South Oxfordshire District Council

Listening Learning Leading



Community Enablement Annual Report



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND INSIGHTS
2025 - 2026

Community Enablement

What we do

Provide support for Voluntary and community sector (VCS) along with Town and Parish Councils

Support other council teams setting up online applications, such as Infrastructure and Development and the Community Hub

Administration of community grants to VCS organisations, town and parish councils

Process Assets of Community Value nominations

Administration of SO Charitable Lottery scheme

2025/26 in numbers

231 calls

86 Asset of Community Value enquiries dealt with

3,359 emails

Two Community Funding sessions held

288 grants awarded

213 organisations supported

348 grant applications processed

308 grant monitoring forms assessed

36,610 tickets sold

Seven newsletters sent

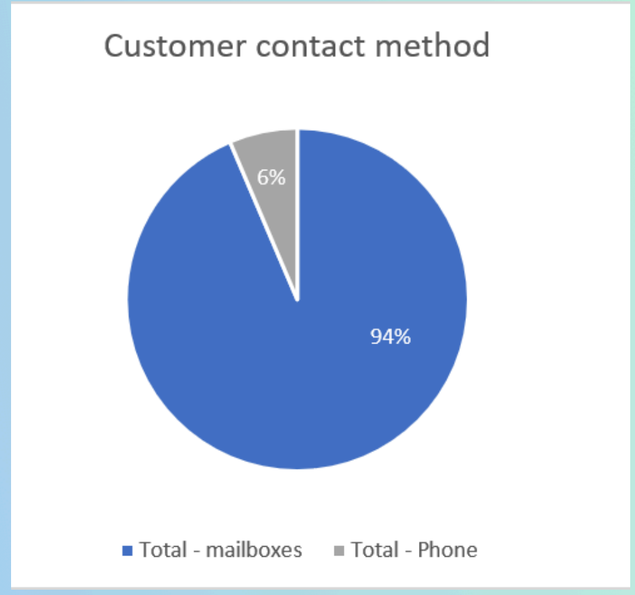
£1,288,099 grant funding awarded

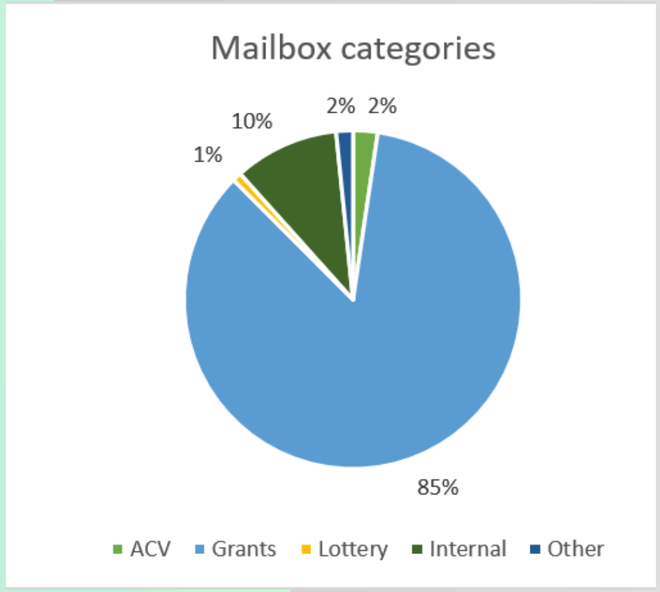
135,656 grant beneficiaries

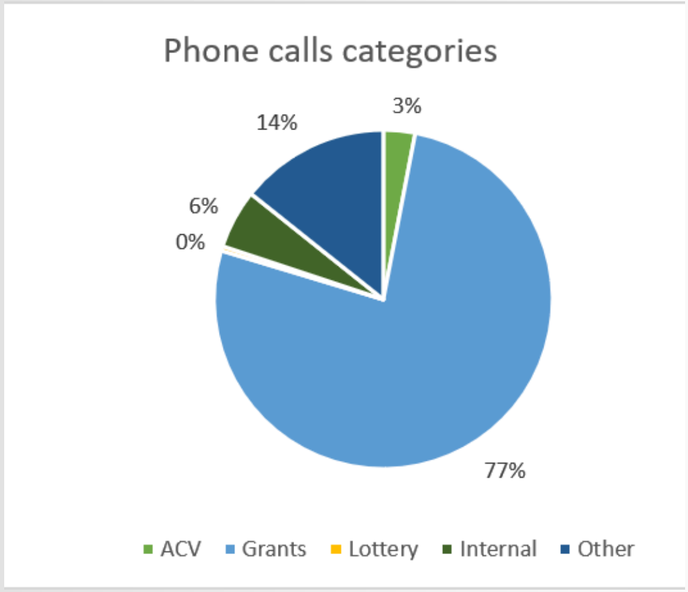
Enquiries

During 2025/26, the Community Enablement team handled 3,590 enquiries via email and telephone. This figure includes follow-up contact, meaning some enquiries required multiple responses and are therefore not all unique customer interactions.

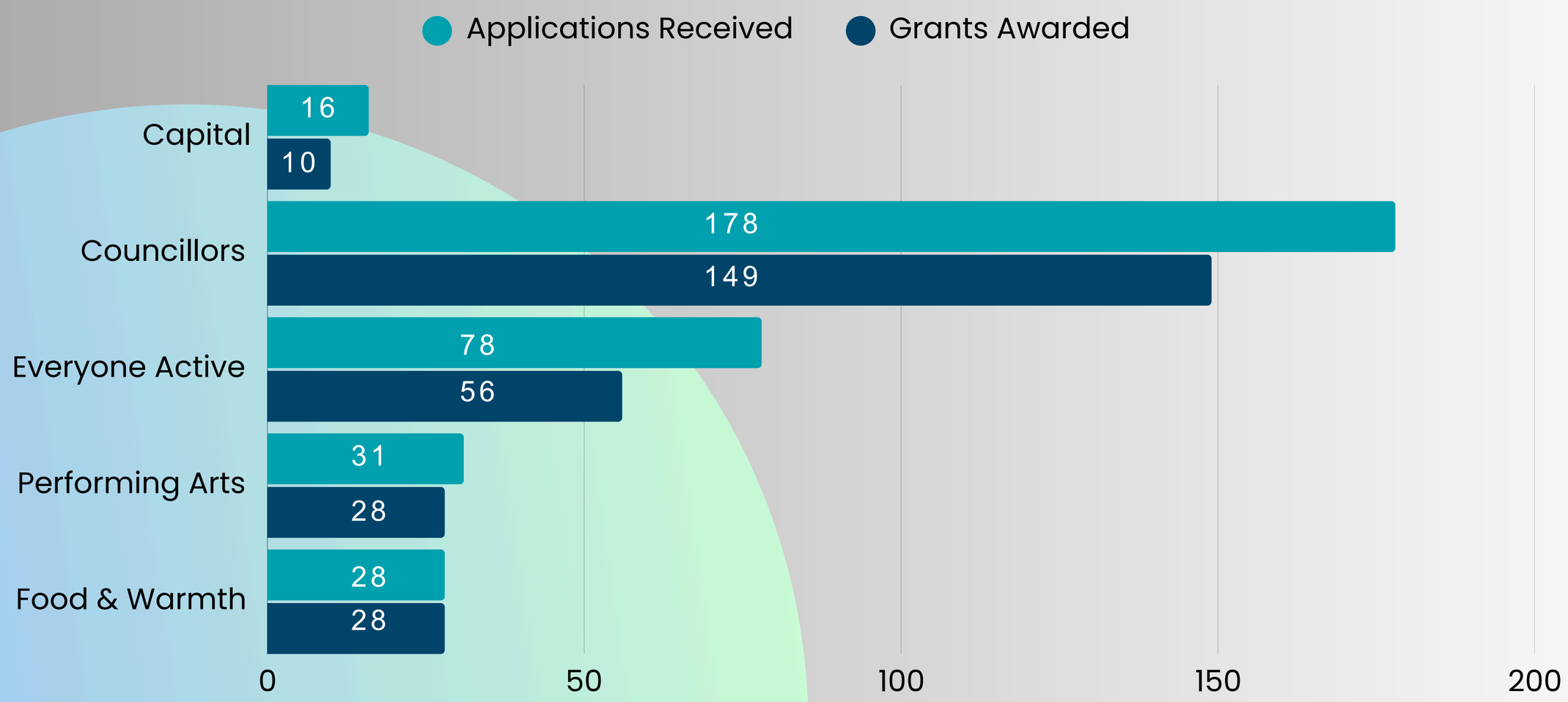
The charts below show the proportion of telephone and email enquiries by subject area. As expected, grants generated the highest volume of enquiries, reflecting continued demand for funding support and advice. This was followed by internal enquiries, including requests for consultation and advice on matters such as Section 106 applications.





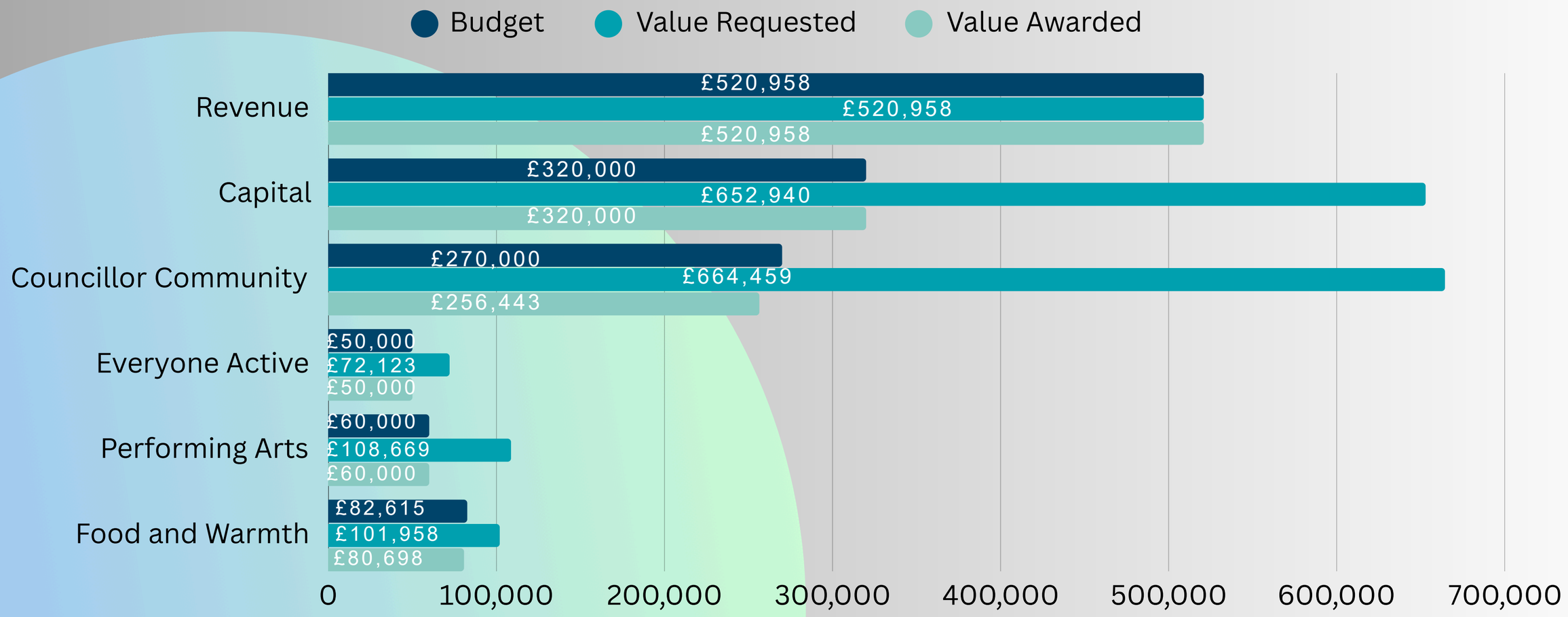


Grants at a glance



Grant award/budget breakdown

£2,121,106 grant funding was requested against a budget of £1,303,573 with £1,288,099 being awarded. We also continued to support the seven organisations in receipt of Berinsfield Garden Village revenue grants paying out £40,400 (held in a separate budget).



Council Plan Priorities

In 2025, the Council published its four-year Council Plan, The Way Ahead 2025–2029. The plan sets out the Council's key priorities and strategic objectives, providing a clear framework to guide its work and decision-making over the lifetime of the plan. To ensure funding supports these priorities, all grant applicants are now required to identify which of the Council Plan priorities their proposed project will contribute towards and how it will help deliver the Council's objectives for local communities.



Action on climate change and nature recovery

Leading in building climate resilient communities, reducing carbon emissions and restoring our natural environment.



Participation, accessibility and accountability

Ensuring robust governance, transparency, and equitable access to council services.



Thriving, healthy, and inclusive communities

Nurturing healthy, safe, and resilient communities in our rural and urban areas while being responsive to the impact of national changes on local need. Championing local businesses, local food production and a thriving, sustainable local economy and fostering community cohesion and inclusion.



Homes and infrastructure that meet local needs

Meeting local housing needs through sustainable development that is supported by appropriate infrastructure, protects green spaces, and mitigates the effects of climate change.

Council Plan Priorities

Projects awarded in 2025/26

The table below summarises the grants awarded in 2025/26, including the number of awards made, the total funding provided, and the expected number of beneficiaries. It also identifies which of the Council's priorities each project will help to deliver, ensuring grant funding is aligned with the objectives set out in The Way Ahead 2025–2029.

Council Plan theme	Number of grants awarded	Value of grants awarded	Estimated number of beneficiaries
Thriving, healthy, and inclusive communities	240	£1,121,594	325,565
Action on climate change and nature recovery	25	£102,874	86,703
Participation, accessibility, and accountability	18	£38,148	14,881
Homes and infrastructure that meet local needs	5	£25,483	66,280

Council Plan Priorities

Projects delivered in 2025/26

Due to the timescales involved in delivering grant-funded projects, many of the projects completed during 2025/26 were awarded funding before the publication of the Council Plan, The Way Ahead 2025–2029. As a result, these projects were not originally assessed against the Council's priorities at the point of application. To provide a consistent picture of how grant funding contributes to the Council's strategic objectives, completed projects have been reviewed retrospectively and aligned to the priority they most closely support. This enables us to demonstrate how grant funding has helped deliver outcomes that contribute to the Council's priorities.

Council Plan theme	Number of grants awarded	Value of grants awarded	Estimated number of beneficiaries
Thriving, healthy, and inclusive communities	162	£421,739	121,559
Action on climate change and nature recovery	31	£78,631	24,097

Everyone Active Grants

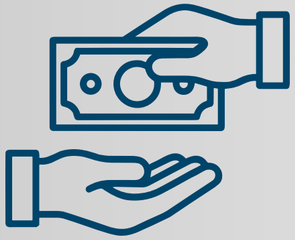
Funding to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and the role we play in providing high quality active opportunities for our communities to contribute to tackling inactivity and addressing the inequalities that challenge our society.



78 Grant Applications requesting £72,123 against a budget of £50,000



56 grants awarded



£50,000 awarded



56 organisations supported



estimated that 52,764 people will benefit from the grants awarded in 2025/26



63 projects delivered from previous funding



estimated that 53,240 people have benefitted from the projects that completed in 2025/26



Action on climate change and nature recovery
1 grant awarded for £1,000 with estimated 250 beneficiaries



Thriving, healthy, and inclusive communities
55 grants awarded for £49,000 with estimated 52,514 beneficiaries

Everyone Active completed projects 2025/26

Sonning Common Preschool
Project: Big Garden Upgrade - Sensory, Balance and Interactive Equipment

“As a Charity run Pre-School we rely solely on funding and fundraising. The Everyone Active Grant has helped us enormously with our Great Big Garden Upgrade. The Grant has helped us purchase and install a new wooden sandpit, a wooden playhouse and new balance and sensory equipment. The new equipment has made a world of difference to our Pre-School Garden, and the children's learning and wellbeing, which wouldn't have been possible without the Everyone Active Grant. A big thank you to the Community Enablement Team for their help and support throughout the process!”







ABM Skittles Club
Project: A portable skittle alley

“Over 300 people played skittles for the first time while our portable alley was at Bunkfest. We have had great feedback and an increased awareness that there is a skittles club in Wallingford, and that it is open to people of all ages, including beginners. As a year-round indoor sport that takes place in a fully accessible building at Wallingford Sports Park, playing skittles at the ABM club is a great way to socialise, stay active, and try something new. Since we started taking the portable alley out into the community we have had increased interest in membership.”

Watlington Town Football Club
Project: New U6 & U7 Football Teams - Equipment, Kit and Coaching support

“Thanks to the funding provided through the Everyone Active Grant Scheme, two age groups at Watlington Town FC - 6 and 7-year-olds - were able to benefit hugely in the past year, through the purchase of a new playing kit, footballs, coaching support and football equipment - enabling the children to make the most of their time playing football this year. The teams both enjoyed a great year, with the U7s entering (and winning!) some local tournaments.
Watlington Town are hugely grateful for this funding, which allowed the club to support its teams in this most beneficial way.”



Eco SoCo
Project: Caring for Our Community Orchards and Creating Pollinator Plant Zones

“Working to create thriving community orchards rich in biodiversity has created a number of appealing, accessible green spaces for our community to enjoy. In particular, one of the larger orchards is situated on accessible land at the village care home, and it has bought joy and a greater sense of well being to residents, visitors and staff alike. The orchard in the village centre has been adopted by the local Cub and Beaver groups, who visit the orchard to learn about the trees and they have provided buckets to collect rain water to water the trees.”

Everyone Active completed projects 2025/26

Berry Youth Centre - Berinsfield
Project: Berry Camps - Physical and Mindful Activities Delivery

”The programme has been a game-changer for young people who might otherwise be left out. It’s welcoming, and gives everyone a chance to join in."

"Before this scheme, my son spent most holidays indoors. Now he’s active and social. It’s made a huge difference to his confidence."

“This scheme has been a huge help. It keeps the kids active, entertained, and off their screens.”







GWP Baby & Toddler Group - Didcot
Project: Outdoor play and sports equipment

"We had an amazing time at GWP baby & toddler group today. My little one was so absorbed in play, he didn't want to leave! Such a fun and comfortable environment, it's like a home away from home. Love the set up, freedom to play, and craft activities, and especially the story and snack time. We now look forward to this each fortnight!"
“General feedback from children and parents is that they like playing with the larger toys they don’t have space for at home and parents appreciate 'getting out of the house' and feeling less socially isolated.”

The Chiltern Centre - Henley-on-Thames
Project: Henley Regatta for the Disabled

“I would like to convey our sincere gratitude for the SODC Everyone Active Grant of £1000 awarded towards Regatta for the Disabled in 2025. Thanks to your generous grant and invaluable support, we were able to offer the young adults we support life-changing experiences that they will cherish forever. The donation towards The Disabled Regatta helped offer an incredible experience to so many. The training on the river was so positive for their mental and physical well-being, we see their confidence and training skills grow week on week. The day of the competition was fantastic fun, there was a huge sense of personal pride and team achievement. It is more than an opportunity to do something often off limits to young adults with disabilities, it is an opportunity to be part of something community focussed that builds self-esteem and self-belief - our team have won multiple times and came second this year! Your contributions empower the young adults we support to spend time developing friendships and gaining confidence, allowing us to continue enriching their lives in ways that go far beyond what we could achieve alone.

Your kindness and commitment are an inspiration to us all. On behalf of all of us at The Chiltern Centre please accept our thanks and appreciation for your support.”

Chiltern Centre
Supporting young adults with disabilities

Regatta for the disabled HENLEY

Capital Grants

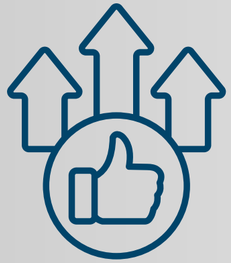
Funding towards projects that help to build thriving communities and improve the quality of life for the residents in the district by building, replacing or making improvements to long term assets.



16 Grant Applications requesting £652,940 against a budget of £320,000



10 grants awarded



£320,000 of grant investment enabling £2.1 million of projects



10 organisations supported



estimated that 99,200 people will benefit from the grants awarded in 2025/26



11 projects delivered from previous funding



estimated that 8,068 people have benefitted from the projects that completed in 2025/26



Action on climate change and nature recovery
1 grant awarded for £7,142 with estimated 1,000 beneficiaries



Homes & infrastructure that meet local need
1 grant awarded for £14,453 with estimated 60,000 beneficiaries



Thriving, healthy, and inclusive communities
8 grants awarded for £298,405 with estimated 38,200 beneficiaries

Capital Grants completed projects 2025/26



Clifton Hampden and Burcot Sea Scout Group
Project: New roof for scout hut

“Clifton Hampden and Burcot scouts is a thriving youth community group serving a wide catchment area of South Oxfordshire. Central to this group is our scout hut, our home. This project has enabled us to secure the future of the group by ensuring we have a weather proof, secure, well insulated roof protecting our scout hut for years to come.”

Tiddington with Albury Parish Council
Project: Playground Upgrade

“The project has really enhanced the whole playground which has a knock on effect of raising the impact of the entire recreation area. Before the swings were looking very old and tired but now they look much more inviting and are used more. Previously unused space now has the Aerial Runway and the spinner roundabout increased the capacity of the whole area. The play area also appeals now to wider age range of children from pre-schoolers to teens and we see everyone in there, especially in the summer months.
We are very grateful to SODC for their support and funding of this project.”



Long Wittenham Parish Council
Project: Acklings Playground Upgrade

“We have provided a new playground for our village, aimed to be more challenging than our other playgrounds. It also provides a new social focus for families in the village. It is already being well used with good feedback and is attracting families from neighbouring villages.”





Thames Sport Club Limited - Thame
Project: Solar Panel Installation

“Thanks to a grant from SODC, we've been able to install solar panels and storage battery to reduce our fuel bills and future-proof the building. This will help us keep our facilities affordable for our diverse membership, from the very young to those in their 80' s.”

Capital Grants completed projects 2025/26





The Berin Centre
Project: Community Cafe

“This project has made a staggering difference to this local community. We can now provide a gathering place where friendships can develop, a place to eat healthily and affordably, a gateway to seek help and support with a range of issues, education around food, cooking and healthy eating, a workspace, employment. The benefits of introducing something as small as a local cafe are many and astounding.
One gentleman, recently turned 90, said 'it's something that's been needed for a long time. I live on my own and I come here two days a week and order the soup. It save the electric! It's a great thing.'
Another local resident told us (by building the cafe) 'you've given Berinsfield a future.'
Without the support of the Capital grant, it simply wouldn't have been possible. We've been able to not only deliver on our aspirations to create a new community facility, but to provide it with such high quality and attention to detail that it strongly upholds the dignity of the people of Berinsfield and nurtures the reputation of the village in the local area.”





Councillor Grants

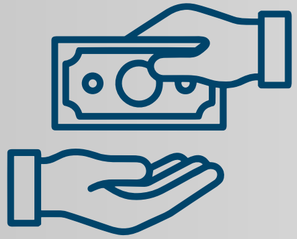
Each South Oxfordshire district councillor has £7,500 to award to projects or services that offer community benefits in their ward area.



178 Grant Applications requesting £664,459 against a budget of £270,000



149 grants awarded



£256,443 awarded



139 organisations supported



estimated that 188,600 people will benefit from the grants awarded in 2025/26



65 projects delivered from previous funding



estimated that 48,577 people have benefitted from the projects that completed in 2025/26



Action on climate change and nature recovery
20 grants awarded for £43,328 with estimated 71,437 beneficiaries



Participation, accessibility and accountability
18 grants awarded for £38,148 with estimated 14,881 beneficiaries



Homes & infrastructure that meet local need
2 grants awarded for £2,100 with estimated 550 beneficiaries



Thriving, healthy, and inclusive communities
109 grants awarded for £172,867 with estimated 101,732 beneficiaries

Councillor Grants completed projects 2025/26



Cholsey Parish Council
Project: Cholsey Community Allotment

‘‘We are very grateful for SODC Councillor grants in 2025 which have enabled us to establish a Community Allotment in Cholsey. We now have all the key things in place, including raised beds, water butts and polytunnel staging, to have a productive growing season this year. We were also able to hold seven events at the allotment in 2025, including welcoming Brownies, Cubs, and Explorer Scouts to the allotment who enjoyed planting vegetables, painting sheds, filling raised beds, and making bug hotels. The vision for the Community Allotment is to become a hub for developing sustainable food-growing skills in Cholsey as part of the ‘Growing Better Together’ initiative.’’

Wallingford Accessible Boat Club
Project: Riverside Moorings Operations

“This project has benefited the local community hugely! It enabled WABC to carry almost 500 local disabled and less mobile people, with their friends and families, out on the river Thames, at no cost to themselves, to allow them to experience the joys of boating and the health benefits that are part of it. We are very grateful to SODC, and particularly our local Councillors, for their trust as well as their support of our volunteers and everything they have achieved. Without SODC's support and particularly the Community Grants scheme, we certainly would not be where we are today and many hundreds of disabled and less mobile people would be missing out as a result."









1st Wheatley Rainbows
Project: Community Action & Outdoor Equipment

“Through the adventurous outdoor activities enabled by the Councillor Grant, the Rainbows have increased in confidence, broadened their horizons and developed a deeper appreciation of the natural World around them. They are proud to be Wheatley Rainbows, which gives them a lasting affinity with our village, becoming more appreciative and aware of their local environment and communities. Parents have reported that children who have not been able to engage with other extracurricular activities really enjoy Rainbows and that they look forward to our weekly meetings with enthusiasm.”

Councillor Grants completed projects 2025/26

Benson Short Mat Bowls Club
Project: Improving facilities and accessibility for all

“This project has provided the club with 3 new sets of coloured bowls, making identification easier during play, and some aids to help those with mobility issues to join in more easily. This means the club can support and include a more diverse section of the local community. We have also been able to replace some worn out mats and measuring tapes. Overall, this grant has provided a greater opportunity for a wider group of local people to enjoy the sociable atmosphere of the club, whilst being active and improving their levels of skill in this sporting activity. The grant has been much appreciated by all club members, both new and old. Thank you very much”





Red Kite Family Centre
Project: Neurodiversity Support Programme

“Our project to improve neurodiversity support has had a meaningful impact on the local community. By raising awareness, providing tailored resources, and fostering inclusive environments, we have helped individuals feel more understood and supported, while also encouraging greater empathy and collaboration among community members.”

Goring on Thames Cricket Club
Project: Pavilion refurbishment - Women and Girls changing facilities

“This project has provided a much needed facility for Goring Cricket club's female players. No changing facilities were available for prior to this project which now supports the club's thriving girls cricket teams for children age 9-16. It will ensure the future growth of this group will be properly supported into the future.”

Oxfordshire Discovery College
Project: Discovering a Brighter Future for Mental Health

“The council's support of this project has enabled us to reach an unprecedented number of young people across the area, raising their awareness of mental health and sharing with them some simple strategies for wellbeing self care. Feedback from young people and from their schools has shown us how greatly appreciated this opportunity has been.”





Performing Arts Grants

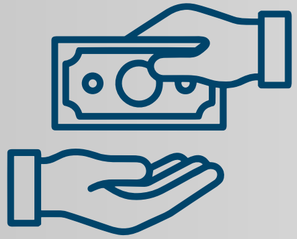
Funding towards projects that enhance community wellbeing, foster mental, emotional and physical well-being through accessible performing arts initiatives.



31 Grant Applications requesting £108,669 against a budget of £60,000



28 grants awarded



£60,000 awarded



22 organisations supported



estimated that 111,546 people will benefit from the grants awarded in 2025/26



33 projects delivered from 2024/25 funding that was awarded by the Community Arts Team.



Participants reached over 10,000 and audience members reached over 16,000 from the projects that completed in 2025/26



Action on climate change and nature recovery
1 grant awarded for £2,500 with estimated 7,500 beneficiaries



Homes & infrastructure that meet local need
2 grants awarded for £8,930 with estimated 5,730 beneficiaries



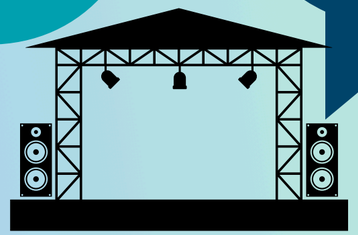
Thriving, healthy, and inclusive communities
25 grants awarded for £48,570 with estimated 98,316 beneficiaries

Performing Arts Grants quotes from 2025/26 projects delivered by the Arts Team

"I think it's just brilliant that SODC have set up this scheme [...] encouraging work in the sector in this way is laudable."



"We would like to thank SODC for this is grant because without it, this project would not have been possible. [...] By having the theatre trip in Didcot, this helped to create more awareness around brain injury."



"With the help of grant awards such as the Performing Arts scheme, theatres in the South area feel better supported and can continue to develop as outstanding venues for public entertainment."

Wigod Way Family Centre
Project: Music and performance
"Thank you for recognising the power of performing arts and enabling us to reach and beneficially impact vulnerable adults through live music."



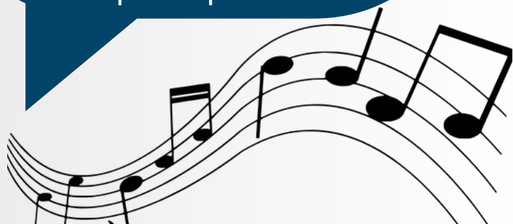


Thame Players Theatre Company
Project: Dressing room improvements
"The dressing room now contributes to the sustainability of the theatre overall; it had been very dilapidated for many years, and the work that has been done means it is now more sustainable and fit for purpose for at least the next ten years."

"The grant has made a tangible difference to our ability to reach new young audiences and families, and to build the kind of lasting partnerships that will sustain this work for years to come."



"We are very grateful for the support provided through this grant. It has enabled us to deliver inclusive, high-quality performing arts opportunities for families who may otherwise face barriers to participation."



Food and warmth grants

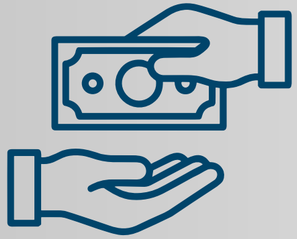
Community Enablement supported the Community Hub team in delivering this vital scheme, providing support to residents facing financial hardship and helping them access food and maintain warm homes as part of the council's commitment to support thriving, healthy and inclusive communities.



28 Grant Applications requesting £101,957 against a budget of £82,615



28 grants awarded



£80,698 awarded



28 organisations supported



estimated that 11,232 people will benefit from the grants awarded in 2025/26



21 projects delivered from previous funding



estimated that 9,771 people have benefitted from the projects that completed in 2025/26



1,702 families with children have benefitted from the projects that completed in 2025/26



All grants awarded contributed to Thriving, healthy, and inclusive communities

Food and Warmth Grants completed projects 2025/26

Millstream Day Centre

Project: Purchase of additional food storage space and additional beverage facilities

"The project has delivered clear benefits to the local community by improving the Benson Millstream Centre's ability to provide safe, efficient, and welcoming spaces for residents. The new fridge, additional stainless steel trays, and hygienic backsplash have increased our food preparation and storage capacity, allowing us to continue offering freshly prepared lunches, activities, and companionship to older residents three days each week. These improvements support both the quality and reliability of the meal service provided.

Enhancements to the smaller kitchen have also had a significant impact. The new bespoke beverage station, with its easy to use 'bean to cup' coffee machine, improved storage, new crockery including attractive dual handled cups, has created a more comfortable and inclusive environment for all users, including those with dexterity or mobility challenges .These changes have greatly improved the appearance and functionality of the space, helping us better support those Community Groups which already hire the Centre, and it is hoped the new facilities afforded by the Grant will encourage increased community bookings, strengthening the Centre's role as a modern friendly hub at heart of Benson. Thank you."





Wallingford Family Centre

Project: Warm Welcome Friday's

"Warm Welcome has had a strong impact on the local community by providing a safe, warm and welcoming space for families during the winter months. Due to requests from families, the sessions were delivered on Mondays, ensuring the project remained accessible and responsive to local need. The project exceeded expectations in overall reach, supporting 631 residents compared to an initial projection of 264. The sessions created valuable opportunities for young children to play and socialise, supporting early development, while parents and carers built connections and reduced feelings of isolation. Overall, the project strengthened community connections, improved wellbeing and provided vital support to families during the winter months in Wallingford."

Wigod Way

WALLINGFORD FAMILY CENTRE

- REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1173241 -

Food and Warmth Grants completed projects 2025/26



urHome.church
Project: Snug - winter lunch

“Food & Warmth funding enabled Snug Community Café to extend its opening hours over winter and offer a free banquet or soup and sandwiches lunch each week. This made a significant difference to older residents facing rising living costs and social isolation. We are now fully certified by Oxfordshire Environmental Health with a 5-star food safety rating and the basic equipment necessary to offer lunches.

Attendance grew steadily throughout the funded period, with over 20 people joining most weeks (excluding volunteers). Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and several attendees expressed real sadness when the winter season came to an end. One widower who moved to Thame last year, had not attended any social events for six months before discovering Snug. He told us that he ‘only came because there was food prepared for me, but now I've made friends here.’ He is now a weekly regular, has begun joining others in the lounge at his retirement home, and—after trying new foods at our Easter party—has even discovered he likes quiche.

As another attendee put it: ‘Snug has given me somewhere warm to go, people to talk to, and the confidence to try things I never would have on my own.’”

Be Free Young Carers
Project: Winter respite for young carers

“The food and warmth grant was used to provide young carers in South Oxfordshire with the opportunity to attend youth club sessions during the winter months with the charity. These sessions specifically allowed us to provide a Winter holidays meal to our 13+ young carers in youth club along with 2 other 13+ youth clubs which have been taking place in the centre of Didcot. These sessions have been a really important opportunity for young carers to come together and take part in guided activities and socialise with their peers in a warm and social environment. They have had food provided at all of these opportunities to make sure that all the young carers have access to a meal on that day.”





Revenue Grants

The council continued to invest in building and supporting thriving communities and action on climate change and nature recovery, helping to improve the quality of life for residents across South Oxfordshire. In 2025/26, Full Council approved an additional £520,958 from the council's 2024/25 revenue underspend to enhance the core revenue funding programme. This was added to the £667,992 previously approved in 2024/25 for allocation over two years (2025/26 and 2026/27). As a result, the total funding allocated to organisations in 2025/26 increased to £594,476, enabling continued support for 17 local community services and initiatives with estimated 30,087 beneficiaries.

Organisations supported

citizens advice Oxfordshire

OPA Oxfordshire Play Association

River Thame Conservation Trust

My Life My Choice

MyVision Oxfordshire – Supporting Visually Impaired People

SeeSaw Grief Support – For children and young people in Oxfordshire

oxfordshire youth

Wild Oxfordshire

BE FREE YOUNG CARERS

TRAIN – Inspiring Young People

Thomley – A place for people of all abilities and disabilities

Reducing the Risk of Domestic Abuse

SOFEA

The Berin Centre

The Abingdon Bridge

Wigod Way Wallingford Family Centre – Registered Charity No. 1173241

Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire

Action on climate change and nature recovery
2 grants awarded for £48,904 with estimated 6,516 beneficiaries

Thriving, healthy, and inclusive communities
15 grants awarded for £472,054 with estimated 23,571 beneficiaries

Revenue Grants

Case Studies from organisations supported

Oxfordshire Youth - Young Leaders programme and school Transitions Programme

Taking part in the Young Leaders programme changed how A is able to communicate and identify his needs. He is now much more able to manage his emotions, control his anger and has the language to express his feelings in challenging moments. He is confidently planning for the future through volunteering opportunities, further courses and a career pathway in paramedic science.

“When I signed up for Young Leaders, I didn’t really know what to expect, but my youth workers said the programme would be really good for me to do and I just thought it was an opportunity to get a qualification for my CV. I was lucky really as it started just a couple of weeks later and I already knew some people there, so I felt like I wasn’t on my own. When we got started, I think I got distracted a lot, and it was kind of hard for me to get back on track. I was really excited, but I was definitely a bit apprehensive and nervous just not knowing how it would go or meeting new people. So yeah, the start was difficult for me. I ended up really enjoying it.

100% of service users satisfied with the service

82% of young people reported an increase of a sense of belonging to their school community

100% of young people achieved an accredited qualification on the Young Leaders Programme

The residential itself was really fun. It was the perfect length of time for me, I had time to settle in but much longer could have been hard to manage. Throughout there was always someone there to work with and help motivate you, and it was the same on the study days. It’s quite a lot of work, but we were able to really focus and smash it out. For me I really liked how much independence they gave us. Like the chill time at night was good, to just kick a ball around with everyone involved and have a good time. There was trust there to manage our time and rooms, and we had activities like the scavenger hunt that we could go off and do and then come back together as the whole group. I still have all the pictures. It was just really well organised and let me take responsibility for my own actions and have some freedom at the same time. Before taking part, I could definitely get angry and lash out, I’d not be able to control my temper but it taught me a lot about how to communicate and gave me some good coping mechanisms. Mostly it’s helped me to understand myself and be able to talk about how I feel and my emotions and just helped me communicate that when I get angry or upset. Just learning how to speak to people and getting things off my chest is the biggest thing for me, it helps me resolve some stress just being able to let things out and talk to somebody like a teacher or my mum; it’s someone else taking your worries away for a bit. I speak up at school a lot more now too and it’s given me more awareness in how I communicate and might have an affect on people around me, especially if I’m running low on social battery. I really enjoy being around animals too and being outdoors, sometimes it’s easier than being around humans when I’m not feeling up to it. For me though, coming out with a Level 2 is great to put on my CV and will really help me when I go for jobs. It shows what I’m capable of and has helped me feel more confident for the next steps for a Level 3. I really enjoyed volunteering too. I’ve done a few things now in care homes, my football club for the younger kids and work experience at a play scheme camp which I liked, everyone was really sweet there. I’m hoping to do more volunteering, maybe more with the cadets or St John’s Ambulance.

Being able to communicate more and understand my emotions is massive, it’s such a big part of me and it’s what makes me. It’s just really important isn’t it and it’s given me so much to take into the future, you don’t always know what will help with the future life but I really enjoyed it and know I have it for when I need it.”

Revenue Grants

Case Studies from organisations supported

Counselling support

A 23-year-old young man (Didcot) who came to us feeling completely disconnected and hopeless. He described feeling stuck, low in mood, and increasingly withdrawn from those around him. There were concerns around his safety, and he was struggling to see a way forward. Through regular 1-1 support with one of our counsellors, he began to open up about how he was really feeling. Together, they worked on a clear and practical safety plan, helping him identify early warning signs and steps he could take to keep himself safe during moments of crisis. This was a significant shift, as previously he had not felt able to manage or even talk about these feelings. As his confidence grew, he was able to have honest conversations with his family about what was going on for him. This opened up a wider support network around him, something that hadn't been there before. He also began to reflect on his relationships and recognised that one in particular was having a negative impact on his wellbeing. With support, he was able to end this relationship, which led to a noticeable increase in his self-worth and sense of control. Over time, he reported feeling more able to cope when things became difficult, more connected to others, and more hopeful about his future. His engagement with support increased, and he began taking positive steps forward in his life.

This case reflects the wider impact we are seeing across the programme. Through the grant, we are supporting around 145 young people per year, with approximately 73% reporting improvements in areas such as emotional wellbeing, confidence, and ability to keep themselves safe. In particular, this case demonstrates:

- increased resilience and reduced risk during periods of crisis
- improved emotional wellbeing and ability to talk openly about thoughts and feelings
- stronger connections with family and support networks.

It highlights the importance of early, accessible support, particularly for those who might otherwise wait significant periods before receiving help. "Thanks to The Abingdon Bridge, I can now think healthily and I'm looking forward to my future."

81% improvement rate on parents gaining increased confidence in understanding and responding to their child's emotional wellbeing and mental health needs

72% improvement rate on young people having aspirations and being more confident about their future

70% of service users satisfied with the service

76% improvement rate on young people showing increased resilience and less likely to participate in risky behaviours

Generally offer support to a young person within four weeks compared to 12 weeks last year

Revenue Grants

Case Studies from organisations supported

We first met YP through our detached youth work at the local skate park. He was part of a regular group of skaters we saw every Tuesday evening. We brought food and drinks, and over time it became something they genuinely looked forward to. Before long, they were texting ahead to ask what we were bringing that week. It might sound small, but it showed that trust was forming through consistency. They knew we would turn up. The group had a difficult reputation locally and were often described as a problem. Spending time with them told a different story. They were a vulnerable group who felt stigmatised and pushed out of other spaces. Detached work gave us the chance to get to know them on their own terms, without expectations. As relationships grew, we invited some of the group into our youth clubs so we could build deeper connections in a more supportive environment.

YP was one young person we became increasingly concerned about. Through conversations on detached, it became clear he was shoplifting and feeling pressure from others to do so. This raised concerns around criminal exploitation. At the same time, he was getting into trouble at school and edging closer to sanctions that risked pushing him further away from education. As trust deepened, YP shared more about what was going on at home. He was acting as a young carer for his mum. He was carrying a lot of responsibility including managing complex household tasks. This pressure was largely unseen by the systems around him and was contributing to stress, behaviour issues and risk-taking. A real turning point came when YP took part in a theatre performance. The themes of the performance reflected risks YP himself was facing, and the opportunity came at exactly the right moment. Working alongside professional artists gave him something completely different to step into. He was trusted, challenged and supported, and for the first time in a while he was being seen for something positive by his community. The impact was immediate. R's confidence grew, he spoke with pride about being involved, and he described it as one of the best things he had done all year. It also strengthened our relationship with him and helped open the door to further support. Because that trust was in place, we were able to takes safeguarding steps, refer him into further support, and link him into one-to-one mentoring .Over the past year, the change has been significant. YP is receiving the right support, staying out of trouble, and doing well at school. He is more confident, less isolated, and better able to see a future that feels achievable.

881
service users

Parents scored 4.6/5 for satisfaction on the service provided

376 interventions so young people were less exposed to risk and harm

529 young people attended the youth club



Revenue Grants

Case Studies - Home Start

Mum arrived in the UK through an arranged marriage, which unfortunately became abusive. Demonstrating great courage, she fled the situation with her three-year-old child and was relocated to a different area for safety.

As a result, the family was referred to Home-Start Southern Oxfordshire. Mum was highly vulnerable and lacked essential life skills due to the prolonged abuse and control she had experienced. Our Family Co-ordinator provided immediate practical support, including a care package of toiletries, clothing and toys, as the family had been unable to bring many belongings with them.

Once a trusting relationship was established, Mum was supported by our Family Co-ordinator in reporting the abuse she had suffered to the police. This was a significant step for her, as she initially had little trust in the police.

A safety plan is now in place.

95% of families reported improved mental health

100% of parents felt better able to cope with the day-to-day running of the home

80% of parents felt more involved in their children's learning and development

100% of parents felt less isolated

Mum and child were then introduced to one of our trained home-visiting volunteers, who quickly began offering practical and emotional support. This included helping Mum update her address with the bank, benefits services and utility providers. The volunteer also supported the family in registering with a GP and dentist and provided an orientation of the local area, including essential amenities such as shops and the library.

The child was not used to being around other adults, so was slightly cautious at first, but has since developed a lovely relationship with our volunteer and has enjoyed their walks to the park to play. Mum feels less overwhelmed by having support while she has been navigating a tricky time with financial and housing issues - we have obtained funding for carpets, wardrobes and support towards an existing energy debt. Mum now really enjoys playing with and reading with her child and they go to the library regularly.

Our Family Co-ordinator helped Mum to secure a place for the child at a local pre-school. The child is now thriving in this setting and Mum says the child feels settled and safe.

HOME START Southern Oxfordshire

Revenue Grants

Case Studies from organisations supported

SeeSaw Grief Support

For children and young people in Oxfordshire

"I first heard about SeeSaw when my Mum was admitted to Sobell House Hospice for end-of life care. I was 17 and in the middle of my A Level exams. Mum had cancer when I was young, but it came back again when I was 14. A couple of weeks before she was admitted, Mum had surgery and she could no longer eat. I was then told that she wouldn't be coming home and probably only had a few weeks to live. I had been used to Mum being ill for pretty much my whole life but hadn't seen this coming. Sobell House mentioned SeeSaw and helped me make a self referral for some support. A worker from SeeSaw came to meet me at Sobell House the same day we spoke on the phone. She explained what support they offer and I thought it could be helpful as I don't really talk about Mum's illness with anyone. I was also able to ask her about what to expect as I was really scared about what it might look like – she explained what changes to expect in Mum's final days, and what would happen afterwards. It helped me think about how I – and different people in my family -might feel and react, which helped me to see there's no 'right or wrong' way to feel or behave. I found it really helpful to talk to someone outside the family. I was able to introduce my worker to Dad, and she also helped him understand some of what I might be going through, which was helpful. Mum died soon after this visit. My worker was able to visit me at home after Mum died, where we talked about how her death had been: I wasn't with Mum when she died but was able to go and spend time with her body afterwards. I was glad I did it, but I found it hard to leave her.

We talked about my spiritual beliefs, school, exams, and university – I had more exams in the days after Mum died, however I found I couldn't focus and felt underprepared, so I didn't sit my last exam. My worker talked with me about whether I felt able to engage with end of A Level celebrations with my friends - hearing that it was 'ok to be ok' and hearing how early grief can come in bursts really helped me and I was able to enjoy some nights out.

My worker helped me navigate my first few months of grief as I waited on my exam results; I got my preferred place at Uni and decided to go for it. I was able to talk through how to explain to new people what my family circumstances are. My worker also helped me learn some new coping strategies to help me better manage my health anxiety, which I think I will always struggle with."

100% of service users would recommend SeeSaw Grief Support

24 schools have received training or advice

100% of service users very satisfied with the service they received

104 children and young people have received support

Revenue Grants

Case Studies from organisations supported

Community Ecology and Partnerships programmes, Ewelme Nature (part of Benson Area Nature Group) story collection.

“The benefit of Wild Oxfordshire is that they've got an overview. The environmental sector seems rather complex and fragmented—similar to the NHS where I worked for many years —with many different organisations for funding, advice, and delivery. In that landscape, groups like Wild Oxfordshire are valuable as central points of contact that can guide people, signposting to the right people and resources, and, importantly, they actually respond. Most of my work with Wild Oxfordshire has focused on hedges. Initially, R and I explored local nature sites, including parish council land (the common), land owned by the Chiltern Society, and a large site owned by Grundon. I first connected with Wild Oxfordshire while looking into the Grundon site, as their landfill license would be ending in a few years. During lockdown, a group of us began asking how locals could help restore it to nature. Various experts came to advise us—one of them was R. At the end of a site visit, I casually mentioned planting a hedge on the common and asked about funding. She quickly outlined the steps, and within three months the hedge was planted! It was very impressive. The following year, I worked with J to extend it further. After being initially, a little apprehensive, I’m pleased to say that the handover from R to J went smoothly. J’ energy, expertise, and clear communication is great and makes us feel engaged without being overwhelmed.

80% of service users satisfied with the service

We then worked with I on the grazing common. She visited, helped with a public walk explaining its history and wildlife, and later carried out further surveys, and produced an environmental study and opportunities plan for us to use. This report has also been delivered to the parish council, who own the common. It offers practical guidance for immediate management—such as optimal cutting times to encourage wildflowers—as well as longer-term ideas to improve biodiversity on the common. The report will serve as a reference for the council in the coming years and as a baseline study to support future grant applications which is really useful. Thanks to Wild Oxfordshire, I think there’s now greater confidence and a clearer understanding of what’s being done. The report provides solid information to answer questions and supports future planning. Future turnover in the parish council could result in organisational memory loss so the nature report can become a future reference document for new councillors. Overall, there’s now a stronger foundation for future work.

131% increase in bulletin subscribers

2,125 residents engaged with Wild Oxfordshire's Community Ecology work

20 community groups, landowners and town/parish councils advised on nature recovery matters

Having some organised events and visible support (like banners and photos), provided as part of the Hedgerow Heroes project, also makes activities feel more official and builds public trust. The earlier hedge planting was low-key, but the later efforts appeared more organised and credible. I think there's a lot more working together since I started being involved with nature recovery about 6 years ago. We're very fortunate with our village locally and it's nice to know what other groups are doing. Each region’s got their own challenges and benefits. The training courses, events, and connections through working with J, led to practical opportunities, like hedge laying, which I enjoyed. Being part of the network helps us stay informed, access resources (like spare trees or funding), and feel involved in the bigger picture. I’ve really appreciated being kept in the loop in this way.”

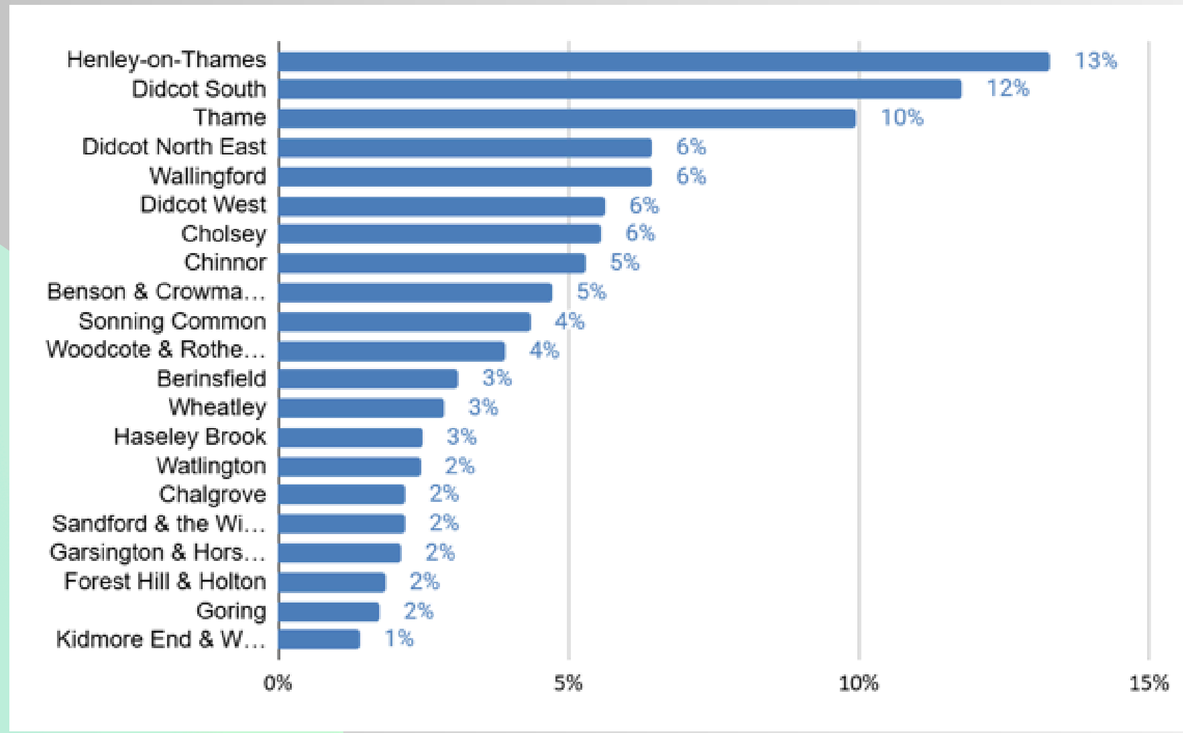
Revenue Grants

Case Studies from organisations supported

citizens advice Oxfordshire

Clients in South Oxfordshire (note they have advice centres in Didcot, Thame and Henley)

The client came to our Henley office after a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) reassessment. In the reassessment, they were awarded the enhanced rate for the mobility component, but received zero points for daily living, where previously they had received the standard rate for daily living. The client manages several complex and serious health conditions for which they were still undergoing various forms of treatment. The client could not understand why the reassessment had taken away their daily living component, as their circumstances had not changed and their conditions had only deteriorated since their first assessment.
Our adviser assisted the client in preparing a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR). This involved supporting the client to gather supporting medical evidence and helping the client write a letter to the DWP clearly stating the grounds for disputing the reassessment. Three months after the submission, the client contacted the office to confirm that the MR was successful; they have now been awarded the standard rate for daily living alongside the enhanced rate for mobility, and are very happy with the outcome which allows them to go about their daily life more easily.



Financial outcomes totalling just over £2.68 million. Over 22 times the grant given by South Oxfordshire District Council in the same year.

Outcomes	
Income gain	£1,811,691
Re-imbursements, services, loans	£21,910
Debts written off	£569,080
Repayments rescheduled	£14,394
Other	£263,778

Advisors dealt with 12,592 issues

£1,811,691 income gain facilitated for clients e.g. Tax Credit gain

5,183 clients seen

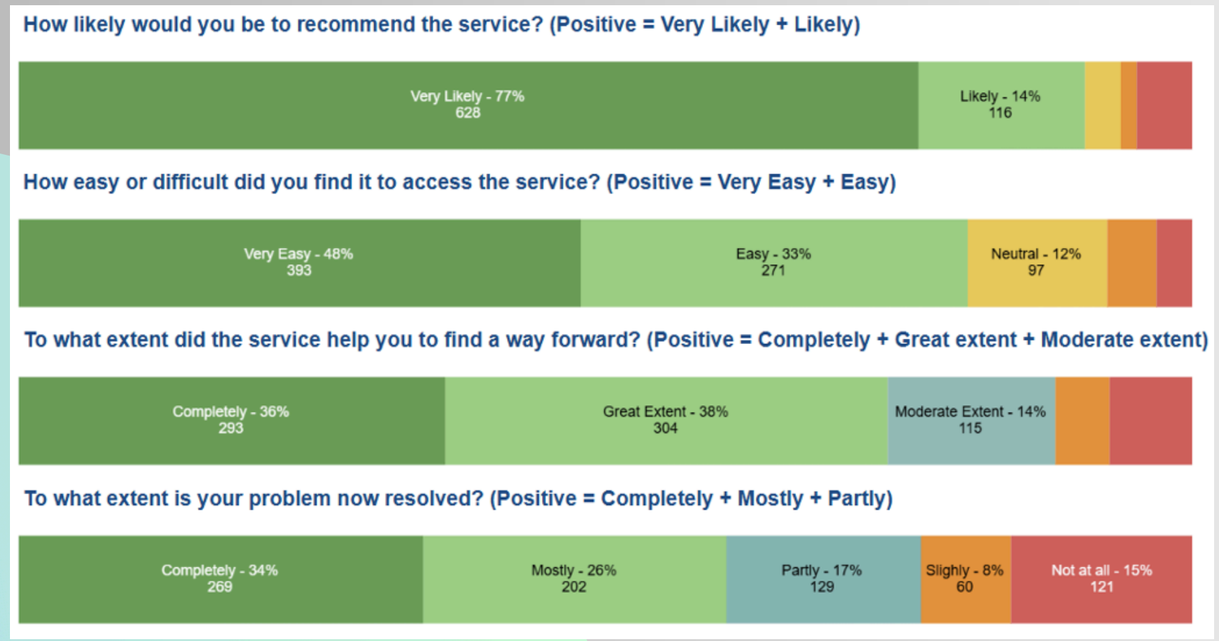
£569,080 debts written off

Revenue Grants

Case Studies from organisations supported

citizens advice Oxfordshire

"[Adviser] from Henley citizens advice was amazing. He was so patient and understanding. I was probably quite a hard client to deal with, with multiple external issues but he was determined to help me fix my problem. He showed great knowledge and empathy. I felt safe and comfortable speaking with [Adviser] and I am forever grateful for what he has done for me."



"Without the support of CAB I would not have known what my rights were, or had the courage to tackle them."

"Received the best help and advice from the Thame citizen advisors ever since 2024 to up to date they are the best team I have ever meet I will forever be grateful."



"Citizens Advice in Henley on Thames have been marvellous in helping me over the years. I honestly couldn't of managed without them."

District Reach

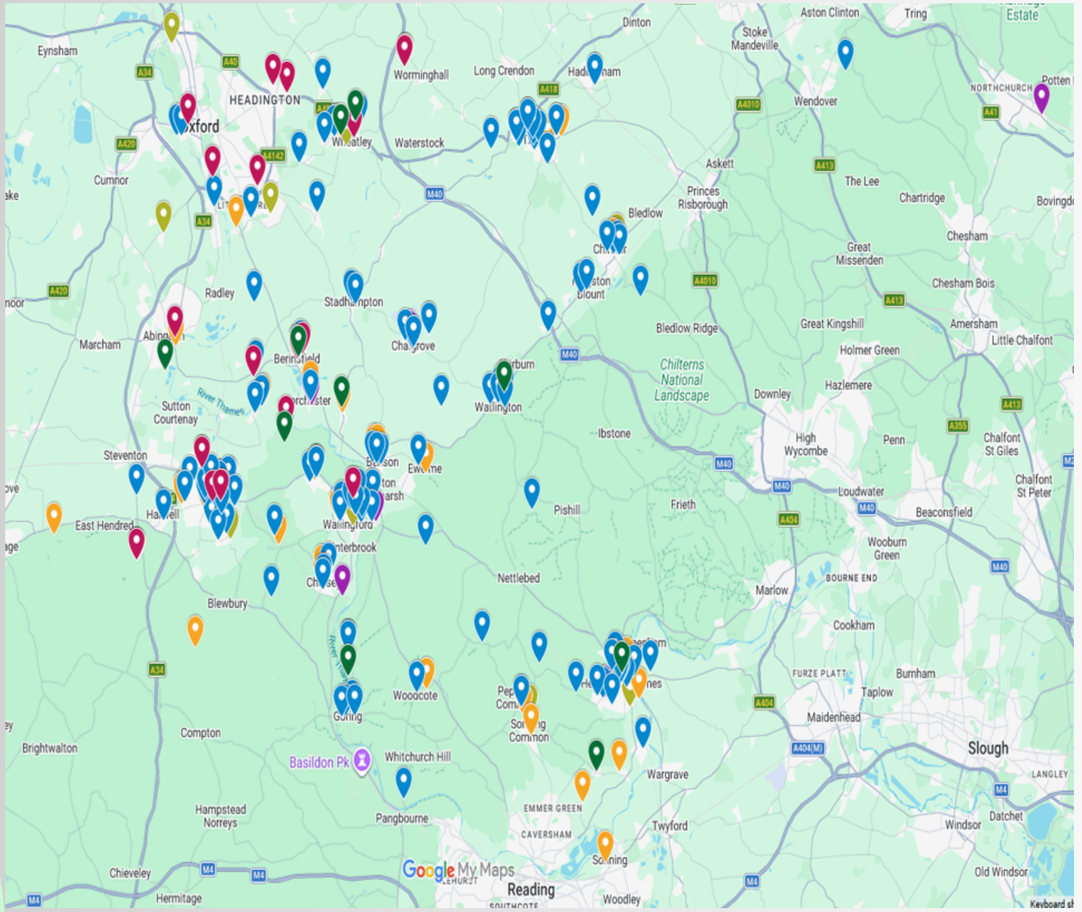
Projects across the district

Interactive Map of Funded Projects (2025/26)

An interactive Google Map has been created to showcase the location of all projects funded during 2025/26. By selecting a project marker on the map, users can view additional information, including details of the project, the organisation that received the award, and the funding programme through which the project was supported.

To explore the interactive map, please copy and paste this into your browser:

https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1haN17953eFrgiQNebHe-reTfWJvHF4Y&usp=sharing



Community Engagement

Funding sessions

Two funding advice sessions were held in partnership with Oxfordshire Community Voluntary Action and Oxfordshire Community Foundation.

16 organisations were advised on grant funding available and seven of these organisations were then successful in applying and being awarded £11,500 of grants.

In preparation for the 2026/27 grants programme officers have also attended the following events to give funding advice:

- Thame Barns Centre, at the Connecting Local Action event.
- Cornerstone Arts Centre, for the Didcot Garden Town Community update meeting.
- Berinsfield Health and Wellbeing Group.
- Community First Oxfordshire Bid writing training.
- Communities of Practice to give a presentation of our grants, SO Charitable lottery and ACVs.



Newsletters

In October 2025 we launched a new Community Grants newsletter.

Feedback received “This is a great initiative, good work team.”

Topics covered include upcoming grant schemes, district council events, external funding opportunities, external events and lottery.



Assets of Community Value

Eligible local organisations and groups, including town and parish councils, have an opportunity to nominate a building or parcels of land to be listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) to help keep it available for everyone as an important part of community life.

2 Nominations:
The Five Horseshoes Pub, Maidensgrove - listed 06/10/25
The Red Lion Public House, Brightwell-cum-sotwell - listed 29/09/25

86 enquiries

3 Expired:
Benson Youth Hall
Oxford Harlequins clubhouse and field
Chiltern Park Aerodrome

The White Lion, Crays Pond appeal
Following an internal review of the listing decision for The White Lion, the asset owner took an appeal to the First Tier Tribunal. The Councils listing decision was upheld. The White Lion will remain listed until 14/06/29

SO Charitable Lottery

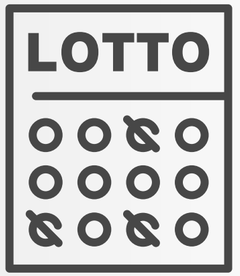
Organisations earned between £3.00 per month and £169.50 for the organisation selling the most tickets



36,610 tickets were sold



Ticket sales increased by 1,252 on previous year



At the end of 25/26 financial year 82 causes were signed up to the SO charitable Lottery

Players can either purchase lottery tickets for their chosen charity, or the central community fund







Organisations selling 20 tickets or more a week at the end of the financial year will receive a share of the central community fund, based on the proportion of their ticket sales

Generated an annual income of £21,966 for the voluntary sector

We distributed £7,000 of the central community fund in 2025/26 from the ticket sales in 2024/25

SO Charitable Lottery



Oxfordshire Animal Sanctuary - Stadhampton

Supporting Essential Veterinary Care Through Community Lottery

“We are incredibly grateful to receive £1,595.24 from the SoCharitable lottery, which makes a tremendous difference to our animal rehoming charity's ability to provide essential veterinary care to animals in need across South Oxfordshire. These unrestricted funds are particularly vital in helping us address the ever-increasing number of stray cats we are being asked to help. Over recent months, we have seen a significant rise in requests to take in abandoned and stray cats, many of whom require immediate medical attention, vaccinations, neutering, and treatment for various health conditions before they can be safely rehomed. The funding from SoCharitable allows us to say 'yes' to these vulnerable animals when they need us most. Every pound raised through the lottery translates directly into life-saving veterinary care – from emergency treatments and routine health checks to the essential spaying and neutering that helps prevent future overpopulation. We would encourage all residents of South Oxfordshire to consider signing up to the SoCharitable lottery. Not only do participants have the chance to win prizes, but they also know that their contribution is making a real, tangible difference to local animals and the community organisations working tirelessly to help them. Thanks to the generosity of SoCharitable lottery supporters, we can continue our mission of giving every animal that comes through our doors the medical care they deserve and the best possible chance of finding their forever home.”



Friends of Ewelme School - Wallingford

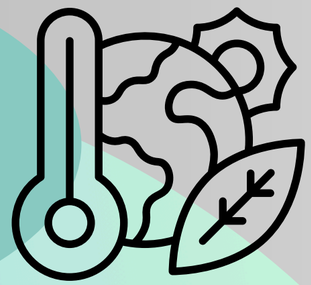
“Friends of Ewelme School signed up to the South Oxfordshire Lottery in 2018, and it has been a brilliant source of income for the School. We have had several winners in that time, and we are waiting for the jackpot next! We are a small school, so receiving the additional funds from SO Lottery makes a big difference to us. We are going to put the funds towards our ever-popular Forest School, that allows the children to have a weekly session with an external specialist, and spend more time in nature. The children all love learning outdoors, and benefit hugely from these sessions, so thank you SO Lottery for helping Friends of Ewelme School!”



Looking forward 2026/27

New Nature and Climate Action Fund

Launching in September 2026, this new £100,000 grant scheme will support local projects that tackle climate change and restore nature, with grants of up to £10,000 available.



Berinsfield Garden Village Grant Scheme Extension

We will be extending the grant scheme policy to March 2028, or until local government reorganisation takes effect to maintain funding continuity. Subject to budget approval in February 2027, this will provide £40,400 in funding to seven local organisations in 2027/28, with performance targets agreed during 2026/27.





Revenue Grant Scheme Extension

To ensure continuity of funding, we will be extending the Revenue Grant Scheme policy until March 2028, or until local government reorganisation takes effect. Subject to budget approval, this will provide £333,996 in funding to 17 organisations during 2027/28, with performance targets agreed during 2026/27.

Assets of Community Value (ACV) Legislative Changes

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 will introduce several changes to the Assets of Community Value (ACV) process, including extending listings from five to ten years, creating a separate category for sporting ACVs, and enhancing rights for community nominees. The changes will also increase the council's role in supporting engagement between nominating groups and asset owners when listed assets are put up for sale. We are awaiting the supporting regulations and commencement date, after which guidance, application forms and processes will be updated accordingly.



Grant Monitoring Forms Review

Monitoring forms will be reviewed to ensure they capture the key outcomes and impact of funded projects.