subset (dark green border), also include people who class themselves as retired. Importantly, these are individuals who no longer intend to work, though they have not necessarily reached state pension age.

Removing retired people from the active population gives an estimate of the labour market participants who are in scope for the Get Oxfordshire Working plan – this figure (63,249) is captured in the pink box. However, it was estimated in 2022 that there was a substantial number (17,446) of working-age retirees,[5] who may be considered in scope for returning to work.

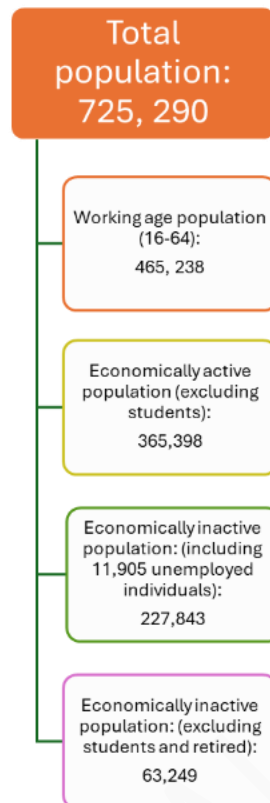[4] This plan combines data sources to verify economic activity.
[5] APS 2022

Figure 1: Relative position of economically active and inactive groups within Oxfordshire's overall population.

Source: Census, 2021

The breakdown of the economically inactive cohort, corresponding to grouping for their economic inactivity is detailed in figure 2. The largest cohort which represents the largest proportion of those economically inactive are individuals with caring responsibilities (representing 22,705 individuals and 35 per cent proportionally).

Figure 3 shows the five-year trajectory of each economically inactive group. Data from the APS, although low in response rate, is useful to understand trends in variables and is the main source in figure 1 and preceding time-series data illustrations. The student cohort shows the greatest increase, with long-term sick and disabled people following. Those looking after home/families, retired and labelled "other" cohort, show declines in economic inactivity rates.
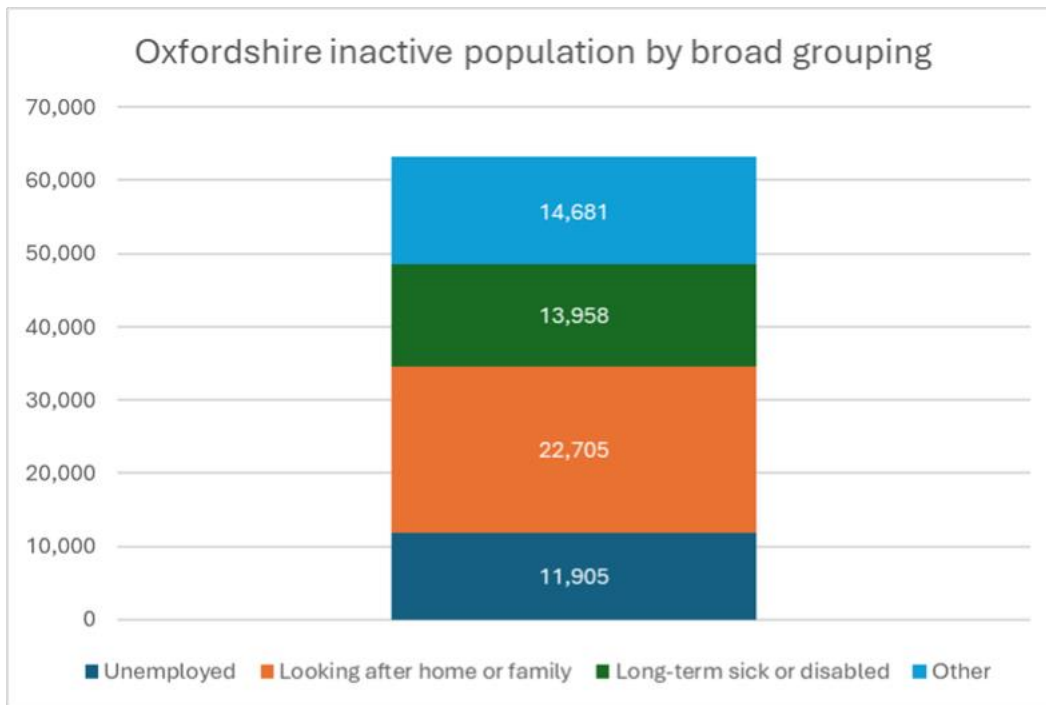
Figure 2: Total individual count in each inactive and unemployed cohort.
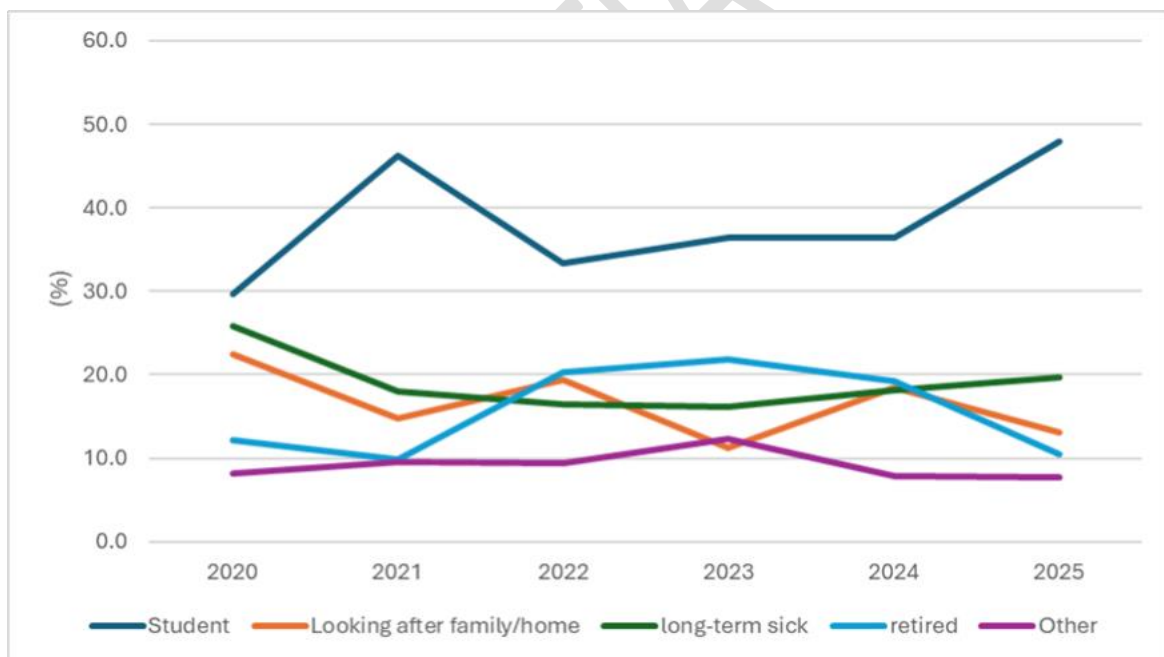
Source: Census, 2021

Figure 3: Economic inactive by reason from 2020 - 2025.

Source: APS, Nomis (March-April)

Employment rate

The employment rate is defined as the proportion of working-age people who are in employment. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Labour Force Survey (LFS) and APS defines the working age population as 16-64. However, DWP's guidance for the GBW plan asks for working aged 18-66,

reflecting the national policy aim to extend education until age of 18 and extend retirement age. The Census 2021 captures employment figures within the DWP age categories, however there is caution that this figure is inflated from capturing inactive individuals from the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, ongoing employment evidence will use the APS to avoid capturing pandemic data and present most recent data.

In Oxfordshire the employment rate although fluctuating since the pandemic has continuously remained above England average employment rate (figure 4). In addition, the target employment rate set out for the plan is 80% and Oxfordshire has stayed above this figure since 2023. Latest data from April 2024 – March 2025 shows Oxfordshire's employment rate sits at 82.4%.[6]
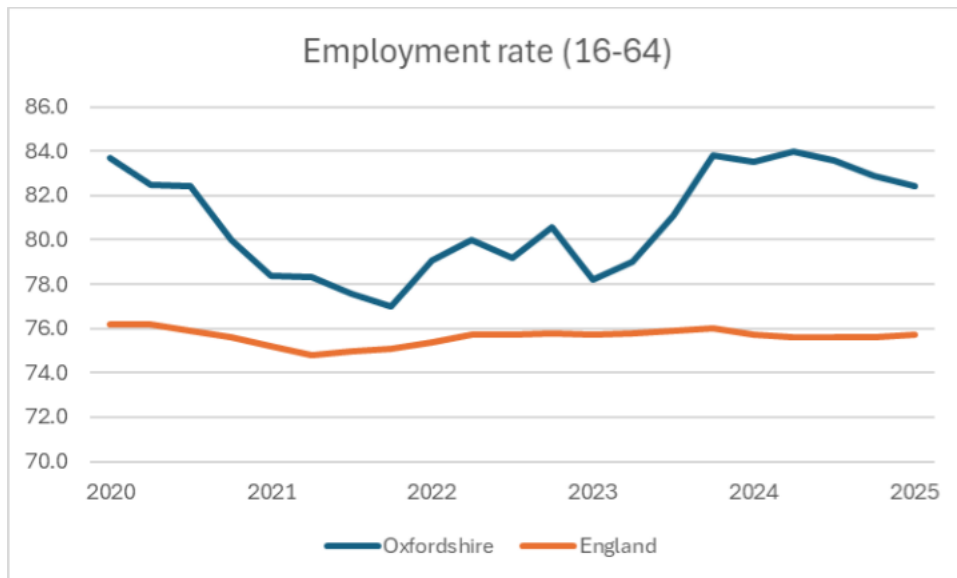

Figure 4: Employment rate from 2020 – 2025.

 Source: APS

Inactive subgroups in scope of the plan

The labour market analysis identifies the absolute number representing each inactive subgroup. This section breaks the subgroups down further, which helps to identify where this plan needs to focus.

Claimant count measures individuals claiming unemployment-related benefits. It provides a supplementary or alternative measure of unemployment and can be broken down by gender (figure 5).

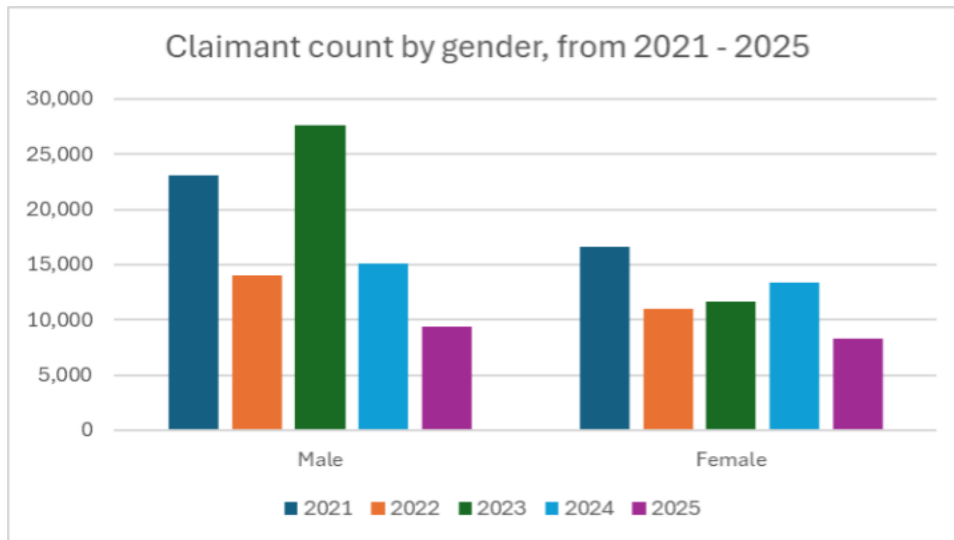[6] APS 2025

Figure 5: Unemployment claimants by gender from 2021 – 2025.

Source: APS (April-March)

As a proportion of total claimants, male claimants exceed female claimants in each year. The largest difference is in the year 2023, where there were 16,030 more male claimants than females. For both sexes, recent data (captured until March 2025), shows there has been an overall reduction in claimants where numbers are at the lowest out of the last five years. In the most recent year of data, the gap between male and female claimant rates is narrowing.

Another way to understand gender discrepancies is through economic activity rates. In the past 5 years, males have consistently participated in the labour market at higher rates than females (figure 6). However, recent data shows the economic activity gender gap is converging over time. This aligns with the trend in the claimant count statistics. The difference between male and female economic activity rates decreased from 6 percentage points in 2022 to 4 percentage points in both 2023 and 2024.
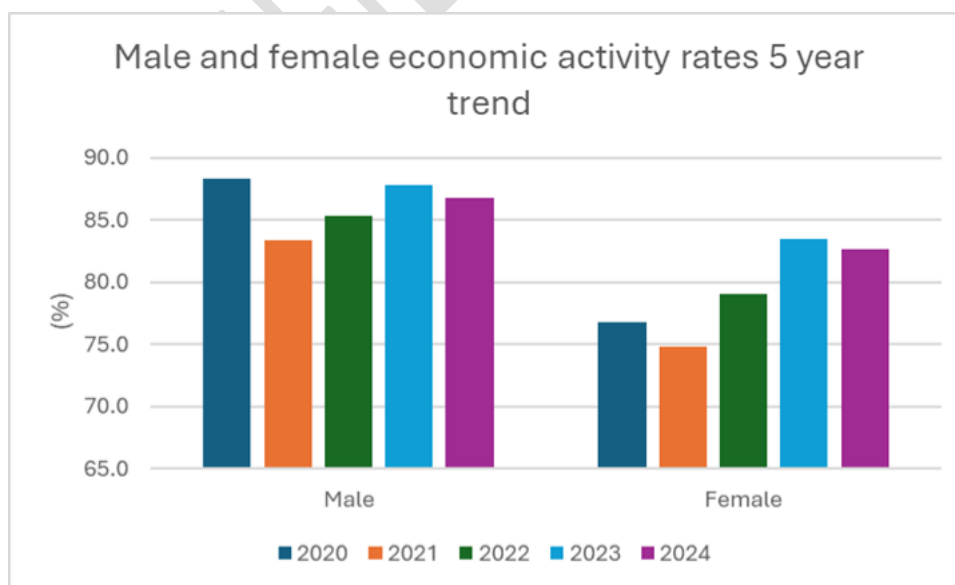

Figure 6: Gender split in Economic Activity rates - from 2020 to 2024.

Job quality

One focal area in the Get Britain Working White Paper is the Government's commitment to create more good quality, productive and secure work by enhancing individual skills. The current landscape of the quality of jobs available in Oxfordshire is therefore important to consider. A person's respective job quality directly correlates to earnings, for instance poor quality jobs (insecure work, inadequate working condition) correlate to lower paid employment available. There's also a greater likelihood of a person developing health and wellbeing issues because of low quality work, causing a person to leave the labour market.

To understand job quality in Oxfordshire, occupational classifications can be used. This highlights the prevalence of types of jobs in Oxfordshire. See table 1 for breakdown of occupation by Standard Occupation Classification (SOC).

Standard Occupation Classification	Profession	Number of persons in employment	Profession relative to South East total
SOC 1	Managers, directors and senior officials	48,549	8%
SOC 2	Professional occupations	89,465	10%
SOC 3	Associate professional and technical occupations	48,925	8%
SOC 4	Administrative and secretarial occupations	29,222	7%
SOC 5	Skilled trades occupations	32,137	8%
SOC 6	Caring, leisure and other service occupations	27,249	7%
SOC 7	Sales and customer service occupations	21,193	7%
SOC 8	Process, plant and machine operatives	18,941	8%
SOC 9	Elementary occupations	30,611	8%

Table 1: Number of persons in employment (16-64) by Standard Occupation Classifications.

In Oxfordshire the highest concentration of persons in employment is in the Professional service occupation (89,465). This is followed by SOC 3 (Associate professional and technical occupations)

and SOC 1 (Managers, directors and senior officials) at similar levels of 48,925 and 48,549 respectively. Overall, Oxfordshire is under-represented in low quality roles (SOC 6-9). Total jobs in low-quality professions aggregate to 97,994, compared to high-quality (SOC 1-3) professions aggregation of 142,909. Table 2 further evidences this, with nearly over half (60 per cent) of the workforce in SOC 1 – SOC 3.

As a proportion of the South East total count of each profession, Oxfordshire is most represented in the Professional occupations classification accounting for 10 per cent of regional employment. In the remaining sectors there is a similar share (around 7-8 per cent).

Standard Occupation Classification	Profession name	Oxfordshire (%)	South East average (%)
SOC 1	Managers, directors and senior officials	12.2	11.1
SOC 2	Professional occupations	36.5	26.6
SOC 3	Associate professional and technical occupations	11.7	15.1
SOC 4	Administrative and secretarial occupations	10	9.2
SOC 5	Skilled trades occupations	8	8.5
SOC 6	Caring, leisure and other service occupations	7.3	8.6
SOC 7	Sales and customer service occupations	5.0	5.5
SOC 8	Process, plant and machine operatives	3.7	4.6
SOC 9	Elementary occupations	5.6	7.5

Table 2: % of those (16+) in employment by Standard Occupation Classifications (16+), Apr 2024 – March 2025).

Source: APS 2025

Table 2 further illustrates the comparison between the Oxfordshire and the South East average occupational structure. Similarly, Oxfordshire has a higher concentration of professional workers at 36.5 per cent compared to 26.6 per cent in the South East. Occupations where the South-East average is higher includes associate professions, elementary occupations, process operatives and caring and service occupations by 3.4, 1.9, 0.9 and 1.3 percentage points respectively.

The gender distribution across different SOC sectors is presented in figure 7 and 8. These charts also compare Oxfordshire's gender patterns to the South East to indicate how representative Oxfordshire's patterns are. Both male and females in Oxfordshire are highly represented in professional occupations with 1.9 percentage points difference of more females than males (37.5 per cent and 35.6 per cent respectively). Gender differences show that males are more represented in SOC 1 (managers/directors), with 14.4 per cent males compared to 9.9 per cent females. Females are also more represented in SOC 4 AND SOC 6 with 8.1 and 7.8 percentage point respective difference.
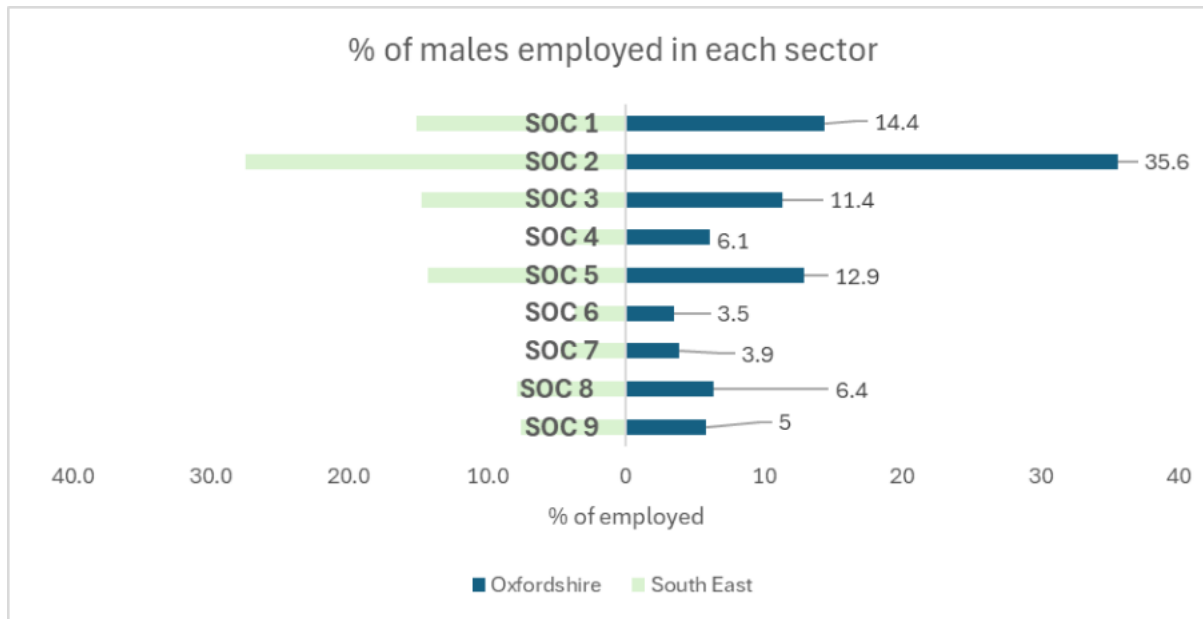

Figure 7: Percentage of males employed in each SOC sector compared to South East average.
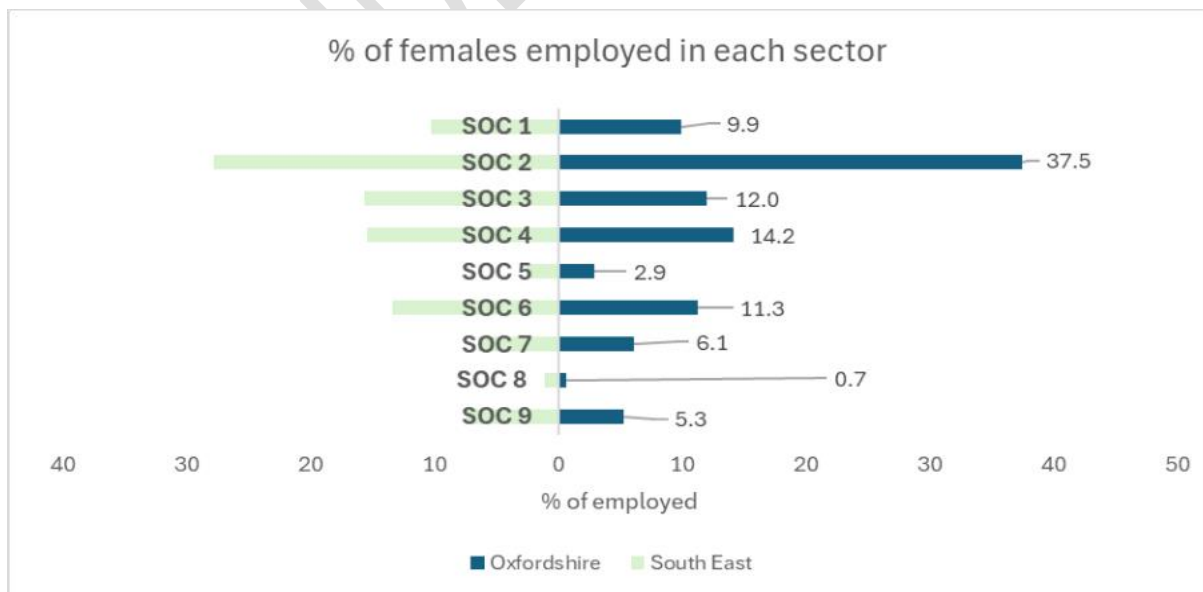
Source: APS 2025

Figure 8: Percentage of females employed in each SOC sector compared to South East average.

Source: APS 2025

Another determinant of job quality is earnings. Earnings per week, split between genders and deciles is depicted in table 3. Oxfordshire residents earn more than both the South East and Great Britain average for all income percentiles. For instance, the median weekly pay in Oxfordshire (£709.90) is £48 higher than the South East average and £87 higher than the average in Great Britain. Similarly, even for the lowest earners (10th percentile) Oxfordshire residents are better off by £14.10.

Notably, across all the income percentiles analysed and on average, there is a gender pay gap in Oxfordshire – males earn a median weekly pay of £782, females earn £176 below this.

(£)	Male	Female	All people	South East	Great Britain
Median gross weekly pay	782.0	606.2	702.9	654.8	615.4
10th percentile	367.6	192.7	236.0	221.9	216.6
20th percentile	504.0	330.8	425.1	384.5	362.4
25th percentile	567.6	375.6	480.8	448.5	429.7
30th percentile	612.1	436.8	520.7	488.4	468.2

Table 3: Median weekly gross pay rates in Oxfordshire, all workers average.

Source: ONS Annual Survey of hours and earnings

People with caring responsibilities are a large cohort of the economically inactive population. To understand this cohort, figure 9 illustrates the number of economically inactive caregivers per how many hours of caring they do per week.

A u-shaped relationship is observed in figure 9, where those who provide low hours of care (9 hours or more) and those who provide more (50 hours) are the two cohorts with greater economic inactivity cases. The case for those providing extensive hours of care is that this cohort physically cannot work standard jobs due to caring responsibilities accounting for a large proportion of their weekly activities.
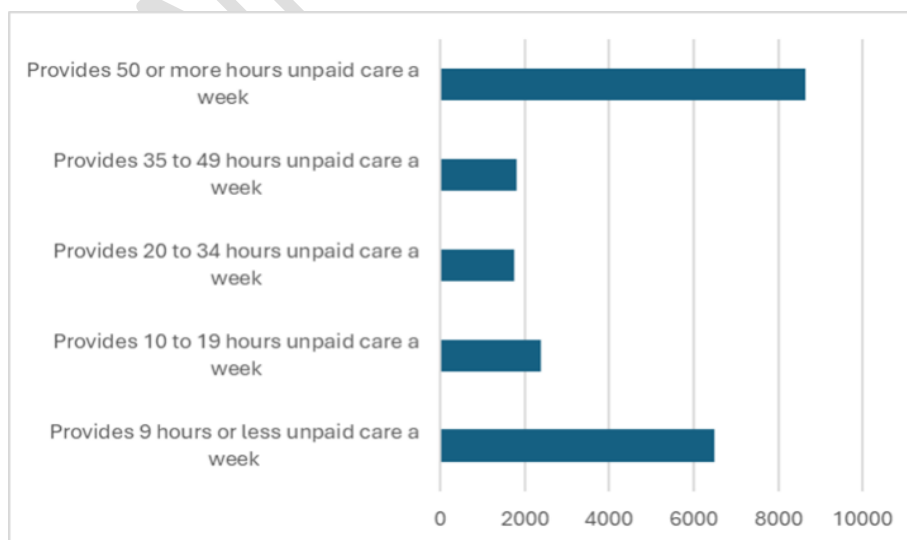
Figure 9: Number of economically inactive care-givers per hour of care.

Source: Census, 2021

Skills

Overall skill levels are also important to consider and are a key determinant in economic inactivity and unemployment. In Oxfordshire, across all Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) levels, Oxfordshire scores higher than the regional and national averages (table 4). The gap widens as skill level progresses but even still at the highest qualification level (degree level, or RQF4), Oxfordshire achieves 61.2 per cent compared to 48.2 per cent for the South East and just 47.2 per cent for Great Britain overall (figure 10). In addition, Oxfordshire has low levels of residents with no qualifications, and only 4.1 per cent have no qualifications compared to 6.8 per cent nationally.

	Oxfordshire (%)	South East (%)	Great Britain (%)
RQF4 and above	61.2	48.2	47.2
RQF3 and above	78.3	69.9	67.6
RQF2 and above	92.5	88.2	86.5
RQF1 and above	94.1	90.8	88.9
Other qualifications	1.8	3.7	4.3
No qualifications	4.1	5.5	6.8

Table 4: Oxfordshire skill levels relative to regional and national benchmarks.
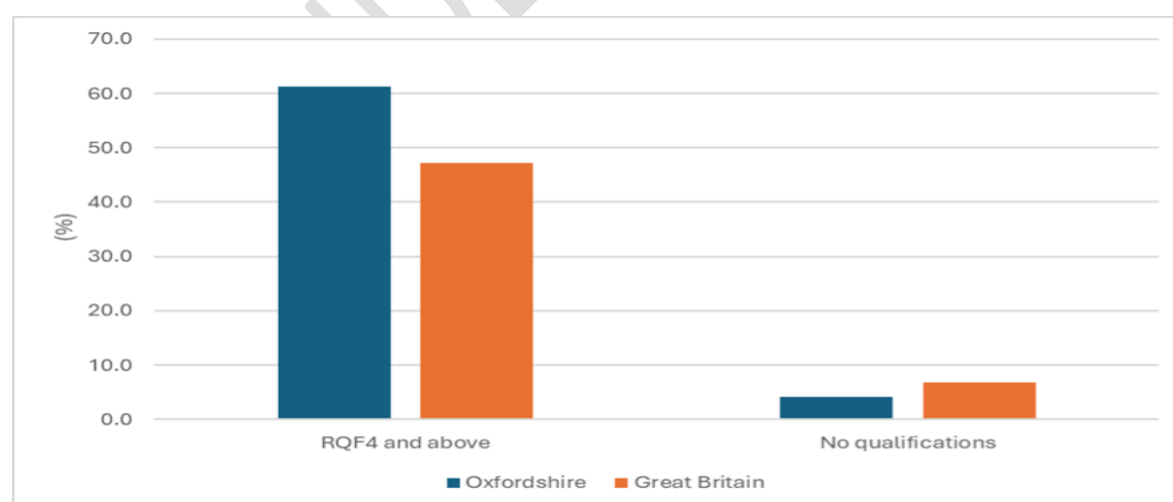
Source: APS 2025

Figure 10: Oxfordshire skill levels (RQF4 and above, and no qualifications) relative to national benchmarks.

Source: APS 2025

To understand vacancies available, unique job postings data can be used to understand the demand for jobs in Oxfordshire. This variable can reflect the actual number of positions available. Figure 11 tracks job postings over time revealing the upward movement since the COVID-19 pandemic. By June 2023, the number of job posts more than doubled (41,787) since January 2020 (16,552). And most recent data recorded until August 2024 shows job postings have dropped back since 2023 but still above pre-pandemic (2020) levels.
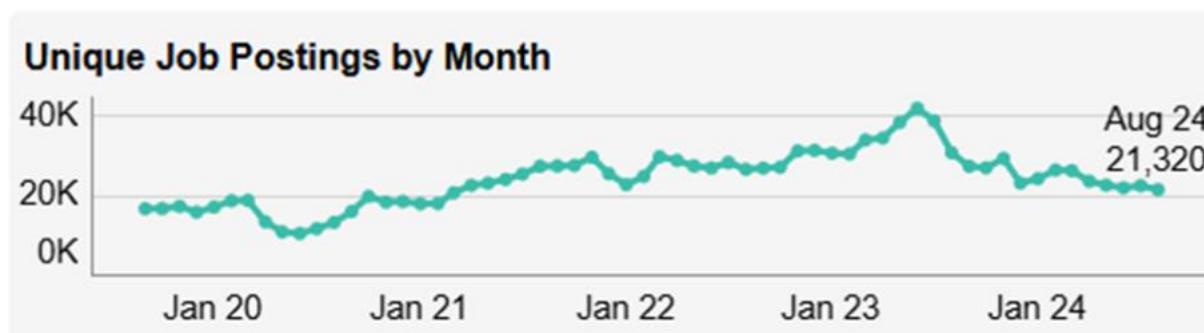

Figure 11: Oxfordshire unique job postings by month.

Source: Oxfordshire local skills dashboard

Individual cohort data

The Get Britain Working White Paper identifies target cohorts for reducing economic inactivity. These are: people with long-term sickness, young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and women with caring responsibilities.

Young people who are NEET

To understand the absolute extent of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), a proxy of claimant counts in the age cohort 16-24 is utilised. Data constraints have meant that there are no exact data on how many young people are not in education, employment or training. So, proxy indicators have been used to estimate general trends.

Figure 12 displays a ten-year time trend (from 2015 to 2025) of claimant counts of young people at Oxfordshire level, displaying that overall claimant count figures spiked during the Covid-19 pandemic (30,255 in 2020). And as steep as these figures climbed in the pandemic, this figure has also steeply fallen in recent years but remains almost doubly higher than pre-pandemic levels. Figure 13 maps claimants count for young people at district level showing that Oxford and Cherwell have strikingly more young people claiming benefits whereas the other three districts fare similarly.
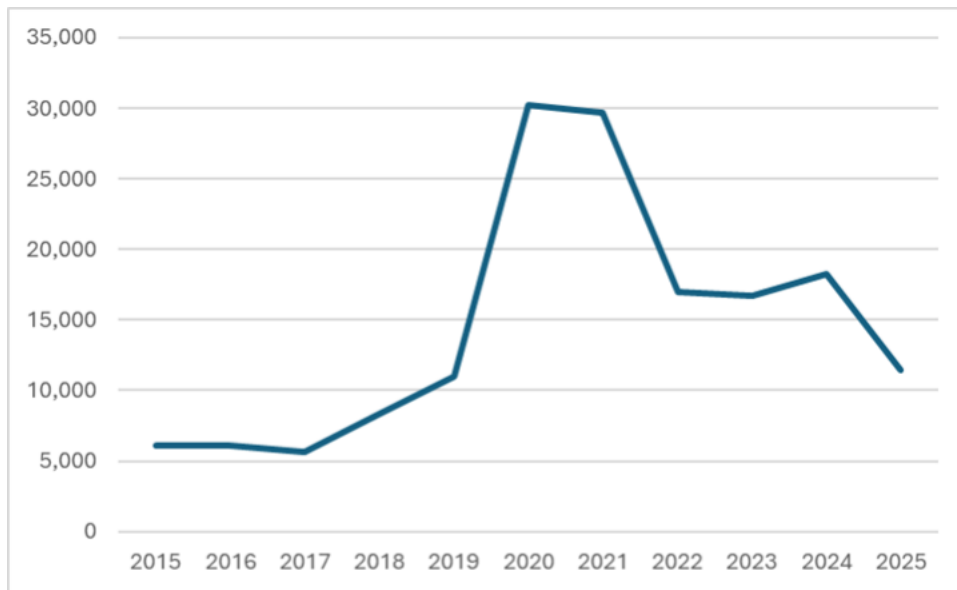
Figure 12: Oxfordshire level. Claimant Count for 16-24 Year Olds (2015-2025).
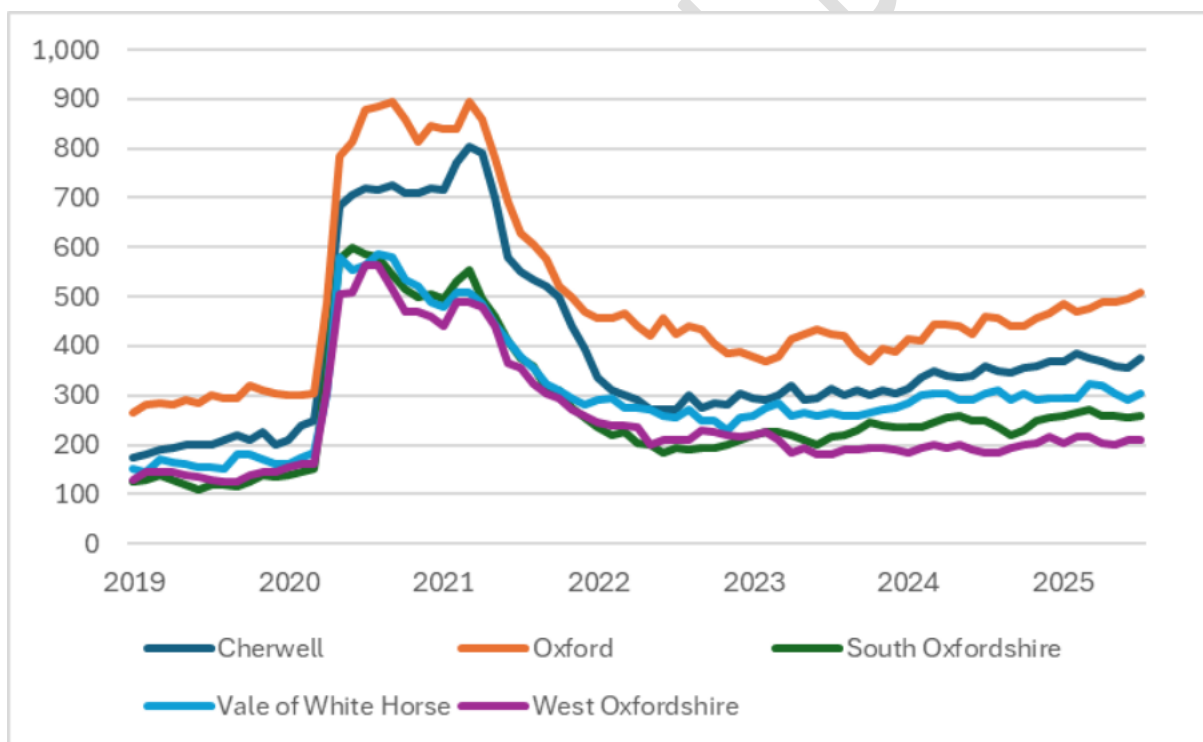
Source: APS

Figure 13: District level - claimant count for 16-24 Year Olds (2019-2025).

Source: APS

Those with long-term health conditions

As shown above, those who are long-term sick or disabled are the second largest cohort of economically inactive individuals behind students, making up 19.7% of the total economically inactive

population. The proportion of economically inactive individuals who are economically inactive due to a long-term health condition or disability has grown over the last 5 years.[7]

In Oxfordshire 86 per cent of residents are in good and very good health (composed of 52.6 per cent in very good health). 10.6 per cent of residents are recorded as having fair health, and 3.4 per cent have bad to very bad health.[8] A district-level breakdown of health status is depicted in figure 14, where all districts fare similarly, with no obvious outliers. Table 5 shows the prevalence of the most common health conditions. It is not understood from this data source whether these individuals are economically inactive, however theses data can indicate which health conditions are affecting those accessing primary health services.
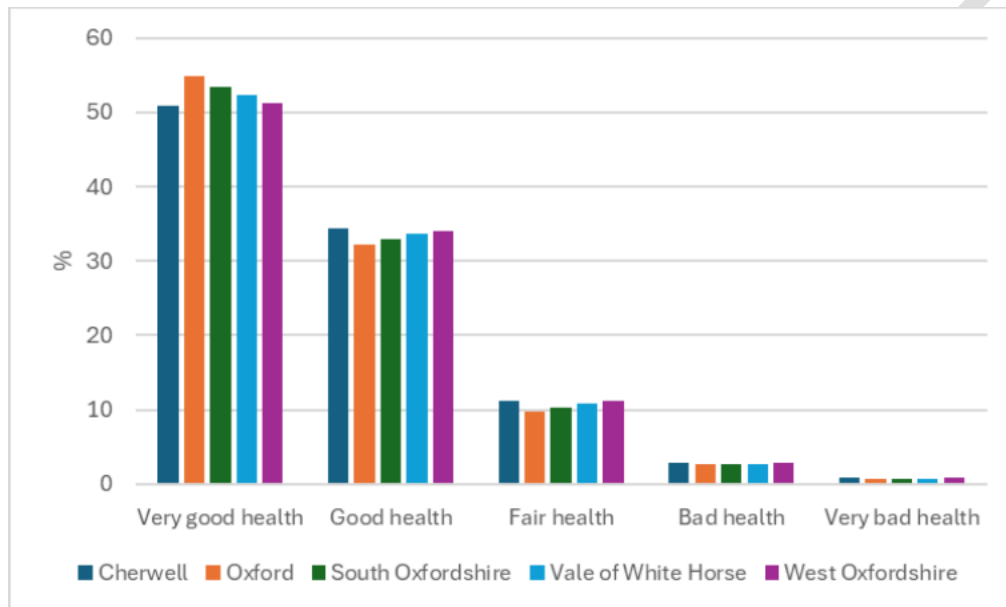
Figure 14: District level − Percentage of residents in very good health to very bad health.

Source: Census, 2021

Health condition	Number of patients
Hypertension (high blood pressure)	99,710
Depression	80,720
Obesity	54,169
Asthma	45,841

Table 5: Number of GP-registered patients with health conditions by prevalence from 2021 − 2022.

Source: Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2023)

---

[7] APS 2025
[8] Census 2021

Women with caring responsibilities

As shown above, caring responsibilities are strongly associated with economic inactivity. The third largest cohort of the total economically inactive population are those who are looking after family or home,[9] and those providing 50 or more hours of care per week are more likely to be economically inactive than any other care-giving cohort.[10]

These data do not reflect the gender of the caregiver. However, at a national scale women are statistically significantly more likely than men to provide unpaid care[11] and so it may be assumed that those with caring responsibilities in Oxfordshire are more likely to be female. Therefore, women with caring responsibilities are likely to be an important economically inactive subgroup in Oxfordshire, as per the DWP White Paper.

District-level analysis

This section considers the various indicators to give a district-level analysis of the economic inactivity numbers (figure 15) and economic activity numbers (figure 16). Most figures presented of cohorts and district-level analysis is sourced from the Census due to the problems identified with the reliability of the LFS.

Figure 15 depicts that Oxford has the highest level of inactive individuals at 12,827, followed by Cherwell at 12,118. This aligns with preceding findings, which confirms Oxford with the lowest employment rate. West Oxfordshire, has only 7,499 economic inactivity residents, representing a 71 per cent difference from the worst-performing and best-performing district. Percentages of those economically inactive by district has also been presented to control for the overall size of population.

And in terms of economic activity, figure 16 shows that Cherwell leads with the highest absolute numbers of individuals characterised as economically active at 86,083. This is followed by South Oxfordshire at 77,479. West Oxfordshire, despite having the lowest economically inactive count, also has the lowest economically active court.
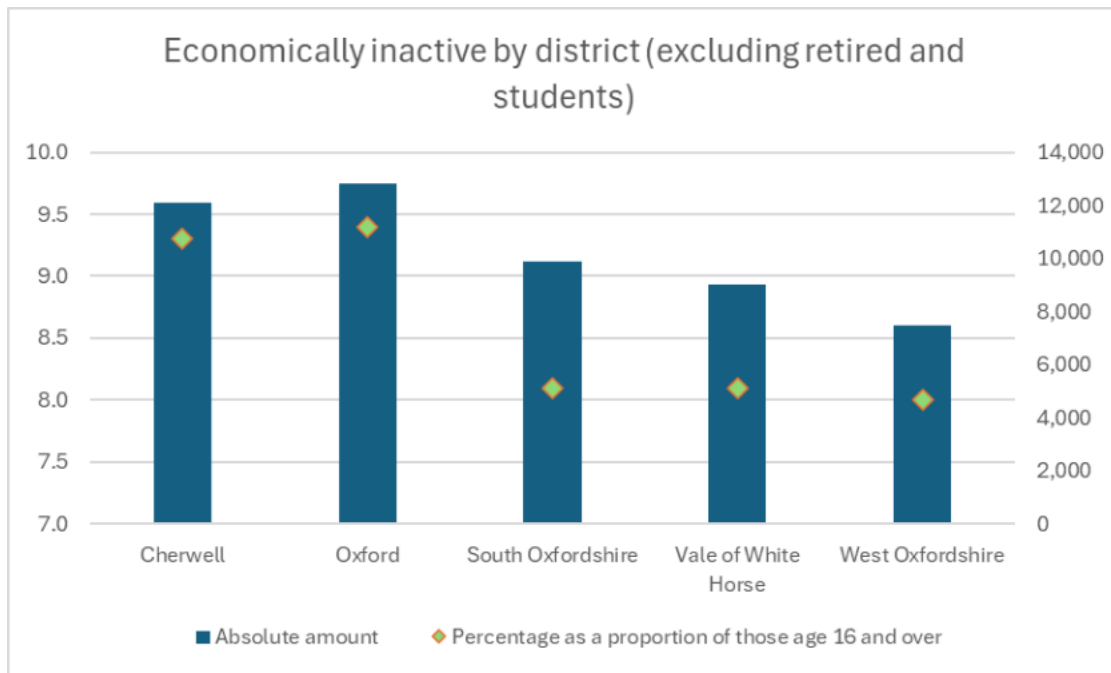
---

[9] APS 2025
[10] Census 2021
[11] *Ibid.*

Figure 15: Number of inactive and unemployed people by district, age 16 and over (excluding students and retired cohort).

Source: Census, 2021
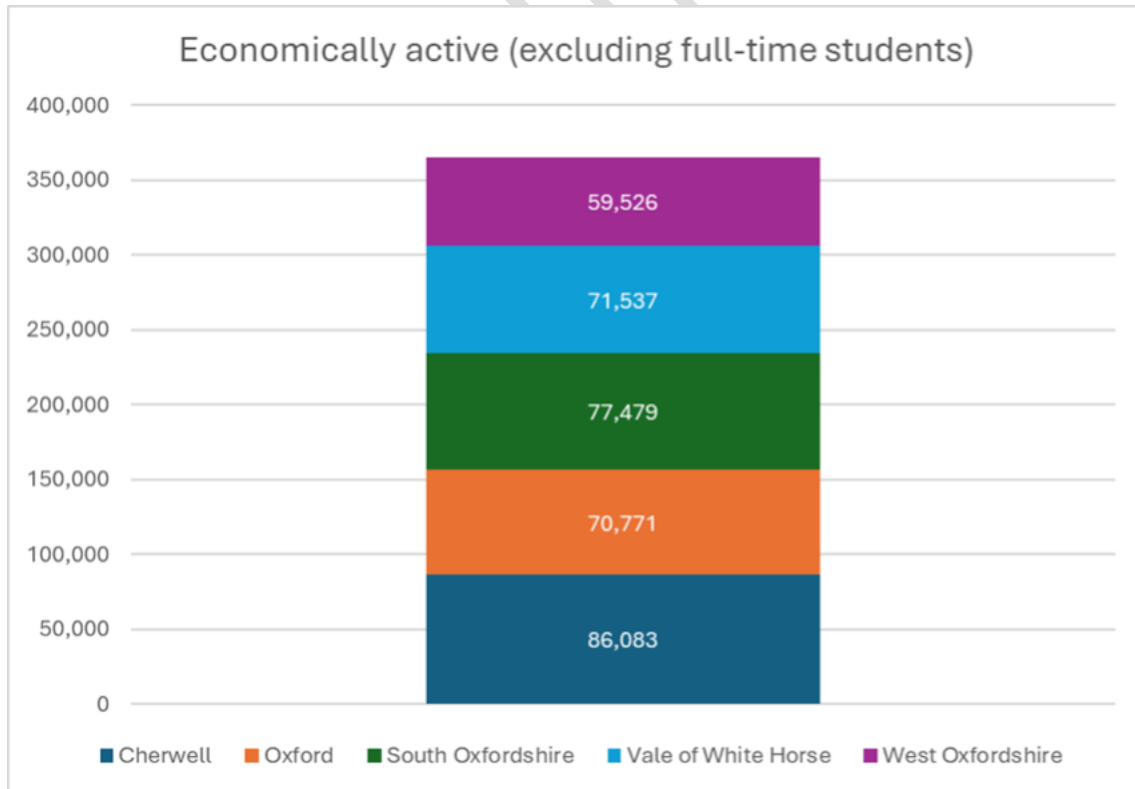
Figure 16: Number of economically active individuals by district

Source: Census, 2021

Although Oxfordshire as a whole meets the 80 per cent employment rate Get Britain Working target, this figure masks variations at district level, where some areas perform well above the target while others fail to reach it.

Figure 17 presents two data sources, the Census and LFS and at different time points. The census shows consistently lower employment rates compared to the LFS. Notably, both surveys present Oxford as having the lowest employment rate (76.9 per cent in LFS and 59.6 per cent in Census), suggesting Oxford as a district with high employment support need. However, it should be noted that the employment rate figures below include students, which has a marked effect in Oxford where the large student population (around 35,000 aged 16-64) elevates levels of economic inactivity. By contrast, districts such as Cherwell do not have this same demographic profile. Figure 16 illustrates how excluding students changes the picture of economic inactivity across districts.
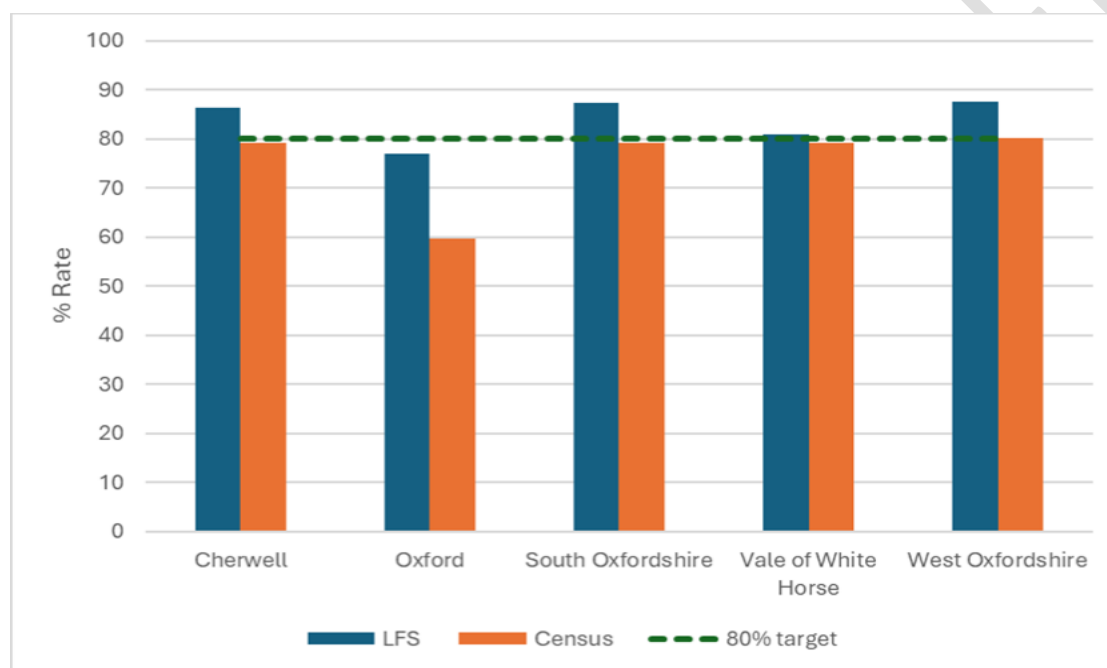
Figure 17: Employment rate for working age population from LFS and Census.

Source: Census, 2021 (16-64) and LFS March 2025 (16-64)

Specific cohorts

The GBW white paper specifies that local plans should focus on employment among groups of people who may face disadvantage in finding good work.

Homeless people

Applicants are owed a prevention duty by the local authority if they are at risk of homelessness within the next 56 days. They are owed a relief duty if they are currently homeless. In Oxfordshire, there were 780 applicants owed prevention or relief in 2024. 35% were in Oxford, with the rest spread evenly throughout the districts of the county.
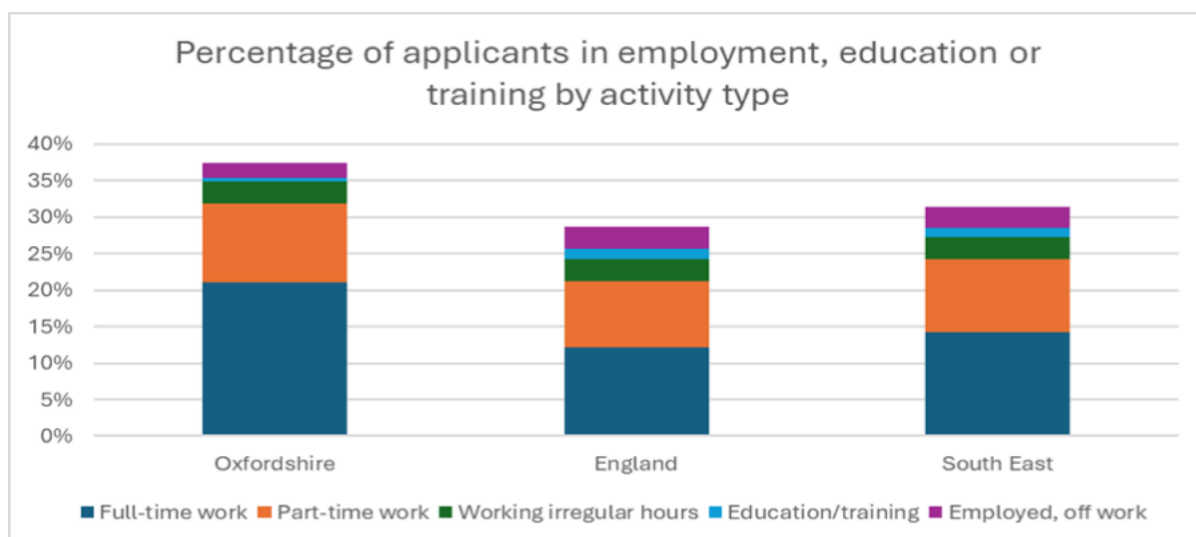
Figure 18 percentage of applicants in employment, education or training.

Source: MHCLG, 2025. These data only capture those who identify the LA of their accommodation status, meaning that they are potentially biased towards urban populations and those in more stable employment

Oxfordshire has a very high proportion of applicants in EET relative to England and the South East. Most of these applicants are in full-time work. This potentially indicates issues in Oxfordshire of high costs of living despite the above average wage levels.

There is substantial heterogeneity in employment among applicants across the county, as shown in Figure 19. In the more urban districts of Oxford and Cherwell, a substantial proportion of applicants are unemployed, whereas in rural districts a much lower proportion are registered as unemployed, perhaps reflecting the difficulty of accessing unemployment services in rural areas and pointing towards a potential demographic who are not being helped by current service provision.
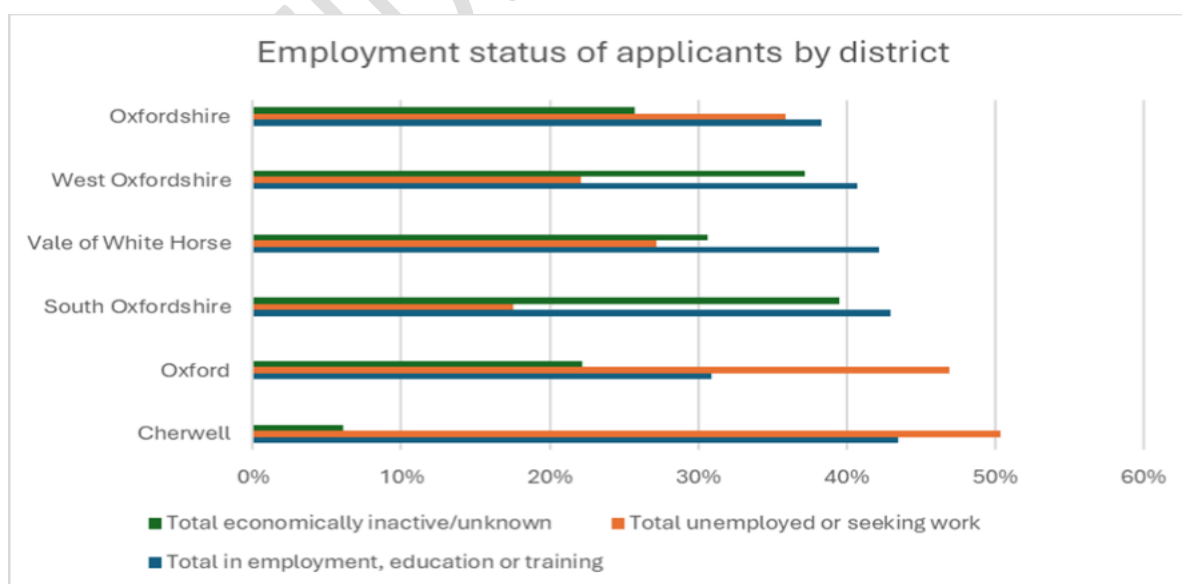
Figure 19: Employment status of applicants by district.

Source: MHCLG, 2025

Care leavers

In 2024 there were 157 care leavers aged 17-18 and 387 aged 19-21 in Oxfordshire. 19-21-year-olds were much more likely to be NEET, with 32% of this cohort NEET compared to 20% of 17-18-year-olds. Across both age cohorts, a lower proportion of care leavers were NEET than the regional and national level, as shown in Figure 20.
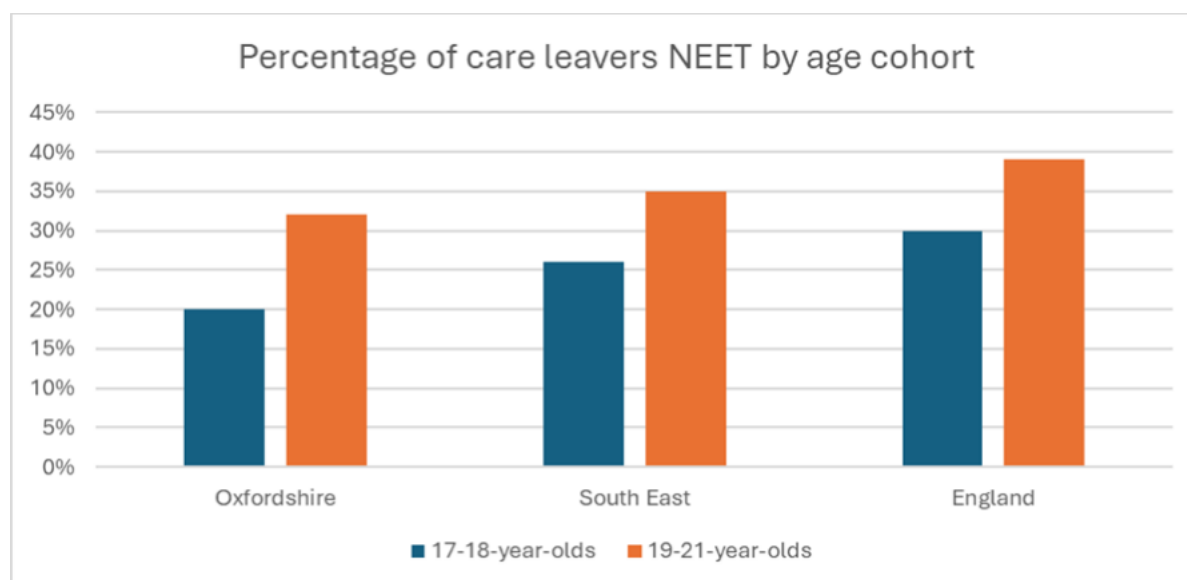
Figure 20: Percentage of care leavers NEET by age cohort.

Source: Children looked after in England including adoptions, 2024. These data are robust with a high n (50670)

At age 17-18, most care leavers (57%) were in education other than higher education. In the 19-21 age group, the largest proportion was in training or employment (36%), with only 25% remaining in education.

Community adults referred to drug and alcohol misuse services

In Oxfordshire 1,765 community adults were referred to drug and alcohol misuse services in 2024. A higher proportion of community adults were in regular employment than regionally or nationally. A corresponding lower proportion were unemployed, economically inactive or long-term sick, as shown in Figure 21.
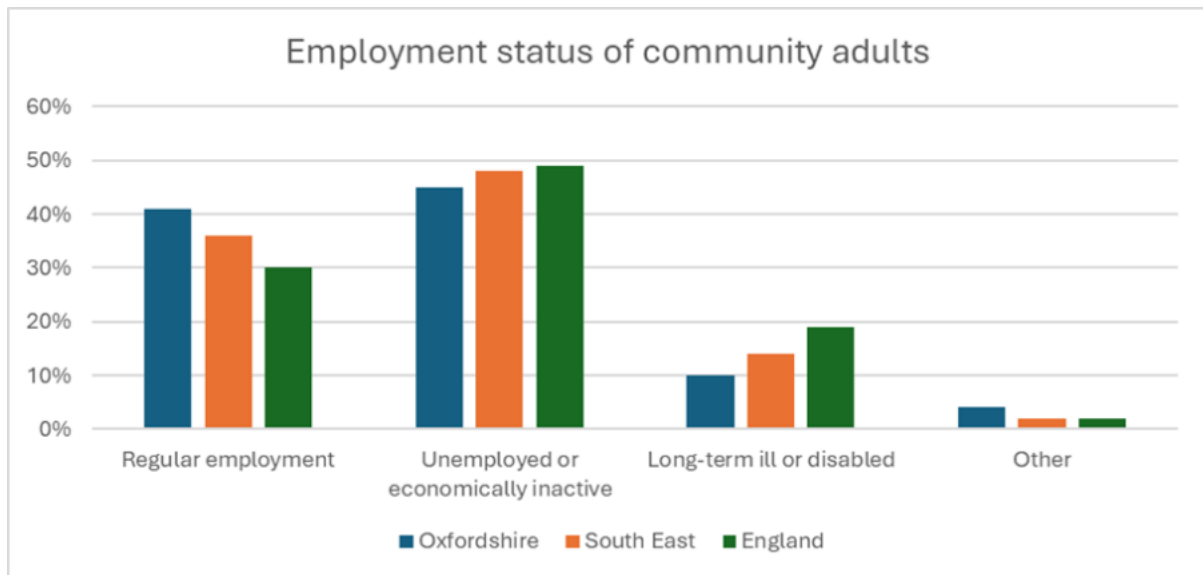
Figure 21: Employment status of community adults.

Source: OHID and NDTMS, 2024

There was substantial heterogeneity by substance category, with only 24% of those referred for opiate only use in regular employment, whereas for alcohol only use, a greater proportion are in regular employment than are unemployed or economically inactive.

The OHID and NDTMS data allow us to examine trends over time, though volatility in estimates and a clear inverse relationship between the proportion classed as unemployed or economically inactive, and long-term ill or disabled, suggests these trends reflect categorisation error rather than true change. In Oxfordshire, the percentage of community adults in regular employment has steadily increased over the last 5 years.

Disability

The disability employment gap in Oxfordshire is smaller in absolute and relative terms than that for the South East and England. In March 2025, those without disabilities regulated under the Equality Act were 20% more likely than those with EA-core disabilities to be employed. In the South East, they were 33% more likely, and in England 43% more likely. The unemployment gap was smaller in absolute terms in Oxfordshire than regionally or nationally, but this was driven by Oxfordshire's overall low unemployment rate. In relative terms, the gap was wider than nationally or regionally, with EA-core disabled people 2.7 times as likely to be unemployed than those without EA-core disabilities. These gaps are shown in Figure 22.
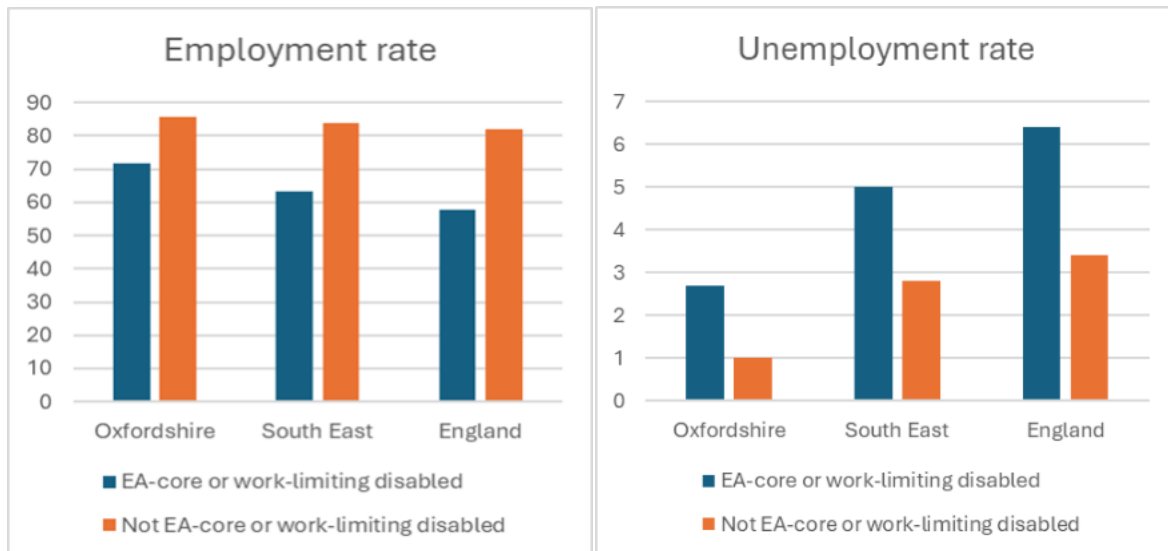
Figure 22: Employment and unemployment rate of EA-core and non EA-core or work limiting disabled.

Source: OHID and APS, 2025. The disability gaps identified in these statistics only includes those with EA-core or work-limiting disabilities, so is likely to over-estimate the true gap, as those with less severe disabilities are more likely to be in employment

The high unemployment rate and low employment rate among those with EA-core and work-limiting disabilities was driven by the very low employment rate for those with learning disabilities or in contact with secondary mental health services. For those with a long-term health condition, the employment gap was lower, at only 10.2 percentage points, though this group made up the largest share of the cohort.

Data gaps

There were insufficient data available to examine employment patterns among certain groups, such as refugees, veterans and ex-offenders.

3 Drivers and causes of supply and demand side labour market issues

Summary overview

Economic inactivity in Oxfordshire is driven by both individual barriers and wider structural issues. Long term health conditions (including both physical and mental health problems), caring responsibilities, low skills, and limited ESOL provision constrain participation, while shortages in sectors such as health, care, logistics, and construction highlight mismatches between the skills residents have and the skills employers need. Beyond this mismatch, there are also systemic challenges in how employers and potential employees are brought together, with gaps in careers pathways, employer engagement, and progression routes. Wider factors such as high housing costs, poor rural transport, and cost-of-living pressures reinforce inactivity. Certain groups, including older workers, refugees, carers, ex-offenders, and people with long-term health conditions, face multiple, overlapping barriers, making them priority cohorts for support.

Oxfordshire's labour market performance is strong, with an employment rate of 82.4%, exceeding the 80% target set out in Get Britain Working guidance. This performance reflects the county's distinctive economic base, including globally significant research institutions, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, and a strong visitor economy.

However, this success also creates a sharper challenge in engaging those left behind. Economic inactivity is increasingly concentrated among groups facing multiple barriers. Areas within Oxford, Banbury, and Abingdon fall within the most deprived nationally, where IMD data suggests that residents face poorer health outcomes, lower skills attainment, and constrained access to opportunity. **The task is therefore less about lifting general employment levels and more about addressing entrenched inequalities, improving access, and tackling the barriers that prevent specific cohorts from participating fully in the labour market.**

Supply and demand issues in the labour market

Despite Oxfordshire's overall strength, employers across priority sectors consistently report **difficulty in filling vacancies.** The 2023 Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and subsequent progress reports from 2024 and 2025 highlight **acute shortages in health and social care, life sciences, ICT and digital, construction, logistics, and hospitality.**

The LSIP also highlights that recruitment pressures in health and social care are particularly severe, with **high vacancy rates for domiciliary care workers and nursing roles**. Employers cite retention challenges linked to workload pressures, cost of living, and competition from other sectors. In the life sciences cluster around the Science Vale, firms face shortages of mid-level technical staff and laboratory technicians, with LSIP evidence noting that graduate supply does not always align with employer demand. **Construction faces persistent shortages in trades such as bricklaying and**

plumbing. Older workers are leaving the workforce without replacement, and **younger people are deterred by perceptions of poor-quality jobs or limited training pipeline capacity**.

In ICT and digital, employers note high demand for cybersecurity, software development, and data analysis skills. Hospitality and logistics, meanwhile, are constrained by housing and transport challenges: **in Oxford, affordability pressures push lower-paid staff further out of the city, while in Bicester, poor public transport connectivity makes it difficult to recruit for shift-based logistics and warehouse roles**.

Stakeholders also stress that some employers' recruitment practices can act as barriers, including **unnecessarily high qualification thresholds and limited workplace adaptation for people with disabilities.** Many employers are also **unaware of support available to them** – or simply do not have the capacity to engage with it – especially amidst a climate of rising business costs. Together, these factors not only point to a skills mismatch, but also a structural weakness in how the system operates to bring employers and potential employees together.

Education and young people
Educational outcomes in Oxfordshire are above average overall, but disparities remain. School readiness among children eligible for Free School Meals in some wards of Oxford city is significantly below the county average, with long-term implications for employment and life chances. This also **directly drives long-term inactivity through reduced educational attainment and skills gaps**.

At post-16 level, the LSIP identifies **gaps in vocational and technical pathways**, especially in construction, logistics, and care. Employers report inconsistent work readiness among new entrants, pointing to weaknesses in careers advice and variable employer engagement in schools. The LSIP progress report notes that despite efforts to expand T Level provision and Skills Bootcamps, participation remains uneven and further alignment with employer demand is needed.

For young people living in rural parts of the county, **inactivity is driven not only by skills gaps but also by structural barriers**: poor transport limits access to apprenticeships and evening/weekend work. SEND young people, particularly autistic or ADHD 16–18-year-olds, are described by health partners as an "untapped" group, with potential for greater participation if support can be improved.

Health
Health is a critical driver of economic inactivity in Oxfordshire. JCP report that over **four-fifths of the Universal Credit caseload have a health-related barrier to work**. Long-term conditions, poor mental health, and disabilities are the most common challenges, with **support needs exceeding current capacity in the system.**

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Director of Public Health annual report, and stakeholder interviews all highlight mental health as a significant and growing driver of inactivity. **Waiting times for services are long, often over a year, and early intervention is limited**. This discourages people from seeking work while awaiting support. By the time treatment becomes available, individuals are often further from the labour market, and the challenge of re-entry has increased.

These delays also impact families. **Carers' own capacity for employment is directly undermined by the demands of providing support and attending repeated appointments**. Prolonged hospital visits

and treatment delays reduce the time and energy they have to sustain work, contributing to higher inactivity among carers.

Stakeholders and literature stress the **cyclical relationship between work and mental health**. Poor mental health reduces capacity to find and maintain employment; meanwhile, unemployment or working in poor-quality jobs creates financial strain, increases stress, and heightens risks of conditions such as depression. Over time this cycle of worklessness and deteriorating mental health makes it progressively harder for individuals to return to the labour market.

Health inequalities vary significantly across the county. **Banbury records higher rates of chronic illness and shorter healthy life expectancy than the county average, while deprived wards in Oxford face compounded challenges of unemployment, poor housing, and poor mental health.** Older people and carers also experience higher risks of social isolation, which undermines health and work readiness.

Given current service pressures and demographic trends of an ageing population, these issues are unlikely to resolve in the short-to-medium term, **requiring systemic investment in prevention and early intervention.**

Demographic and workforce inclusion barriers

Migrants: For migrants, the main drivers of economic inactivity are linked to language, recognition of qualifications, and limited access to tailored training. More than 8,000 new arrivals have come via visa and resettlement schemes since 2020, many with professional qualifications. However, overseas qualifications are often not recognised, and requalification processes are costly and time-consuming, leaving many unable to work at their skill level. Asylum seekers are also often not permitted to work while their claims are processed, which can take months or even years – leading to financial dependence on the State and negative impacts on their mental health and wellbeing.

A shortage of ESOL provision compounds this problem, with long waiting lists preventing people from acquiring the English required for training or employment. This is especially the case for Afghan and Ukrainian residents in Oxfordshire. Lack of UK work experience, employer barriers (such as requiring a secure UK address), and discrimination, including bias in recruitment processes, further restrict access to jobs.

Other practical barriers include **digital exclusion, childcare responsibilities, and transport costs**, which make participation in work or training harder, especially for women and families. Health challenges, such as past trauma and poor mental wellbeing, also affect confidence and employability. These intersecting factors mean that many migrants remain inactive despite strong motivation and valuable skills.

Older workers: Older workers are increasingly inactive due to health, digital, and accessibility barriers. The **over-50s now account for twice the number of claimants as the youth cohort on the JCP register**. Many exhibit low digital confidence and, in some cases, age discrimination. **These factors push people out of work earlier than they would wish or deter them from re-entering.** In rural areas, transport is an additional driver of inactivity, with some older workers who are no longer able to drive or cannot afford a car, unable to access shift-based jobs in care, hospitality, and

logistics. Given Oxfordshire's ageing population, these **drivers are likely to intensify unless addressed through digital inclusion, employer flexibility, and targeted retraining pathways**.

Wider determinants

Structural barriers beyond skills and health also shape labour market participation:

- **Housing**: High costs in Oxford, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse restrict recruitment into lower-paid roles but also drive inactivity by pricing individuals out of feasible commuting or working patterns.

- **Transport**: In Bicester, poor connectivity constrains access to logistics and manufacturing jobs. In rural areas, the lack of evening and weekend services directly prevents people from taking roles in care and hospitality. Poor public transport particularly damages the employment prospects of young people, who are the cohort least likely to own a car.[12]

- **Childcare and caring responsibilities**: The planned expansion of free childcare in 2025 has potential to boost parental employment, but local capacity constraints remain. Where childcare or eldercare responsibilities cannot be met with flexible work, inactivity becomes the default outcome.

- **Social isolation**: Rural isolation and transient housing patterns contribute to loneliness, which undermines both health and work readiness, keeping individuals outside the labour market.

- **Cost of living**: Oxford is the second most unequal city in the UK. High living costs push some people to withdraw from job-seeking altogether, as available roles do not cover basic costs.

Intersectionality and complex needs

Some groups experience multiple, **overlapping drivers of inactivity. Prison leavers and people experiencing homelessness often present with low skills, health challenges, and unstable housing, while employers remain hesitant to recruit them.** In the most deprived wards of Oxford and Banbury, health issues, low skills, and limited local jobs reinforce one another, creating a set of interlocking causes of inactivity rather than a single barrier. Tackling these challenges requires integrated, place-based interventions that bring together health, skills, housing, and employment support.

---

[12] This Is Oxfordshire, 2025 from GoCRP Youth Transport Report

4   Current system and offer

Summary Overview

Oxfordshire benefits from a wide and diverse mix of employment and skills support, spanning national programmes, local authority initiatives, health services, and a strong VCSE sector. Key partners such as the ICB, Jobcentre Plus, Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) and local district councils all contribute to a patchwork of provision, while place-based initiatives like Brighter Futures in Banbury and collaborative delivery programmes such as Connect to Work demonstrate the potential of more integrated approaches.

However, the system remains fragmented. Funding streams are often short-term and programme-based, which makes it difficult to build a coherent and sustainable infrastructure of support. Stakeholders report that, from a customer journey perspective, residents can face repeated assessments, long waits, and confusing referral routes, though it should be noted that this evidence is anecdotal and not derived directly from user feedback.

Strengths of the system include the depth of expertise within the VCSE, the commitment of partners to inclusive growth, and the existence of strong local anchor institutions. Yet, gaps persist in ESOL and mental health provision, rural access, tailored pathways for older workers, and employer-facing activity that connects disadvantaged groups into opportunities. Addressing these weaknesses is essential to build a system that feels joined-up, accessible, and genuinely responsive to the needs of different cohorts.

Overview of current provision

Introduction

This section provides an overview of the skills provision and employment support provided in Oxfordshire. Services provide support for different cohort groups and geographies, with the offer ranging from careers guidance and personalised employment support to training courses and apprenticeships.

Oxfordshire is designated as a Marmot Place, and the Marmot Principles can be seen within the local support offer, through consistent priorities of a healthy start in life, fair employment and tackling rural inequalities. In addition, the range of partnerships in place across health, skills and the economy support Marmot priorities and offer an opportunity for a system wide approach to tackling economic inactivity, something which will strengthen the support offer.

As a county not yet benefitting from devolution, Oxfordshire has not yet been able to exercise more control over certain funding streams (including the Adult Skills Fund, formerly known as the Adult Education Budget). Being able to determine the totality of the adult skills offer based on local needs would strengthen the skills offer in Oxfordshire through more tailored provisions.

This section presents an overview of the offer across the five stages of support before providing an analysis of where there are strengths, gaps and opportunities within the system.

The graphic below presents an overview of the type of provision available through different funding streams:

https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVJTv8z7M=/?share_link_id=783568626533

Overview of the support offer in Oxfordshire

A mind map with "Oxfordshire" at the centre, connected to the following branches:

Department for Work and Pensions
- 1:1 in work support
  - Access to Work
- Local Supported Employment programmes
- Personalised employment support
  - Connect to Work*

Probation
- Pre release support by prison work coaches

Health
- Mental health employment support
  - Talking Therapies and Employment Advisors
- Clinically integrated support
  - IPS

Department for Education
- Employer engagement and careers education
  - Careers Hub
- Careers advice
  - National Careers Service

Independent delivery/training organisations
- Delivery of employment programmes
  - Fedcap

Local government
- Enterprise Oxfordshire
  - Skills bootcamps
- Learning and training
  - Adult education
- Targeted careers guidance
  - Migrant Career
  - Employability Support Programme

Voluntary and community sector
- Individualised support
  - No Limits delivered by SOFEA Didcot and Aspire Oxfordshire
- Skills development and mentorship
  - Business Guardians
  - Transition Through Leadeship

Further and higher education
- Employer engagement
  - Thames Valley FE Partnership
- Training courses and apprenticeships
  - LSIP and UKSPF funded training
  - Abingdon and Witney College
- Supported internships
  - Activate Learning Oxford

There are several partnerships in place across Oxfordshire, each playing a different role in supporting Oxfordshire residents, through the economy, healthcare, skills provision and work. The following partnerships each have priorities which overlap with the Get Oxfordshire Working plan, these partnerships will be an essential part of the successful delivery of the Plan.

Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership - Focused on reducing inequality and creating opportunity and benefits for communities and citizens. This partnership supports the delivery of Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-term Sustainable Development. As set out in more detail in Section 8 of the Plan, this partnership will manage and monitor the progress of the Plan going forward.

Buckingham, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership - Brings together NHS organisations and VCSE organisations to set priorities and ensure services such as primary care, hospitals, mental health and community care work in a more joined-up way. Its focus is on improving access, reducing health inequalities and moving care into local communities through integrated neighbourhood teams.

Oxfordshire Place Based Partnership - Focuses on specific communities such as those who are homeless, for prevention and wider determinants of health. Comprised of executive leaders of health, local authorities and communities, it is uniquely placed to accelerate integration and make choices about how to leverage resources and prioritise actions and interventions that reduce health inequalities and increase investment in prevention.

Health and Wellbeing Partnership - A partnership between local government, the NHS and the people of Oxfordshire. It includes local GPs, councillors, Healthwatch Oxfordshire, and senior local government officers. The purpose of the partnership is to improve health, reduce inequalities and support independence and wellbeing with closer collaboration and a focus on the "building blocks of health".

Oxfordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan - The Employer Representative Body (ERB) for the Oxfordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC). The LSIP is focused on improving the alignment of education and training with the needs of local employers, ensuring that the skills of the workforce meet the demands of the Oxfordshire economy. The TVCC have set up the Thames Valley Skills Unit, a team dedicated to skills and workforce development. Through this Skills Unit, **Workforce Development Partnerships** have been set up across Hospitality and Visitor Economy, Manufacturing, Science and Innovation and Health & Life Sciences. These partnerships act as collaborative forums, bringing together education and training providers along with employers to address workforce development challenges and create effective solutions.

Connect to Work - Enterprise Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire Employment as part of OCC are supporting the Oxfordshire Connect to Work programme, with funding provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The Connect to Work programme takes a collaborative, locally led approach to tackling "hidden unemployment". It will help connect local work, health and skills support and aims to support people into good, sustainable work. It is a voluntary programme to help

tackle economic inactivity by providing a specific form of support targeted at the right people at the right time, based on their individual circumstances.

Marmot Place

Oxfordshire is designated as a Marmot Place, committed to creating a fairer and healthier county by addressing health inequalities through the application of Marmot Principles. The programme focuses on giving every child the best start in life, creating fair employment and good work for all, and ensuring a healthy standard of living for all. It works to understand and tackle rural inequalities beyond the ten most deprived wards, working collaboratively with business partners to promote fair employment practices. The programme also supports Primary Care Networks by developing dedicated resources to help identify and address the social and economic factors affecting a patient's health. In addition, it supports policy development through the local policy lab (a partnership between University of Oxford, Oxford Brookes University and Oxfordshire County Council).

Charity and voluntary sector organisations play a vital role in this work, the programme aims not to replace existing systems and support offers, but to build on existing work, measuring and tackling rural inequality, and utilising research to find innovative solutions.

The Marmot principles support Get Oxfordshire Working by setting a precedent of partnership working, a commitment to supporting existing work collaboration across health and employment.

Cross Organisation Working

Case Study: Brighter future in Banbury

Brighter Futures is a long-term programme aimed at breaking down barriers which perpetuate the cycle of deprivation. The Brighter Futures partnership brings together the anchor organisations such as schools, sports providers, charities and the police, housing providers, community groups and faith groups within three wards (Banbury Cross and Neithrop, Banbury, Grimsbury and Hightown and Banbury Ruscote) wards.

The initiative focuses on key themes:

* Stronger Communities and Volunteering

* Safer Communities

* Start Well

* Housing, Physical Activity, Health and Wellbeing

* Employment, Education and Skills.

The work aims to increase opportunity, social sustainability and community cohesion and community resilience through efficient local, cross-organisation working.

DWP in Oxfordshire has had place-based plans for a number of years. These plans look at understanding the unique challenges to the place – and finding specific place-based solutions to address this. The approach mixes knowledge and insights to determine common challenges, looking at how issues can be prevented, and understanding what wraparound support can be offered by partners to deliver solutions. Place based partnerships bring together system partners to deliver outcomes that matter to Oxfordshire in support of the joint BOB local health and wellbeing strategies.

These partnerships focus on:

- Children and young people- school readiness, mental health and SEND.

- Adult mental health, learning disabilities and neurodivergence.

- People with urgent care needs- children, adults and older adults.

- Health inequalities and prevention- healthy lifestyles, wider determinants of health.

Place based partnerships also mean that decision-making and delivery happens as close to local communities as possible. It builds on the reality that system leaders working closest to local populations are best placed to make decisions.

Wider policy context (as of August 2025)

Within the wider policy context, there is significant change taking place, including the national welfare reform policy agenda. Changes such as this may impact the number of people looking for employment support. As the wider landscape changes, the Get Oxfordshire Working plan will need to evolve to ensure that the local support offer can adapt to accommodate these changes. As part of Section 8 of this Plan, we outline plans to measure and refresh out action plan.

Listed below are some of these expected policy and legislative changes along with the impact that these may have in Oxfordshire.

Welfare benefit reforms

While planned changes to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for existing claimants have been reversed, reforms for new claimants are still anticipated. However, changes to Universal Credit are set to take place with the Limited Capability for Work- and Work-Related Activity element being almost halved for new claimants from April 2026. These changes are expected to particularly affect unpaid carers, women and those with disabilities. Those with caring responsibilities make up a large proportion of economic inactivity in Oxfordshire and, in March 2025, people with EA-core disabilities were 2.7 times as likely to be unemployed than those without EA-core disabilities. With anticipated welfare benefit reforms expected to affect these groups it will be increasingly important to support these key groups across employment, health and skills. As part of the Connect to Work programme, benefit calculations or "better off working" calculations will be offered to ensure those achieving employment are not being disadvantaged.

Pathways to Work green paper

This green paper sets out the Government's ambition to reduce economic inactivity through early intervention and expanded supported employment programmes such as Connect to Work. It also introduces a "right to try" policy, allowing people to attempt employment without immediately losing benefits. This was also highlighted in recent co-production events help locally as a barrier to gaining employment. If these policies are realised, there will be increased demand for skills and employment support.

DWP Jobs and Careers Service

Currently being trialled in West Yorkshire (Wakefield), with a key ambition to get more local employers using Jobcentres for recruitment. This aims to strengthen Jobcentre support for local employers, including a new Coaching Academy model to better match local skills needs. The pilot is linked to the NHS WorkWell Accelerator, which is designed to prevent people falling out of work due to ill health.

NHS 10-Year Health Plan

Focuses on reducing health inequalities and improving access to local health services such as GP, dental, and community health provision. The implementation of this plan creates an opportunity for joined up, accessible community health support which should enable more people to access the care that they need.

Growth and Skills levy

This new levy replaces the Apprenticeship Levy and allows employers to use 50% of levy funds on non-apprenticeship training. This creates new opportunities for supporting in-work progression and responding more flexibly to local employer skills needs. Encouraging ongoing skills development is a proactive way to further careers and improve wage potential through promotions and better job security.

Adult Skills Fund

Adult Education plays a key role in responding to economic inactivity and supporting people to re-enter education and skills. Education and skills provision are most effective when tailored to the needs of the local economy. As a non-devolved area, Oxfordshire residents are eligible for the training and skills funded by the Department for Work and Pensions Adult Skills Fund.[13] But, opportunities under devolution would allow for a tailored education and skills provision based on local knowledge of skills gaps and priorities and this would support the pathway from education and skills to employment.

Locally, many of these policy changes are still being worked through before implementing them. In each case, the Plan will work with stakeholders to place employment at the centre, ensuring that frontline services and community champions are in a position to support jobs, skills and health outcomes.

UKSPF cessation

The end of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) support in 2025/26 presents a challenge for Oxfordshire's employment and skills system. Many UKSPF-funded projects, often managed at district

---

[13] Confirmed: Skills England moves to DWP from today

level, have provided direct support to economically inactive groups. Their closure risks creating service gaps and reducing local capacity at a time when greater investment is needed.

Assessment of current services

Support for key cohorts

Refugees

Oxford City Council is an accredited Local Authority of Sanctuary for those fleeing conflicts and persecution. This accreditation recognises Oxford's commitment to creating a culture of safety, inclusion and support for all vulnerable groups. The council works closely with partner organisations, local communities, and government bodies to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers can live with dignity and contribute positively to society. Although Oxford is recognised for the availability of cultural activities, outdoor spaces, friendly communities and the support of local charities, a Needs Assessment Report by Asylum Welcome conducted in 2024 highlighted that more accessible provisions are needed across transport, health and wellbeing, education and employment, and accommodation. In addition, there is not enough provision for the growing number of non-native speakers who face ESOL challenges. This group need support to with re-training to ensure that they can successfully enter the workforce.

Ex-offenders

Support for prison leavers is provided by prison work coaches and partner organisations such as Aspire Oxfordshire. Aspire Oxfordshire provide specialist support to people who are in custody or have recently left prison to find employment, training, work experience, or education. They offer a range of support through projects such as Restart Thames Valley, which aims to work with over 350 prison leavers to improve access to stable accommodation, mentoring, training, job readiness and employment opportunities, support networks and place-based community interest groups, with "meet at the gate" support. Aspire Oxfordshire, in partnership with the NHS Liaison and Diversion Service, also provides peer support to prison leavers to sustain their rehabilitation through the Reconnect Programme.

Case study: Employment opportunities for prison leavers

Tap Social Movement is an independent social enterprise, craft brewery, bakery and hospitality organisation in Oxfordshire that provides training and employment opportunities for prison leaves and people in prison. They help prisoners and prison leavers have a productive and fulfilling life after prison by providing employment opportunities that can build self-confidence and resilience.

Tap Social is one of Oxfordshire's enterprise hubs, they run workshops, networking events and peer-to-peer learning sessions to help social entrepreneurs, charities and businesses to improve their skills, build partnerships and increase their social and environmental impact. As well as their role as an enterprise hub, Tap Social's Director is Chair of the HMP Bullingdon Employment Advisory Board which works with prison governors to create employment opportunities for prison leavers.

Reach
Tap Social has reached over 500 prisoners through workshops, interview schemes, art programmes and employment fairs and has employed over 60 prisoners/prison leavers.

Mental Health Provision

Mental health problems can significantly impact a person's capacity to find and maintain employment and the number of students aged 16–18 who are NEET and reporting mental health problems has risen since 2022. This represents a challenge as support needs exceed current capacity. Within the voluntary sector, Oxfordshire Youth and Oxfordshire Mind provide mental health support for young people and NHS Talking Therapies offer employment support alongside services for anxiety and depression. However, the BOB ICB 2023/24 annual report highlighted that the increasing complexity of people's needs means that they do not recover as quickly as the Talking Therapies model is designed for.

Older Workers

Older workers are increasingly inactive due to health, digital, and flexibility barriers. Across Oxfordshire the needs of older workers can be categorised in two ways: there is not enough provision to support older workers who may need to retrain or upskill, and employers are not equipped for the flexibility and support needs of an ageing workforce.

Self-employment

Case study: Pop-up Business Schools

Before the pandemic, "Pop-up Business Schools" were delivered in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse. These were run in association with local housing associations and were well received by local residents, helping those furthest from employment to build skills and confidence. These pop-ups were particularly impactful for those with care responsibilities that mapped better to self-employment than more standard vocational activities that were often targeted through standard employment support programmes.

Young People

Within Oxfordshire there is a disconnect between potential employees and local employment opportunities, evidenced by worsening positive destinations for young people, persistent inequalities, and a tightening employment market. This, in part, is due to a perceived disconnect between business and education. Although work has taken place to increase the availability of work specific training such as increased apprenticeship provision across priority sectors (such as construction, logistics and care), there is a need for the Workforce Development Partnerships to increase provisions and develop more non-traditional pathways to work targeted at young people.

Oxfordshire benefits from a wide range of education and skills providers including Activate Learning, Abingdon & Witney College, Ruskin College, and The Henley College as well as Oxfordshire UTC, Oxford Brookes University, University of Oxford, and a large range of Independent Training Providers. However, for young people in rural areas, transport remains a barrier to education, and this limits young people's choices.

Case Study: Business Guardians

The Business Guardians programme launched by Oxfordshire Youth (OY) is a partnership with leading local businesses such as BMW Group's Oxford Mini Plant, Blenheim Palace and Freeths. Through the programme, Oxfordshire Youth and local businesses are collaborating to tackle youth unemployment and skill shortages by connecting young people with meaningful, future-focused experiences.

Business Guardians offer workplace visits, employability workshops and CEO mentoring to those facing multiple barriers to work. The programme has enabled the creation of a leadership council composed of the CEOs of the Businesses involved who meet annually to support the advancement of Oxfordshire Youth's strategic goals.

The campaign targets three challenges facing young people today:
- Poverty and inequality of opportunity.
- Youth services are struggling to provide the opportunities and support young people need to thrive.
- Education, employment, and skills / training.

Case study: Local funding for local initiatives in Didcot

The Didcot Powerhouse Fund tackles deprivation and inequality in the grater Didcot area through grant funding for community organisations. To date, 3,486 people have directly benefited from one of their grants.

One of their key initiatives is Powerhouse Pathways:

The Didcot Powerhouse Fund, in partnership with SOFEA, works with local employers who are powerhouse donors to support, recruit and retain entry level employees in roles in catering or warehousing.

SOFEA work with employers to find a young person who matches their requirements and coaches the young person through the interview process. If successful, the young person is the hired for a paid part-time 1-year role. SOFEA provide wraparound support for employers and support the young person with two days of learning including employability skills and GCSE retakes where required. The young person, employer and SOFEA work towards positive progression after the 1-year contract.

Skills and sector gaps

Oxfordshire's foundational economy contains a substantial employment base with a wide range of employment opportunities. However, there are significant workforce shortages, especially in public services.

The LSIP reported that the employment market in Oxfordshire is very tight with employers facing both chronic and acute skills shortages. Among other factors, this can be attributed to the lack of skills provisions for young people and the ageing population. As older workers retire there may be a

shortage of workers with the skills and expertise to replace them, this could lead to further skills shortages in skilled sectors.

In addition, many of the key sectors in Oxfordshire (including Professional, Scientific, and Technical activities) are rapidly digitalising and making use of new technologies, these sectors therefore have increasing demands for digital, growth and transformational skills.

Employer perspective data: The Cherwell District Council Business Survey 2023

In 2023 Cherwell District Council ran a Business Survey to gain an understanding of the impacts of changing economic conditions on businesses in the area, as well as to capture the views of local businesses about skills, infrastructure and the green agenda.

The survey found that 52% of businesses that had vacancies found at least one of these hard to fill (a rise from 47% in 2017), this equates to 19% of all businesses, this is higher than the national average of 15%. In addition, a third of employers with vacancies (33%) said that they found at least one skill difficult to recruit for during the previous year (equating to 12% of all businesses).

Employers most commonly reported sector specific skills as the skills they have most trouble finding job candidates for (39% of businesses that found skills difficult to recruit for).

The main reasons for difficulties filling vacancies or finding recruits with the right skills was a lack of qualifications that align with company demands (39%), a lack of work experience (34%) and a low number of applicants with the required skills (29%).

Skills gaps are not only apparent when businesses are recruiting but can also be seen within existing workforces: 11% of businesses have skills gaps in their existing workforce.

The main reason cited for skills gaps in existing workforces is a lack of training, with 31% mentioning inflexible times for training or courses, 22% were not prepared to release staff for training during working hours, 17% said there was a lack of appropriate training or courses, and 14% said that there was insufficient budget to provide training courses.

Clarity of the support offer and participant journey

Across the support system in Oxfordshire more integration and collaboration are needed across organisations to ensure a client centred approach is developed. To achieve this, Oxfordshire will need to build on the work taking place through the Marmot Place programmes and the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership.

The work that has gone in to setting up Connect to Work in Oxfordshire has considered the importance of the participant journey, a participant day held in connection with the emerging programme highlighted the importance of successful referrals. Individuals who are navigating employment support are often on waiting lists for a long period of time and, when they are seen by a practitioner are faced with retelling their story. This can lead to participants feeling rejected and losing confidence in the support system before ultimately disengaging. To support successful referrals, practitioners require access to detailed and accurate information, both about participants and the services they are referring them to.

5   Working with partners

Summary overview

Oxfordshire's partnership landscape provides a strong foundation but remains shaped by fragmented national funding streams and short-term programmes. Six broad themes, infrastructure (physical and community), funding, partnerships, programmes, and policy, frame the levers available locally. These levers range from joint commissioning through the ICB and expanding place-based working with Jobcentre Plus and districts, to aligning with Connect to Work, embedding Marmot principles, and leveraging the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economic Partnership.

For priority cohorts, these levers can unlock more consistent support: pooled commissioning can create joined-up health and employment pathways for those with long-term conditions; place-based working can strengthen connections for carers and older workers; and County of Sanctuary status provides a platform to improve access for refugees. While there are challenges in aligning stakeholders with different remits and time scales, the breadth of levers available shows that Oxfordshire has both the assets and the partnerships to build a more coherent and sustainable system.

The levers available to stakeholders in Oxfordshire should be viewed within the county's unique governance and partnership landscape. While Oxfordshire benefits from strong collaborative networks and strategic initiatives, much of the provision influencing employment and skills remains short-term programme- and funding-stream-based, following centrally set targets and limited timeframes. This can constrain the development of long-term, locally led infrastructure to address economic inactivity.

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities to align existing assets, improve collaboration, and leverage local strengths. Oxfordshire's approach can be framed around six broad themes.

Infrastructure – physical	Infrastructure – community	Funding
Partnerships	Programmes	Policy
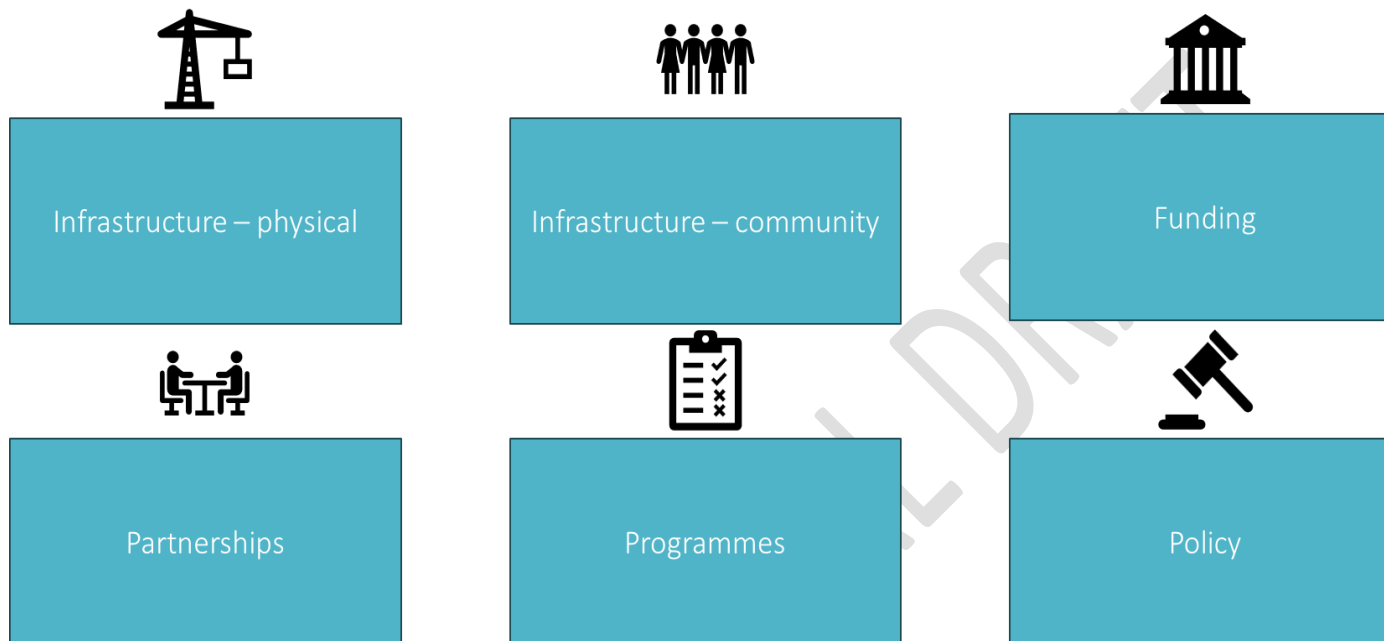
These themes provide a foundation for strengthening strategic and operational alignment, streamlining siloed working, and creating a coordinated, sustainable ecosystem of support.

Over the following section, specific levers under each theme will illustrate how partners can pool resources, build on place-based working, and connect local and national priorities. Together, these levers can enhance wraparound support and ensure provision is better aligned to meet the needs of Oxfordshire's residents.

Utilising joint commissioning potential
Joint commissioning and pooled budgets through the Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Board offer an opportunity for coordinated delivery.

Public health funding for inclusion groups
The local public health teams are already beginning to explore gaps in the system through community engagement work, particularly with health inclusion groups.

Extend place-based working
Extending the practice of place-based working by building on the work between JCP and the district councils. This helps to map priority cohorts and match opportunities with local needs. Emerging changes including greater JCP presence on high streets will strengthen this as a lever.

Joining up with Connect to Work
By linking up the GOWP with the Connect to Work programme, the GOWP can link together the strategic actions with the practical delivery of employment support. This will particularly support those who are in insecure employment.

Potential of Oxfordshire Inclusive Economic Partnership
Through the GOWP, OIEP is ready to provide cross-cutting partnership work, placing the inclusive economy front and centre, providing opportunities across the county through e.g. the employer's charter.

Oxfordshire Civilian Military Partnership
Facilitating information sharing and identifying solutions to challenges faced by service personnel and their families.

Marmot Place
Through the Marmot Place Programme, Oxfordshire is ready to address the wider determinants of economic inactivity – recognising the importance of the Marmot principles for creating a fairer and healthier Oxfordshire.

Place of Sanctuary
Oxfordshire's status as a "county of sanctuary" and the accompanying action plan can be used to leverage a joined-up approach to refugee and asylum seeker communities.

Oxford Growth Commission
The presence of the Oxford Growth Commission links Oxfordshire directly to the national government's plan for change and missions. Linking the GOWP with the 5 workstreams and the commission's late 2025 interim report will ensure policy join-up.

Strength of the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector
Oxfordshire should build on the strength of its VCSE sector and individual support. Programmes such as Aspire Oxfordshire and SOFEA Didcot provide person-centred support for those furthest away from the labour market

OxRail and East-West Rail
The East-West Rail project provides opportunities to increase labour market participation, improve regional connectivity, and foster rural inclusion – link to the Ox-Cambs arc perhaps, and the broader focus on that belt between the two.
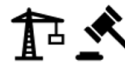
Local Government reorganisation and devolution
There is a medium-term opportunity to consolidate the county's asset and resource base across a strategic authority geography to bring greater spending power.

NHS 10-Year Plan
The NHS Plan focuses on reducing health inequalities and improving access to local health services. These are both issues which are apparent in Oxfordshire – with wide inequalities in areas such as Oxford and poor transport provision in rural areas. Therefore, the NHS Plan offer a potential lever for better partnership working in communities through neighbourhood health and shift to prevention.

6 Systemic changes

Summary overview

Six areas of systemic change have been identified as important for strengthening Oxfordshire's employment and skills system.

Closer engagement with local anchors could help unlock more opportunities for residents, while stronger data on priority cohorts such as refugees, ex-offenders, and people with health conditions would support better design and monitoring of services. Expanding provision in areas like ESOL, entrepreneurship, and tailored pathways for older workers would address gaps for particular priority groups. National and regional policy shifts, including the NHS 10-Year Plan and potential local government reform, provide opportunities to align resources and approaches more closely with local needs. Improving the coordination of outreach could make it easier for groups such as carers, neurodiverse people, and the long-term unemployed to access support.

Crucially, poor health, including long-term physical conditions and mental health issues, is a core structural barrier that interacts with transport and housing problems (especially in rural areas) to limit people's ability to access and sustain work. The section links these headlines to the practical local levers introduced in the previous section.

To deliver meaningful and sustainable improvements in employment outcomes, and in the context of no additional resource from central government, Oxfordshire must use its considerable levers to adapt its local systems. The following themes set out the structural changes, mechanisms, and capacity improvements required to enhance the overall effectiveness of the employment and skills system.

These system changes respond directly to identified challenges - fragmented provision, limited data, capacity gaps among stakeholders, and barriers faced by disadvantaged groups. They highlight opportunities for joint outcomes, stronger alignment across partners, and better use of existing assets to reduce siloed working.

The six themes - engagement with local anchors, evaluation of local data, developing provision and pathways, embracing national and regional policy changes, improving and coordinating outreach, and driving a whole-system approach to reducing disadvantage - each include the rationale for change and the levers that can be used to deliver it.

Together, these changes will create the conditions for a coordinated, system-level response that supports wraparound provision, stronger referral mechanisms, and mixed delivery models. The detailed actions required to operationalise these themes will be set out in the next section - the Action Plan.

Theme 1: Encourage more engagement with local anchors to make the most of employment opportunities, social value and local spending power.

Why is this central to the Plan?

Local anchor institutions, including major employers, health providers, and local authorities, represent significant untapped potential for driving inclusive employment and skills outcomes. Despite Oxfordshire having 21,320 active vacancies in August 2024, engagement between employers and the wider system (health, skills, and employment) remains inconsistent. Better engagement can unlock opportunities for disadvantaged groups, align local spending with community needs, and strengthen the county's economic resilience. Community wealth-building initiatives are already emerging across Oxfordshire, and examples like the BOB ICB's £500m pooled budget show how coordinated efforts can achieve scale.

What levers can be used?

- Utilising joint commissioning potential: BOB ICB's pooled budgets can drive coordinated delivery.

- Potential of Oxfordshire Inclusive Economic Partnership: OIEP can connect employers, social value, and inclusive economy actions.

- Oxford Growth Commission: Links to national missions and wider employer engagement.

- VCSE strength: Local organisations such as Aspire Oxfordshire can connect anchors to disadvantaged cohorts.

Theme 2: Evaluate what data are available at a local level to ensure individual cohorts with particular challenges are supported into sustainable employment.

Why is this central to the Plan?

Effective planning and delivery of employment support in Oxfordshire is constrained by the lack of rigorous, accessible data on key cohorts such as refugees, ex-offenders, veterans, and others facing disadvantage. Without robust evidence, tailored interventions cannot be properly designed, nor can their impact be measured. Oxfordshire County Council also lacks a centralised data source to track employment outcomes and programme performance across partners. Strengthening the evidence base will improve targeting, accountability, and investment decisions.

What levers can be used?

- Joining up with Connect to Work: Data-sharing can support better tracking of employment outcomes.

- Marmot Place: Provides a framework for understanding wider determinants of economic inactivity.

- Place of Sanctuary: Supports refugee-related data collection and analysis.

Theme 3: Develop provision and additional pathways in a way which reduces disadvantage and barriers for local communities.

Why is this central to the Plan?

Certain cohorts in Oxfordshire, including refugees, ex-offenders, those with complex needs or neurodiversity, and older workers, face persistent barriers to employment. ESOL provision is notably lacking, creating a critical barrier for non-English speakers. There are also gaps in entrepreneurship support and tailored pathways for disadvantaged communities. Addressing these gaps will help

reduce disadvantage, support social mobility, and ensure that all residents can access meaningful employment opportunities.

What levers can be used?

- Public health funding for inclusion groups: To expand inclusion-related provision.

- Extend place-based working: To match opportunities with local needs and priority cohorts.

- VCSE strength: To deliver tailored programmes through trusted local organisations.

Theme 4: Embrace changes in national and regional policy and delivery in a way which brings together support to drive devolution and better outcomes locally.

Why is this central to the Plan?

The Get Oxfordshire Working Plan is shaped within a wider national and regional policy environment that is undergoing significant change. The NHS 10-Year Plan provides opportunities to embed employment support within primary care and address health inequalities. Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution (LGR) could enable greater local control over skills and funding streams such as the Adult Skills Fund, while the Oxford Growth Commission links Oxfordshire's priorities directly to national missions and future policy recommendations. Aligning strategically with these shifts will position Oxfordshire to secure resources, influence policy, and drive better outcomes locally.

What levers can be used?

- NHS 10-Year Plan: Embeds employment support in primary care and addresses health inequalities.

- Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution: Could strengthen local control over Adult Skills and funding.

- Oxford Growth Commission: Ensures local priorities align with national missions.

Theme 5: Improve and better coordinate outreach across multi-agencies to target individual groups.

Why is this central to the Plan?

Oxfordshire's high overall employment rate means that those not in employment are often among the hardest to reach. Limited resources, fragmented knowledge of available support, and inconsistent outreach approaches contribute to disengagement. A more coordinated, "no wrong door" approach is essential to ensure priority cohorts, such as people with long-term health conditions, neurodiverse individuals, and refugees, receive timely, effective support. Pooling budgets and working across a wider geography can help agencies achieve scale and impact.

What levers can be used?

- Extend place-based working: Strengthens local outreach by bringing services closer to communities.

- Joining up with Connect to Work: Links strategic plans with practical delivery for harder-to-reach groups.

- Place of Sanctuary: Coordinates support for refugees and asylum seekers.

- Potential of Oxfordshire Inclusive Economic Partnership: Facilitates multi-agency alignment and joint actions.

Theme 6: Drive a whole system approach to reducing disadvantage and disparities in life outcomes such as housing, environment and transport access.

Why is this central to the Plan?

Economic inactivity in Oxfordshire is shaped by wider determinants, including poor health, inadequate transport access, particularly in rural areas, and limited affordable housing near places of work. These factors combine to make it difficult for many residents to reach employment opportunities or remain in sustainable work. Poor health can have generational effects on employment prospects, while high housing costs and limited affordable options exacerbate disadvantage. Employment and health are closely linked, yet health is not currently central to the DWP offer as required by the Get Britain Working White Paper. Addressing these interconnected barriers collectively will strengthen long-term economic participation, improve wellbeing, and support a fairer local economy.

What levers can be used?

- Marmot Place: Embeds health as a central pillar and addresses wider determinants of work and wellbeing.

- East-West Rail: Improves regional connectivity and rural inclusion.

- Utilising joint commissioning potential: Aligns investments to address multi-sector challenges.

- Oxfordshire Inclusive Economic Partnership: Coordinates partners to address cross-cutting inequalities.

7 Priority actions and longer-term goals

This Action Plan sets out ambitious yet achievable priorities for the next 12–24 months, building directly on the six system change themes identified in the previous section. These actions represent the collective commitment of Oxfordshire's partners to improve employment outcomes, tackle economic inactivity, and align local efforts with the national Get Britain Working ambitions.

By embedding these actions into local services and ensuring partners work jointly toward shared outcomes, the plan provides a framework for addressing barriers, supporting residents to access opportunities, and contributing to Oxfordshire's wider priorities on inclusive growth, skills, and health.

Action	Rationale	Next step	Timescales
Encourage more engagement with local anchors to make the most of employment opportunities, social value and local spending power			
Develop a campaign to encourage opportunities for work experience, jobs fairs, taster days etc. to demonstrate the variety of jobs available locally	There is a lack of activity to inform local businesses of the opportunities as well as a lack of structured offer for local residents	Explore how this can be delivered through Connect to Work programme, existing work of OEIP and through existing marcomms resource	Tbc
Consider any opportunities raised by pooled budgets and joint commissioning agenda to achieve scale	Considered a potential opportunity going forward	Explore opportunity or identify as an action to explore opportunity in action plan	Tbc

Action	Rationale	Next step	Timescales
Establish secretariat support for OIEP as local anchor facilitator	OIEP is a strong potential lever to bring local anchors together, and it should be utilised	Resource is required to monitor and refresh the plan going forward	Tbc
Engage employers and demonstrate the opportunities of closer interaction with JCP (e.g. filling vacancies)	With the changing role of JCP and the additional employer engagement activities, JCP should be promoted as a central agency to deliver jobs	Develop a better understanding of the timetable for roll out and delivery	tbc
Evaluate what data are available at a local level to ensure individual cohorts with particular challenges are supported into sustainable employment			
Develop a central data repository from which to evaluate progress	OCC lacks a central data resource from which to monitor and measure impact	Develop a template dashboard based on DWP measures of progress	tbc
Coordinate with providers of specialist support to establish sources of individual cohort data and integrate these data into the central repository to identify progress within key groups	Specialist providers may have data which could inform policy, but it is not readily available, meaning targeted policies and activity cannot be delivered or evaluated against outcomes	Identify what data is available locally by building on the work delivered to produce the Get Oxfordshire Working Plan	tbc

Action	Rationale	Next step	Timescales
Establish how these centrally coordinated data will be used to measure progress	Progress may be measured objectively against key outcome indicators	Explore how other partners gather and store data in a way that can promote sharing and joint commissioning	tbc
Develop provision and additional pathways in a way which reduces disadvantage and barriers for local communities			
Improve pipeline of ESOL provision	There is a lack of ESOL provision in the county. Uncertain if this is due to limited providers or lack of funding	Explore local ESOL market and offer or determine that this should be included in the GOW action plan for future exploration	Tbc
Work with MAPPA to identify pathways for ex-offenders into employment	There may be a gap in service offer for ex-offenders relating to employment opportunities	Explore potential for anchor organisations to recruit from a wider pool of local residents with complex needs or determine that this should be included in the GOW action plan for future exploration	Tbc
Develop a pathway for neuro-diverse residents	There are limited opportunities for neuro-diverse residents to get into employment despite skills of those groups	Explore data and any links to Connect to Work	Tbc

| Action	Rationale	Next step	Timescales
Develop a campaign to improve level of opportunities for residents with complex needs	Limitations of opportunities available from the local employer base have been identified	Explore how this can be delivered through Connect to Work programme through existing marcomms resource	Tbc
Roll out a better understanding of inclusive employment practices and legal rights to improve job opportunities for community adults	Given the large number of job vacancies, there are more opportunities for employment available to the marke	Work with employers and employees to ensure they have a better understanding of their rights and duties to promote an inclusive workplace	Tbc
Develop a plan for local outreach in Bicester	Accessibility issue in Bicester is limited and outreach capability could be improved	Explore if this is an area of focus for other parts of the system and if so, understand if there is an opportunity to improve offer and coordination	Tbc
Develop a plan to address increased caseloads of young people in most deprived parts of Oxfordshire	There has been an increase in young person caseloads in areas of Rose Hill and Blackbird Leys	Identify data to evidence this	Tbc
Embrace changes in national and regional policy and delivery in a way which brings together support to drive devolution and better outcomes locally			

Action	Rationale	Next step	Timescales
Identify issues raised by the Timms review of PIP that worsen resident's independence	The Timms Review will rule on changes to the PIP system which could cause a negative impact to local disabled people therefore the subject needs to remain live	Follow progress of Timms Review (timetable for any policy changes unknown)	Tbc
Identify opportunities for neighbourhood healthcare delivery to include employment support	Neighbourhood health is a key part of the 10 Year Health Plan, and integrating employment support within primary care would be an effective means of leveraging frontline touchpoints	Work with the BOB ICB to understand plans for neighbourhood healthcare delivery and identify where employment support can be integrated	Tbc
Ensure the LGR plan argues for devolution of the skills budget	A devolved skills budget would allow Oxfordshire to be more agile, adapting its skills offering to the demands of employers and the labour market	Ensure that the argument for skills devolution is built into current thinking around LGR and strategic authorities	Tbc
Improve and better coordinate outreach across multi-agencies to target individual groups			
Identify opportunities for working across boundaries (BBO / BOB ICB / Strategic Authority) in the short-term (best practice, test and learn) and long-term (in relation to emerging strategic authority)	Parts of the system working at a BBO level and at BOB ICB level may benefit from a focus on a larger geographical scale, particularly with limited local resources	Understand existing governance, how fit for purpose it is for the Plan and explore opportunities on a larger geographical scale	Tbc

Action	Rationale	Next step	Timescales
Establish better mapping of available support and encourage more conversations with partners to allocate action appropriately	There is strong provision within Oxfordshire, but it may not be clear where it is taking place, and who is delivering it	Use the work started through developing this plan to better map, signpost and avoid duplication	Tbc
Drive a whole system approach to reducing disadvantage and disparities in life outcomes such as housing, environment and transport access.			
Refocus existing activity in the worklessness space towards health and employment outcomes	Health is not a central focus to the DWP service offer to the extent that the new White Paper requires	Identify connection points through the governance to bring subjects closer together	Tbc
Focus resource on parents, carers and guardians of children eligible for free school meals	School readiness 0-5 is a top priority for the BOB ICB as a higher than national average local children are eligible for free school meals. The prevention agenda (to include job opportunities) with parents needs to be built in to reduce this in the long-term	Check in with client on data availability to work this through practically and gain a view on whether to include beyond context	Tbc
Explore coordination of neighbourhood delivery as identified by BOB ICB	ICB is focusing in on local delivery and reducing challenges caused by urgent care ie prevention model that reduces impact on family structures and in turn causes issues for ability of people to find and sustain work	Identify opportunities for this to include unemployment, economic inactivity and start conversations around pipelines	Tbc

Action	Rationale	Next step	Timescales
Improving housing access and accommodation quality	Particularly relevant to the instability of certain jobs, there is a lack of affordable housing which compounds issues of health and employment	Explore housing landscape with districts and/or through MHCLGs Growth Commission	Tbc
Explore how sport and physical activity can be better integrated into a whole system approach to reducing unemployment and economic inactivity	Considered a gap in the current offer to support people into employment. Leadership and motivation are central to sport skills and are beneficial in motivating and preventing worklessness	Review Active Oxfordshire priorities and consider how to integrate into plan	Tbc

8 Governance, local engagement, and future iterations
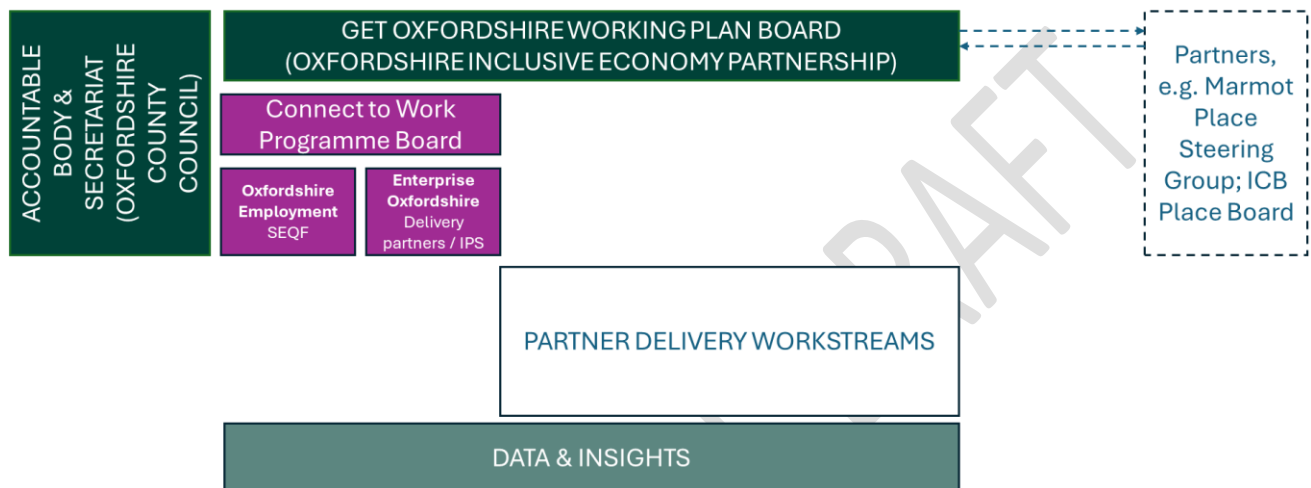
This should provide detail of the governance arrangements in place locally.

It should incorporate partnership members who will jointly agree and maintain oversight of local Get Britain Working plans, ensuring alignment with future initiatives and strategies across relevant stakeholders.

It should describe how wider local stakeholders were engaged pre and post development of the plans and how they will monitor their progression.

The plan should set out what at what period, or in tandem with what events, the plans and progress against agreed actions will be updated and how this will be overseen by the partnership.

This includes changes to locally delivered provision (such as UKSPF and Connect to Work, or national provision), when areas become a strategic authority, or following significant local economic changes.

The plans should also include confirmation that this plan has been developed and agreed by the partnership board and signed off by all nominated representatives from:

• upper-tier and unitary local authorities within the delivery area,

• integrated care board(s), and

• Jobcentre Plus.