

Health Improvement Board

Thursday 17th September 2026

Oxfordshire Making Every Contact Count (MECC) Update and Strategy Development (2026 – 2031)

Purpose / Recommendation

1. The Health Improvement Board is asked to:
 - (a) note the progress made so far in Oxfordshire to embed Making Every Contact Count (MECC)
 - (b) approve the proposed direction of the five-year Oxfordshire MECC strategy, and note the opportunities of MECC to improve population health and reduce health inequalities

Executive Summary

2. This report provides an overview of the progress made to date on implementing the Oxfordshire MECC programme and sets out the proposed direction for the development of a five-year Oxfordshire MECC Strategy for 2026–2031. The strategy will provide a shared vision and clear priorities for embedding MECC sustainably across the county to support prevention, improving population health, tackling health inequalities and strengthening opportunities to connect residents with support that addresses the wider determinants of health. The strategy will also support the continued commitment to MECC during Local Government Reorganisation. The Health Improvement Board is invited to note progress made to date and approve the proposed direction for the strategy to inform its continued development.

Background

3. Making Every Contact Count (MECC) is an evidence-based approach to health improvement, which involves responding appropriately to cues from others to have opportunistic conversations about health and wellbeing. These conversations happen in everyday life – for example, this could be at work, on the bus, at school pick up time, or in a shop. MECC can take place anywhere where there is contact between individuals, and not just in health-related settings.
4. The MECC approach is recommended by a range of health organisations, policies and strategies as a key driver for improving health outcomes in a population and supporting upstream prevention. These include the Local Government Association¹, the NHS 10 Year Health Plan² through acting as an enabler to preventative interactions, NHS England³ and the Office for Health

¹ Local Government Association <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/making-every-contact-count>

² NHS 10 Year Health Plan [10 Year Health Plan for England: fit for the future - GOV.UK](https://www.nhs.uk/10-year-health-plan/)

³ NHS England <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/population-health/our-resources-hub/making-every-contact-count-mecc>

Improvement and Disparities⁴. Whilst MECC is recommended nationally, Oxfordshire is responsible for rolling out the local MECC programme across the county. Public Health work collaboratively across the South East and Thames Valley with other regions' MECC leads to share best practice and connect MECC programmes.

5. Across Oxfordshire, MECC is rolled out in the form of training delivery to professionals, volunteers and the wider Public Health workforce, using various formats including face-to-face and online. The training typically covers five lifestyle behaviours: healthy eating and maintaining a healthy weight; physical activity; smoking; alcohol and mental wellbeing. It also supports awareness of wider factors that influence health and wellbeing, such as housing, employment and social connections. People who receive MECC training are not expected to be health experts. The training helps them to build the confidence and skills to recognise opportunities for brief, everyday conversations about health and wellbeing. These conversations can support people to consider positive behaviour changes, improve their physical and mental wellbeing, and access further support through appropriate signposting.
6. A sustainable cascade approach is utilised locally by training staff in different organisations to become MECC trainers themselves and roll out the training, this is delivered through a Train the Trainer programme. Training in Oxfordshire is co-ordinated by Oxfordshire County Council's Public Health team and is delivered by a range of trainers across organisations within the county.
7. MECC supports the shared vision of the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy⁵ (2024-2030) to improve health and wellbeing across the county through a life-course approach. MECC aligns particularly with the strategy's core principles of preventing ill health, tackling health inequalities and closer collaboration, by enabling staff and volunteers to have meaningful, brief, and opportunistic conversations that support healthier behaviours, early intervention and access to local support.
8. MECC also has a key role in delivering the Oxfordshire Marmot Place⁶ ambitions through supporting knowledge and action on the wider determinants of health and reducing health inequalities at both an individual and population level. By helping to address equity of access to services and support through signposting, MECC enables behaviour change alongside reaching residents who may have not otherwise engaged in a healthy conversation or even considered accessing a preventative support service⁷.
9. In Oxfordshire, there is a MECC Partnership which drives MECC activity across the county and oversees the county's action plan for MECC. Over recent years, partners have worked collaboratively to implement MECC

⁴ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities [About us - Office for Health Improvement and Disparities - GOV.UK](#)

⁵ [Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy - 2024-2030](#)

⁶ [About Oxfordshire a Marmot Place | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

⁷ [NHS MECC Consensus Statement](#)

across Oxfordshire, expanding the network of trained staff and volunteers and embedding MECC principles within local organisations. As part of ongoing work to consider the sustainability of the MECC programme in Oxfordshire, stakeholders have expressed a strong desire for an overarching MECC strategy to support the MECC programme of work going forward. In response, a five-year Oxfordshire MECC Strategy for 2026-2031 is being developed on behalf of the partnership, to provide a strategic framework for the future delivery of MECC and to support sustainability of the programme.

Key Issues

10. There is currently no countywide unified strategy for MECC beyond the existing partnership action plan. Whilst significant progress has been made in implementing and delivering the Oxfordshire MECC programme, the absence of a shared long-term strategic vision and reliance on membership of the partnership presents a risk to the consistency, co-ordination and future development of MECC across organisations, services and communities in Oxfordshire. Commitment and co-ordination is likely to also be affected by the disruption from organisational reform both within the NHS and local government.
11. The Oxfordshire MECC programme has previously benefited from implementation funding of £200,000 secured in April 2022 from the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG and now NHS Thames Valley Integrated Care Board). A fixed-term two-year co-ordinator role within Oxfordshire County Council's Public Health team was then appointed in 2022 using part of this funding to support the strategic roll out of MECC across the county. Public Health also provided further funding to extend the MECC co-ordinator role part-time, with most of these funds now utilised and the fixed-term co-ordinator post coming to an end in August 2027.
12. At a recent workshop, the Oxfordshire MECC Partnership expressed feedback that the dedicated MECC co-ordinator role is essential to maintaining partnership momentum, enabling collaboration across organisations and ensuring effective delivery of the Oxfordshire MECC programme. This feedback reinforces the continuation of the MECC co-ordinator role as a key enabler to embedding and delivering MECC across the county. The future resourcing and delivery of MECC will be reviewed as part of wider Public Health workforce and service planning.

MECC Strategy Direction

13. The Oxfordshire MECC Strategy is being co-developed with stakeholders through a range of engagement activities. These have included an Oxfordshire MECC Partnership workshop in June 2026, where partners discussed the future direction of MECC and identified areas for action, as well as a needs assessment survey and a monthly working group.
14. The proposed direction and key components of the strategy agreed with the MECC Strategy Working Group are outlined in the table below. The strategy

is also expected to include context-setting sections covering the national context, the Oxfordshire MECC picture, evidence-base, and where we are as a partnership. The structure will continue to be refined through stakeholder engagement and partnership input.

Proposed Structure	Purpose
Our Vision	To establish a shared long-term vision for MECC in Oxfordshire across the next five years. Current key themes include embedding sustainability, fostering a preventative culture and empowering people to improve their health and wellbeing, ultimately reducing health inequalities and improving health outcomes for all.
Guiding principles	To set out the key principles that will underpin delivery of the strategies vision and aims.
Priority areas	Key areas for collective action over the next five years to achieve the strategy's vision and aims. Themes being explored include aligning the Oxfordshire MECC strategy to wider regional work across the Thames Valley in consideration of Local Government Reorganisation, post-training support, MECC within the future workforce, and ensuring MECC is targeted and inclusive.
Enablers	The conditions required to support successful strategy delivery, including areas such as collective responsibility, senior commitment and sustainable resourcing.
Monitoring and governance	How delivery of the strategy will be overseen, monitoring of progress and evidence of impact.

Update on recent MECC activity

15. Key areas of activity that have been completed or are ongoing, since the previous [MECC report was presented](#) at the Health Improvement Board on 13th June 2024 are outlined below:

Activity	Action
1. Training delivery	• Development of Oxfordshire specific MECC training in 2024. • A total of 1368 people across Oxfordshire were trained in MECC during the previous financial year (2025-2026)⁸. • 15 people completed the MECC Train the Trainer course⁸. • Attendees covered a range of sectors including the voluntary and community sector, education, healthcare and local authority, working across priority communities and areas at greatest risk of experiencing health inequalities. • A super trainer course was also held in April 2025 to

⁸ Please note the numbers stated are likely to be an underestimation as we know that MECC training is being delivered by organisations across the county which are not reported.

	expand capacity and sustainability of Train the Trainer delivery, with 7 people attending. Attendees included representatives from healthcare, the voluntary and community sector, district councils, and Oxfordshire County Council teams.
2. Grant programme and financial support	• Provision of grants to over 20 organisations and teams (10 ongoing in the current financial year) to support them to embed MECC sustainably. • Financial support for reimbursing time and venue costs to enable accessibility of training for smaller organisations and the voluntary sector. • Grant recipients have adapted MECC training content to suit the nature of different audiences.
3. Future workforce	• Embedding MECC into the future workforce, through training Public Health Registrars and the incorporation of MECC training into Oxford Brookes University undergraduate programmes including nursing and paramedics.
4. Communication and narrative	• Strengthened communication and narrative around MECC, through development of the Oxfordshire MECC website, updates to Thames Valley MECC link, and the creation of new resources including lanyard cards, posters and a trainer's newsletter. • MECC Month of May yearly campaign rolled out across the partnership. • Roll out of the MECC South East Communications toolkit.
5. Evaluation and impact	• Here for Health, Oxford University Hospitals Value for Money evaluation⁹ indicates possible economic impact of Behaviour Change Frameworks such as MECC. • The Local Policy Lab (2024) evaluated MECC training programmes in Oxfordshire, highlighting the effectivity of Oxfordshire's MECC training in building participants confidence to support people to make healthy lifestyle choices, which were sustained three months after. • The Local Policy Lab (2026) project explored appropriate evaluation methods to identify the possible wider impacts of MECC beyond training, providing a recommendation for a three-stage evaluation approach, focusing on implementation, qualitative story-telling and co-designing monitoring indicators. • Increased efforts to collate case studies capturing the benefits of MECC in practice. • Libraries had a total of 19,099 MECC interactions in financial year 2025/2026, an increase in 83% from the previous year. Mental health and wellbeing was the most discussed topic (34% of all MECC conversations).

⁹ [Hospital-Embedded Prevention Across Oxfordshire University Hospitals: Evaluation of a Large UK- Based Behaviour Change Service](#)

6. Embedding MECC	• Increased representation within the Oxfordshire MECC partnership and the number of MECC champions. • 119 MECC trainers across Oxfordshire delivering training both internal and external to their organisations. • Many organisations and services progressing MECC as mandatory training for new staters. • MECC is embedded across a range of organisation's cultures in Oxfordshire. • Development of resources to support implementation of MECC in Oxfordshire, including lanyard cards, flyers, badges and pens.
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Budgetary Implications

16. Oxfordshire County Council's Public Health team are currently holding the remaining pot of funding received from the previous Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG now NHS Thames Valley Integrated Care Board) on behalf of the Oxfordshire MECC Partnership, totalling £25,400. This has been committed by the partnership towards future grants, resources and contingency.
17. The Oxfordshire MECC Partnership and trainers across organisations have provided staff time and resource towards supporting training delivery.
18. Oxfordshire County Council Public Health has provided funding for the extension of one part-time (0.5FTE) two-year fixed-term MECC co-ordinator post until August 2027.

Comments checked by:

Stephen Rowles, Strategic Finance Business Partner

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Equalities Implications

19. A key focus of the Oxfordshire MECC programme is to tackle health inequalities. The programme focuses on embedding MECC within organisations and services that are located in or serve people living in areas of inequality in Oxfordshire or who support groups in the community who are more likely to experience inequalities. Organisations supporting people across the life course are encouraged to get involved in the MECC programme such as early years settings and services aimed at older adults. Where possible, organisations/services that support particularly vulnerable people (e.g. people who are homeless and vulnerable migrants) are also encouraged to engage with MECC, as these groups are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes compared to the rest of the population.
20. It is anticipated there will be no groups who would be disadvantaged by the Oxfordshire MECC strategy.

Sustainability Implications

21. There are no direct sustainability implications associated with the development of the Oxfordshire MECC Strategy. These will continue to be assessed throughout the development and implementation.

Legal Implications

22. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. The report provides an update on the work being carried out across Oxfordshire to embed Making Every Contact Count (MECC), which, in turn supports the delivery of the objective to improve health and wellbeing across the county.

Comments checked by:

Janice White, Principal Solicitor: ASC, SEND and Education

Risk Management

23. There is a risk that MECC will not be implemented consistently without shared commitment and co-ordination across partners. This risk is being mitigated by developing the strategy through a partnership-led approach, with stakeholder engagement at the centre. A MECC Strategy Working Group has helped to identify shared priorities and actions, supporting collective ownership across the partnership.
24. Changes across the wider health and local government landscape, including local government reorganisation and future funding uncertainties could impact the sustainability of future MECC activity. The development of the Oxfordshire MECC Strategy provides an opportunity to establish the foundations of a clear long-term vision, strengthen partnership working and the role of MECC in supporting prevention under the new landscape. It will also enable the embedding of MECC within existing systems, policies and the future workforce to support sustainability. Whilst existing local authority structures will change, the key principles of MECC incorporated within the strategy will be applicable across all three unitary areas and provide an opportunity to embed a consistent prevention-focused approach across the new structures¹⁰.

Communications

25. The Oxfordshire MECC strategy is being developed in collaboration with the Oxfordshire MECC Partnership. This includes a strategy partnership workshop, a MECC Needs Assessment survey incorporating feedback from the partnership, trainers and organisations engaged with MECC, and a dedicated MECC Strategy Working Group which meets monthly to guide the development of the strategy. Represented members of the partnership include:

- Active Oxfordshire

¹⁰ [Local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/local-government-reorganisation-in-oxfordshire)

- Adult Social Care, Oxfordshire County Council
- Age UK Oxfordshire
- Carers Oxfordshire
- Cherwell District Council
- Citizens Advice
- Community Pharmacy Thames Valley
- Early Years, Oxfordshire County Council
- Farmability
- Fire and Rescue Service, Oxfordshire County Council
- Good Food Oxfordshire
- Libraries, Oxfordshire County Council
- Oxford Brookes University
- Oxford City Council
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Oxford Hub
- Oxford University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Oxfordshire Mind
- Public Health, Oxfordshire County Council
- South Central Ambulance Service
- South and Vale District Council
- West Oxfordshire District Council

Key Dates

26. The draft Oxfordshire MECC Strategy (2026-2031) is expected to be completed by the end of December 2026 (Q3 of financial year 26-27).

27. Implementation of activities outlined within the strategy will then be delivered accordingly in collaboration with the Oxfordshire MECC Partnership.

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