Annex 2b

Summary of Focus Group findings

Executive Summary

Early on in strategy development we spoke and listened to populations we don't listen to enough and who are at higher risk of poor health outcomes. This includes children in care, diverse multi-ethnic communities, people from areas of multiple deprivation, people with learning disabilities, asylum seekers & refugees, older people, and people with complex mental health needs. This has helped ensure that 1) we listen to seldom heard voices and 2) the strategy accurately reflects the needs and priorities of those whose health and wellbeing suffers most.

Between mid-July and mid-August 2023, Oxfordshire County Council ran 11 in-depth focus groups, engaging with and listening to 145 people across Oxfordshire. Groups had a good mix of children, adults, and older adults and good geographic coverage across Oxfordshire. You can find a full set of responses from these focus groups in the appendix at the bottom of this document.

- Asylum Welcome
- Banbury Mosque—men
- Banbury Mosque—women
- The Berin Centre
- Berinsfield Adult Day Centre
- Children in Care Council
- The ICE Centre
- Oxfordshire Mind
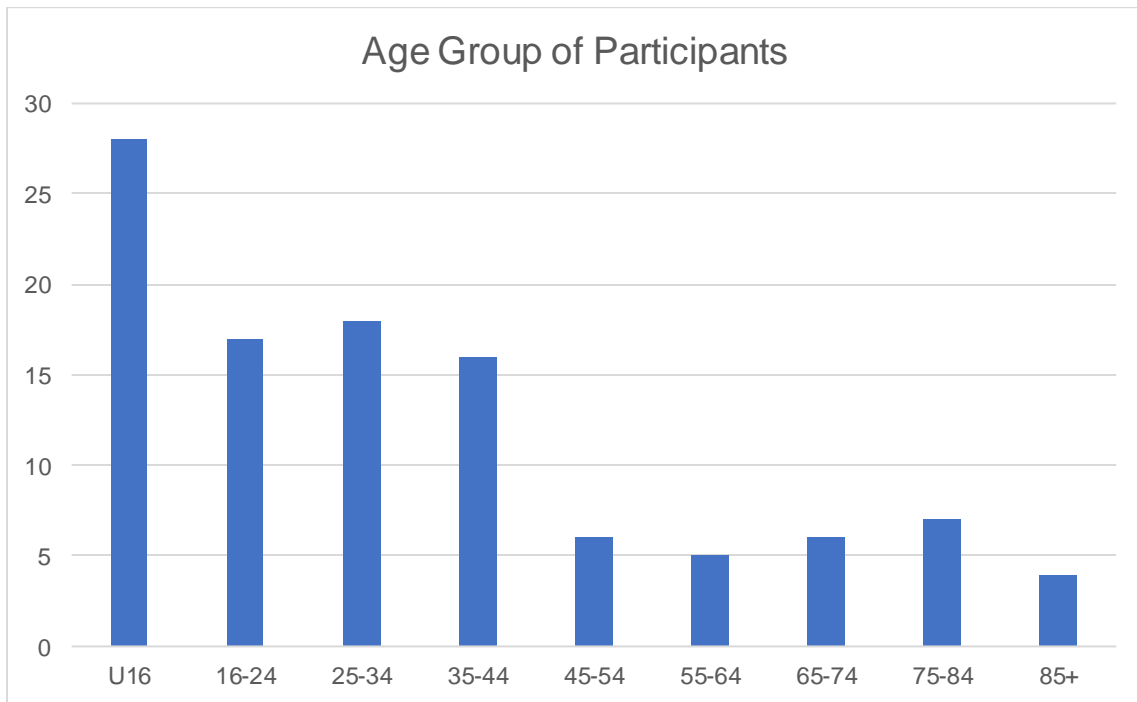- My Life My Choice
- Witney Pride
- Youth Challenge

Further focus groups are planned between now and October to capture the voices of groups we've not yet heard from, including work at Abingdon Hub & a young mothers group.
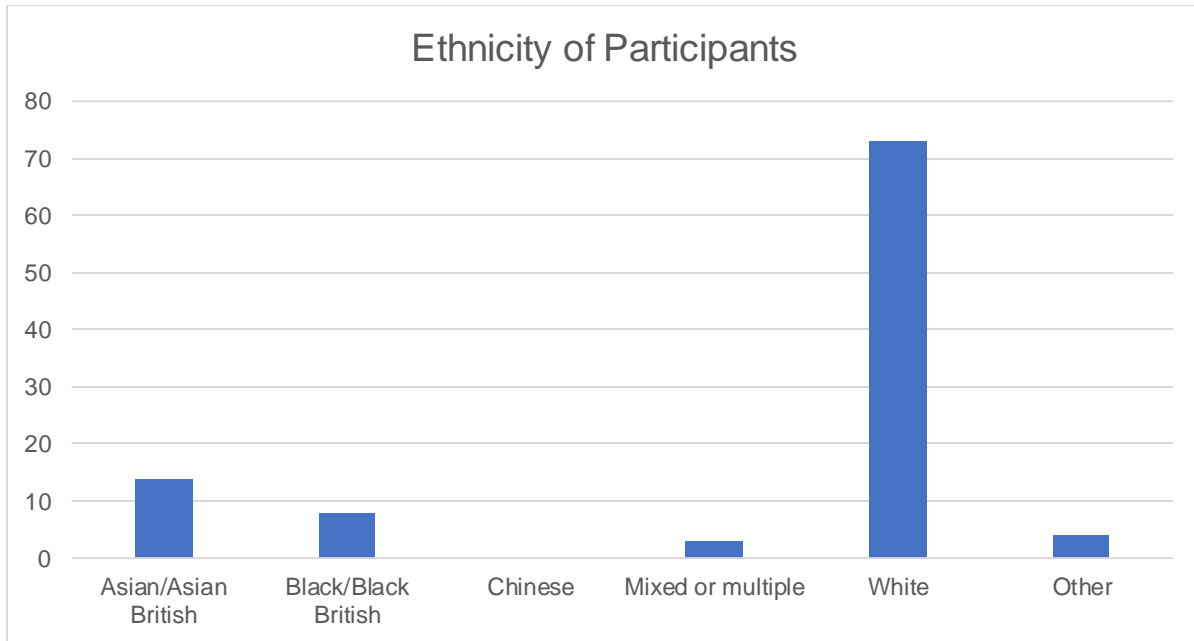
Demographics

Total participants: 145

Please note not all participants completed the demographic collection form, so totals do not necessarily add up. No demographic data was collected for groups at Banbury Mosque (men) and My Life My Choice.

N.B. Both the data itself and reports from those running groups evidence that underserved communities were less likely to complete demographic forms and residents were less willing to record certain characteristics e.g., trans, non-heterosexual, ethnic minority, etc.

Age Group of Participants

Age Group	Count
U16	28
16-24	17
25-34	18
35-44	16
45-54	6
55-64	5
65-74	6
75-84	7
85+	4

Ethnicity of Participants

A bar chart titled "Ethnicity of Participants" showing the following approximate values:
- Asian/Asian British: 14
- Black/Black British: 8
- Chinese: 0
- Mixed or multiple: 3
- White: 73
- Other: 4

The vertical axis ranges from 0 to 80 in increments of 10.

Emerging themes

- Mental health and wellbeing is a clear priority
- The cost of living crisis continues to be a significant challenge for residents, impacting on their ability to afford healthy food, access physical activity, and pay bills
- Residents strongly value community events and organisations – including events for specific groups - as a way to get out and about, stay social and active, and share concerns among people like themselves
- Residents greatly value physical activity, from walking to gardening to exercise classes for people with limited hip mobility – but the biggest challenges are cost and needing someone to go with. Active travel, and the independence it brings, is also valued – but challenges exist, including different cultural norms, health conditions and disability, and lack of time or confidence
- Social isolation remains a concern for residents, who prize time spent with friends and family as a way to relax and enjoy themselves
- Residents regularly talked about the importance of taking time to care for oneself & the dignity it affords, e.g. following a routine, showering, getting a good night's sleep, cleaning and organising your room, or getting your hair done
- Residents highlighted how much they valued creative pursuits including singing, crafts, journalling, & print-making
- NHS organisations, GPs, local councils, and the general public has more to do to understand, respect, and respond to the holistic situations, strengths, and needs of a diverse range of residents e.g. the lived experience of transgender people & people living with depression or paranoia

- A lack of follow-up care: across a broad spectrum of issues, residents regularly brought up that the standard and attentiveness of healthcare was brilliant when they were being seen for a short period—but after that, they felt abandoned in the long-run
- Residents want better and more equal access to green spaces and nature to support their physical and mental wellbeing
- Transport, especially a lack of reliable buses, remains a barrier for people wanting to get out and about, see friends, stay independent, and access healthcare services
- Other priorities include housing, clean air & the impacts of climate change, healthy food & healthy weight

Illustrative quotes

- *"Since covid there's a real shift that people want to be healthy and do exercise, people are more health conscious, but there's a lack of opportunities and the cost is a big barrier." (Banbury Mosque, Women)*
- *"Without money you can't do things, can't access things. Not being able to go out or do things I got very depressed" (Asylum Welcome)*
- "*Sometimes I tell people I'm an asylum seeker and I can see the change in their face. I just want people to see me as a human being… you even see people peeking through the hotel windows to see us like we aren't humans, what are they expecting to see?" (Asylum Welcome)*
- *"[I've been] trying to change my mortgage and everything's online and that's not my generation – I have to rely on my kids to do simple things that once upon a time I could do by myself…the older generation is being left behind…I feel a bit embarrassed" (Banbury Mosque, men)*
- *"What is needed in Oxford isn't the same as what's needed in Banbury or Bloxham" (Banbury Mosque, men)*
- *"I loved cycling when I was young, I want to return, but I'm a bit uncertain. I used to cycle in Banbury but as you grow older you think you haven't got the time anymore." (Banbury Mosque, men)*
- *"A lot of our youth turn to more negative things because the gaps [in provision of activities for young people] allow them to go off track" (Banbury Mosque, women)*
- *"[it's] difficult to balance spending time with my children with looking after myself" (The Berin Centre)*
- *"[It helps] to get about—it's been harder since Covid, I'm a bit nervous to go out. It does make you more aware of what you're doing". (The Berin Centre)*
- *"getting out there and mixing makes a big difference… it makes you realise we're in same boat" (The Berin Centre)*
- *"I wouldn't have participated in the cake sale without the community outreach officer" (The Berin Centre)*

- *"not having people like me at activities is a challenge" (The Berin Centre)*
- *"[I] can't attend [community] activities because I'm at work" (The Berin Centre)*
- *"You only tend to get angry or depressed when you're on your own too much" (Cowley Mill, Oxfordshire Mind)*
- *"it's a big factor in my mental health, getting a good night's sleep" (Cowley Mill, Oxfordshire Mind)*
- *"I love dogs—every time I see a dog I stroke it and it makes me smile—if I'm having a bad day, when I see a dog it doesn't matter, it all goes away" (Cowley Mill, Oxfordshire Mind)*
- *"[I love Oxford printmakers cooperative because it's…] almost a home away from home… it's good because you're always developing and learning new skills… I did it when I was psychotic, tackling little steps in a series" (Cowley Mill, Oxfordshire Mind)*
- *"if you've not got enough money, it affects your mental health and makes you deteriorate and get worse. Might even make you homeless which is really bad for your mental health" (Cowley Mill, Oxfordshire Mind)*
- *[The cost of buses means people are] "priced out of taking the green option" (Cowley Mill, Oxfordshire Mind)*
- *"when I ask for help independently, they don't listen to me, they tell me I don't need it. But then someone from Mind or Restore or a professional asks and I finally get their help… Advocacy's great, but why am I not listened to in the first place?" (Cowley Mill, Oxfordshire Mind)*
- *[What helps is…] "Stingray disability nightclub… I met a partner there. I love it, I wish I could have it more." (My Life My Choice)*
- *[What helps is…] "I go to the gym, I go through Move Together. Having someone to go to the gym with [helps]" (My Life My Choice)*
- *"It can be hard to find groups and activities to join, especially if you have social anxiety like me." (My Life My Choice)*
- *"As part of pride month, Oxford Pride had an LGBT+ swim at the open air pool in Hinksey. It was the first time I'd been swimming in three years because I knew I'd be safe" (Witney Pride)*
- *"Being LGBT and disabled it's even harder to join in with activities, but I need to be able to get there easily and I need to feel it's a safe space for me." (Witney Pride)*
- *"There's a lot of options that could improve things that you can signpost to that wouldn't cost you any money but would improve things a lot, but GPs don't know about them" (Witney Pride)*

Priorities Listing

Focus groups were provided a set of priorities to rank, with the option to suggest their own. The following represents their top three priorities across various categories, assigning 3, 2, and 1 points to their top three priorities respectively. Results are raw and unweighted by group or attendance at present, as below:

Cross Cutting Themes
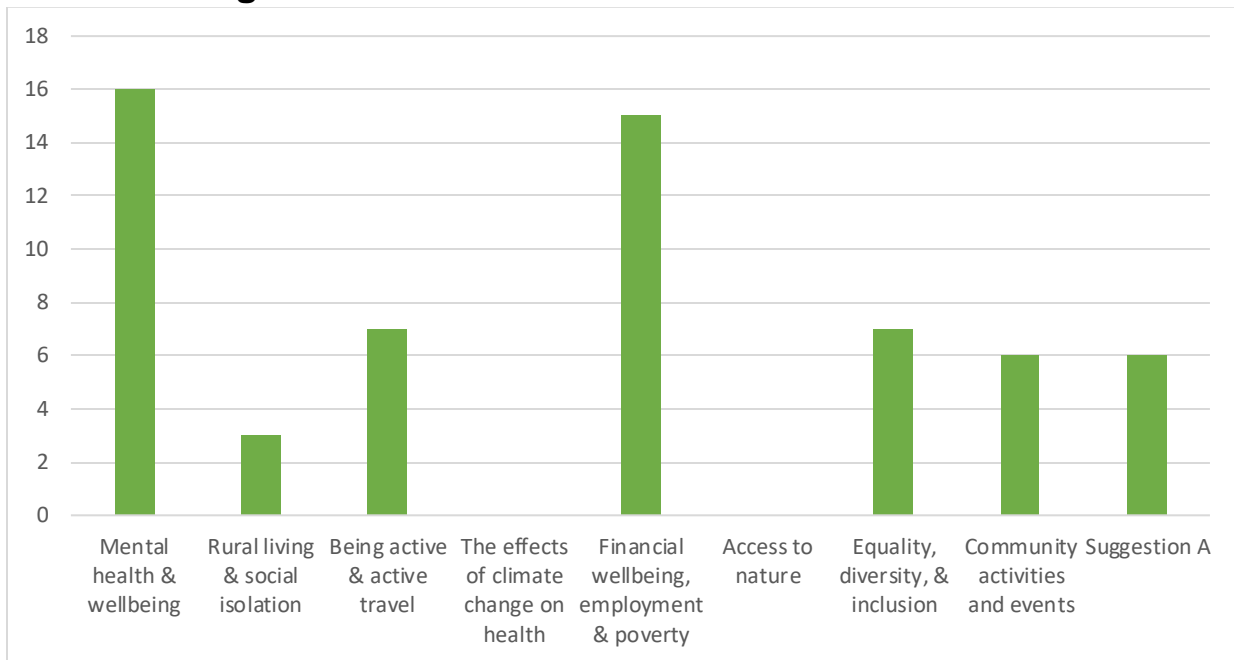
Both access to nature and the effects of climate change on health regularly made it to fourth or fifth place in the rankings.

Additional suggestions include:

- Public transport and travel
- Access to single sex activity spaces/sessions
- Using the mosque as a base for health and outreach services
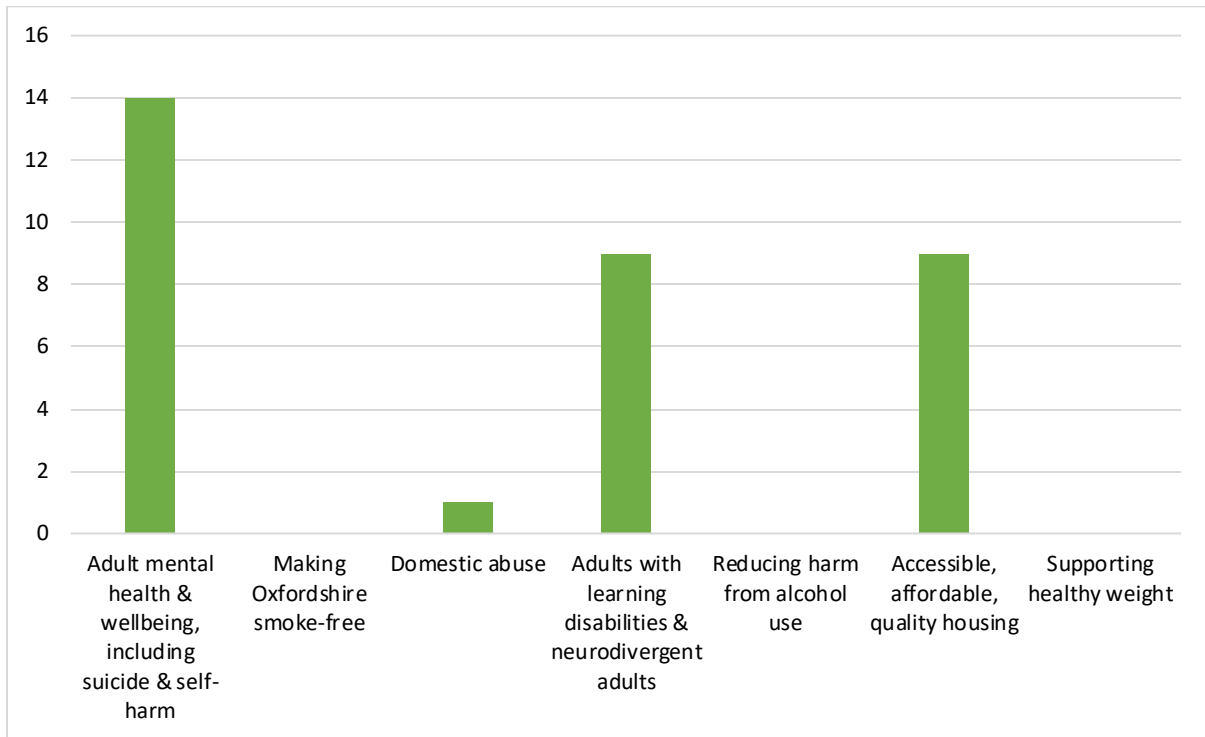- Facilities for disabled people and wheelchair users

Start Well
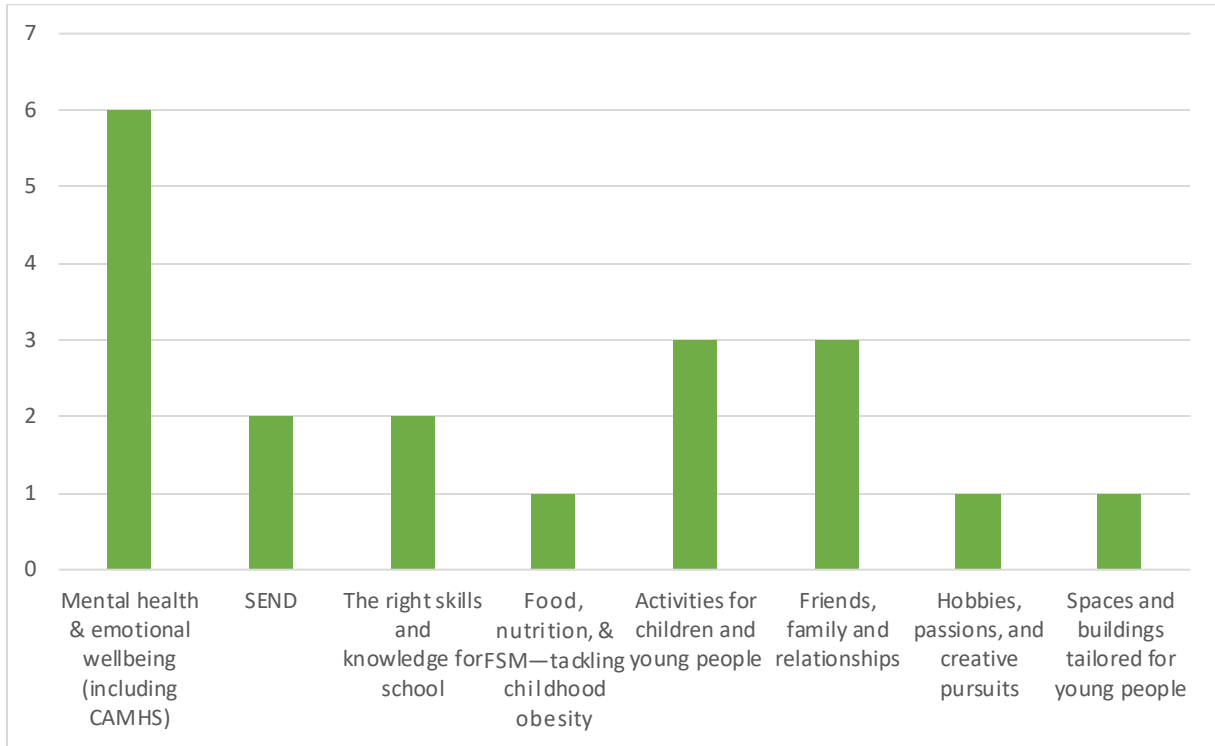
Suggestions from residents included:

- Friends, family, and relationships
- Hobbies, passions, and creative pursuits
- Extra-curricular activities
- Activities for teens during school holidays
- Specific spaces and buildings tailored for young people

Live Well

When residents asked about the "healthy weight" priority, they showed a lot more positivity about creating a healthy food environment than about "supporting healthy weight". Nonetheless, that priority consistently came fourth and fifth in rankings although did not make it into the top three, with alcohol and smoking consistently at the bottom of rankings.

Age Well
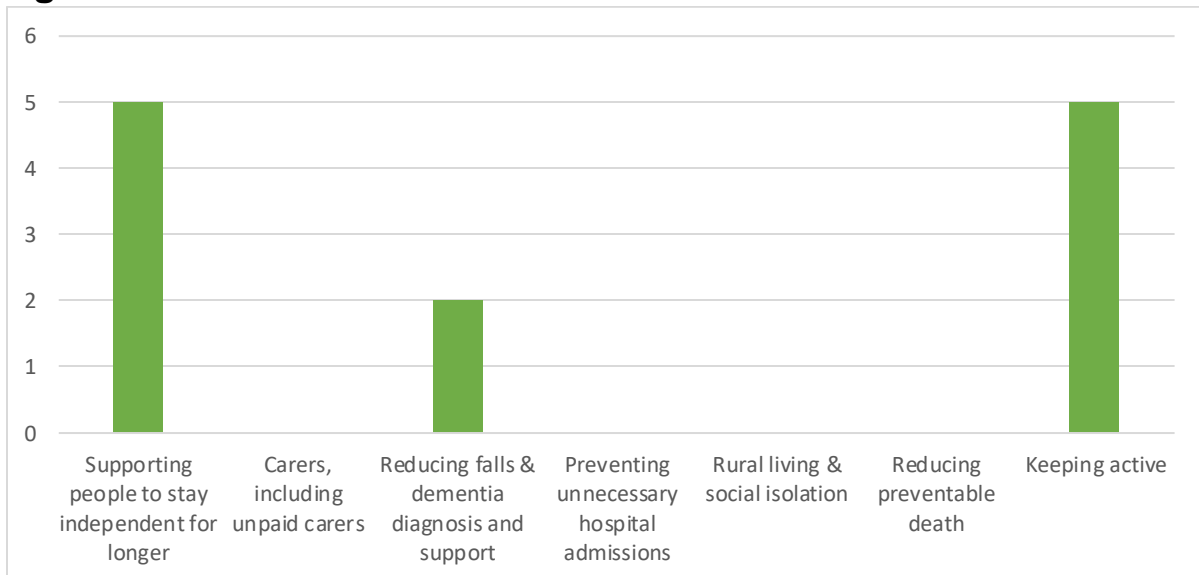
Residents felt that many of these priorities overlapped and found it difficult to rank priorities.

Opportunities for Learning

Learning for the consultation

This work was extremely valuable understanding how to approach the public consultation. For example, we know there is more to do to explain that some of our priorities are related to health, and how e.g. education, climate change. And we know there are some priorities where wording really matters: residents consistently rank "a healthy food environment" as more important than "healthy weight" or "reducing overweight and obesity", which they consider stigmatising. Similarly, they want to see Oxfordshire's residents supported to stop smoking, but do not consider "smokefree Oxfordshire" their top priority.

How we engage with Communities and Residents

- **Residents and community groups clearly valued the opportunity** to talk and speak about health and wellbeing among themselves
  - o Health and wellbeing is clearly a topic people card deeply about and know a lot about too
  - o Covid has increased health and wellbeing consciousness
- **Residents and community groups clearly appreciated the council coming to listen to them**
  - o Sessions ran better because we were engaging at an early stage—i.e., before any draft strategy had been written
  - o Consequently, the focus groups felt genuine and not extractive
- **The health and care system can and should do more listening exercises like this**
  - o Residents/community organisations felt this type of work had been neglected in the past few years
  - o In many cases, residents were bursting at the seams with insights they had clearly stored up
- **More must be done to build trust with residents and communities**, especially from underserved communities
  - o Officers experienced high levels of concern that providing poor/critical feedback would impact residents e.g., the care they receive, or their asylum applications
  - o Residents were scared to speak out on issues they were concerned about
  - o **We have a way to go on our journey to building trust and relationships with residents and communities in Oxfordshire**

Running focus groups

- To realise genuine co-production, significantly more time must be dedicated to the development of strategy—at least another 3 months
- If done again, it would be worth contacting community organisations a couple months earlier to give them time to prepare and deliver focus groups on time
- Staff experienced significant challenges collecting good robust data on people's priorities and demographics
- The wording of possible priorities matters a great deal & can influence outcomes e.g. much higher support for "supporting people to stop smoking" over "making Oxfordshire smoke free"
- Delivering focus groups via existing community groups and with the support of community leaders was very beneficial
- It was beneficial to send a member of staff to attend, either to help facilitate or note-take
- Demographic and expenses forms are needlessly complex, excluding the very people we want to include—we must support residents to complete them and, long-term, simplify them

Word cloud

This is a word cloud based on comments and quotations from focus groups. The top three words were "health", "mental", and "activities".