



**'NO LIMITS'
PROGRAMME**

Impact Report

Cherwell

2024/2025

No Limits Programme funded by



In association with our delivery partners



**Funded by
UK Government**



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Introduction



SOFEA has been leading the delivery of the 'No Limits' programme, designed to support economically inactive residents across Oxfordshire, Funded by OxLEP Skills through the UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund).

Initially funded through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), OxLEP Skill's Social Contract Programme managed Phase 1 and the Phase 2 extension of the programme from August 2022 to June 2024 as SOFEA was subcontracted to deliver tailored support across the county, in partnership with Aspire Oxford, helping young people and adults overcome barriers to employment, education, and training.

As Phase 2 came to an end, OxLEP successfully secured further funding via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Support for Economically Inactive Residents', commissioned by Cherwell District Council. This marked the start of phase 3 a six month project, enabling the continuation of No Limits across the Cherwell district from July 2024 to March 31st 2025.

The UKSPF-funded phase focuses on intensive, person-centred support for individuals aged 16+ who are economically inactive—not currently seeking work—due to challenges such as mental or physical health issues, social exclusion, low skills, or complex life circumstances.



The aim is to help participants:



Build confidence and self-belief



Re-engage in training or education



Overcome barriers to employment



Move closer to or into sustainable work



Improve overall well-being and quality of life



● Programme impact

Discoveries and Impact in Cherwell



The 'No Limits' programme has made significant strides in Cherwell. Key achievements include:

Employer Partnerships:

Collaborations with local businesses in Kidlington and Banbury have facilitated two-week work experience placements, with potential for permanent employment.

Personalised Support:

Participants have expressed appreciation for the tailored, one-on-one guidance provided, enhancing their confidence and job readiness.

Community Outreach:

A targeted event in Banbury successfully attracted 20 attendees, predominantly from ethnic minority backgrounds, fostering inclusivity and engagement.

Job Club Initiatives:

With the Launch of The Banbury Larder, the Job club has been a success in engaging economically inactive individuals on a regular support programme.

Entrepreneurial Guidance:

Three individuals have been referred for self-employment support, encouraging entrepreneurial endeavors.

Work Experience Opportunities:

Through employer partnerships, two participants have commenced valuable work experience placements, gaining practical insights into their chosen fields.

Key Progression Activity

62 Total number of people involved in the program

41 Economically inactive individuals who received support

"No Limits helped me gain confidence with interviews and job skills. The relaxed one-to-one support made CV writing easier, especially with my ADHD."

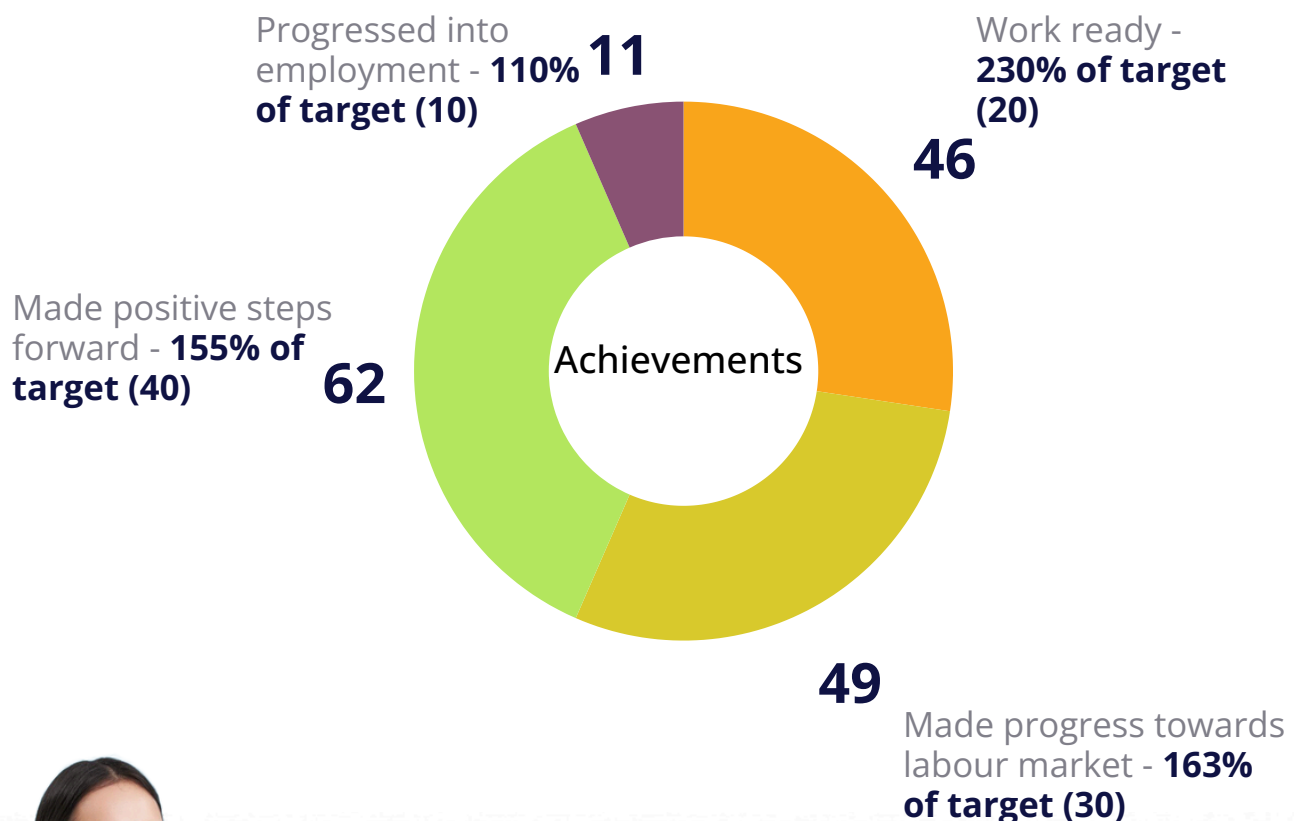
20 Individuals actively engaged in employment, education or training.

3 People referred for self-employment support

2 Participants in work experience placements through employers

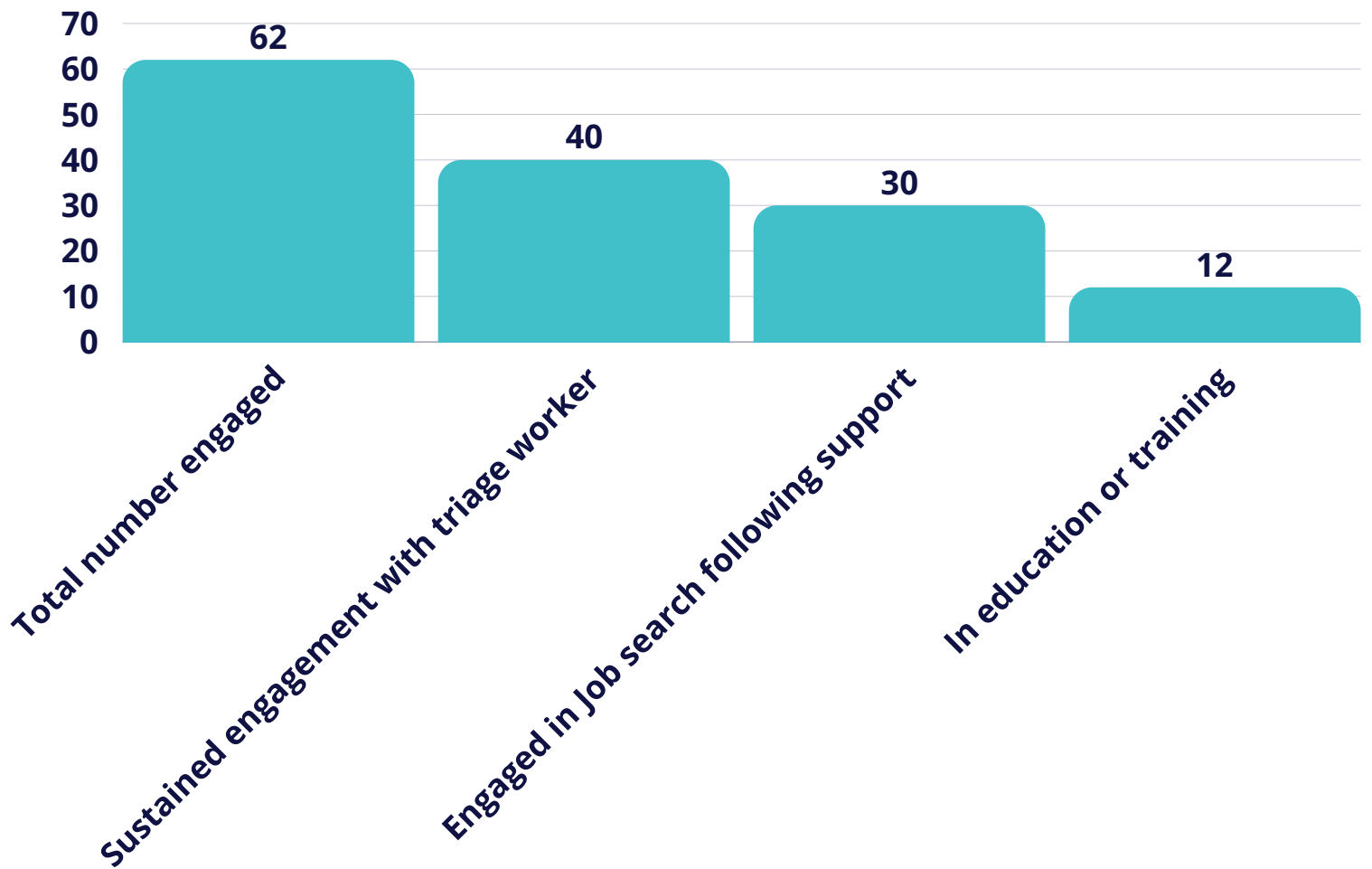
Outcomes

“No Limits’ Cherwell has achieved outstanding success across all of its targets, demonstrating the powerful impact of personalised, community-based support. The programme engaged a total of 62 individuals, including 41 who were economically inactive. Of those, 11 participants have moved into employment, with 6 coming directly from an economically inactive background — a powerful indicator of the programme’s ability to reach and transform the lives of those furthest from the labour market.



Outcomes

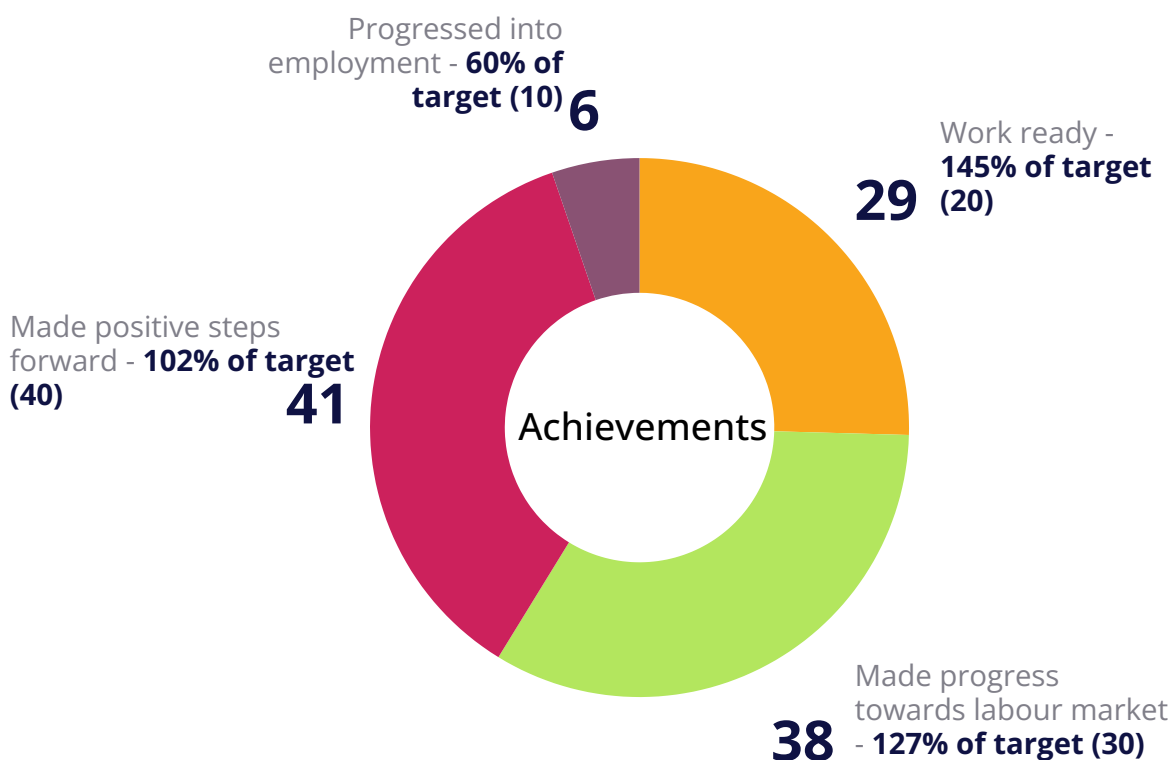
The Cherwell No Limits programme has exceeded expectations across key impact areas. The data below highlights strong engagement, sustained support, and positive progression into education, training, and employment-focused activity:



Economically Inactive

'No Limits' Cherwell has delivered outstanding outcomes for economically inactive individuals, showcasing the impact of consistent, personalised support. Of the 41 economically inactive participants engaged, 6 have successfully moved into employment, while 29 have been assessed as work-ready, reflecting a significant shift in confidence, skills, and job readiness.

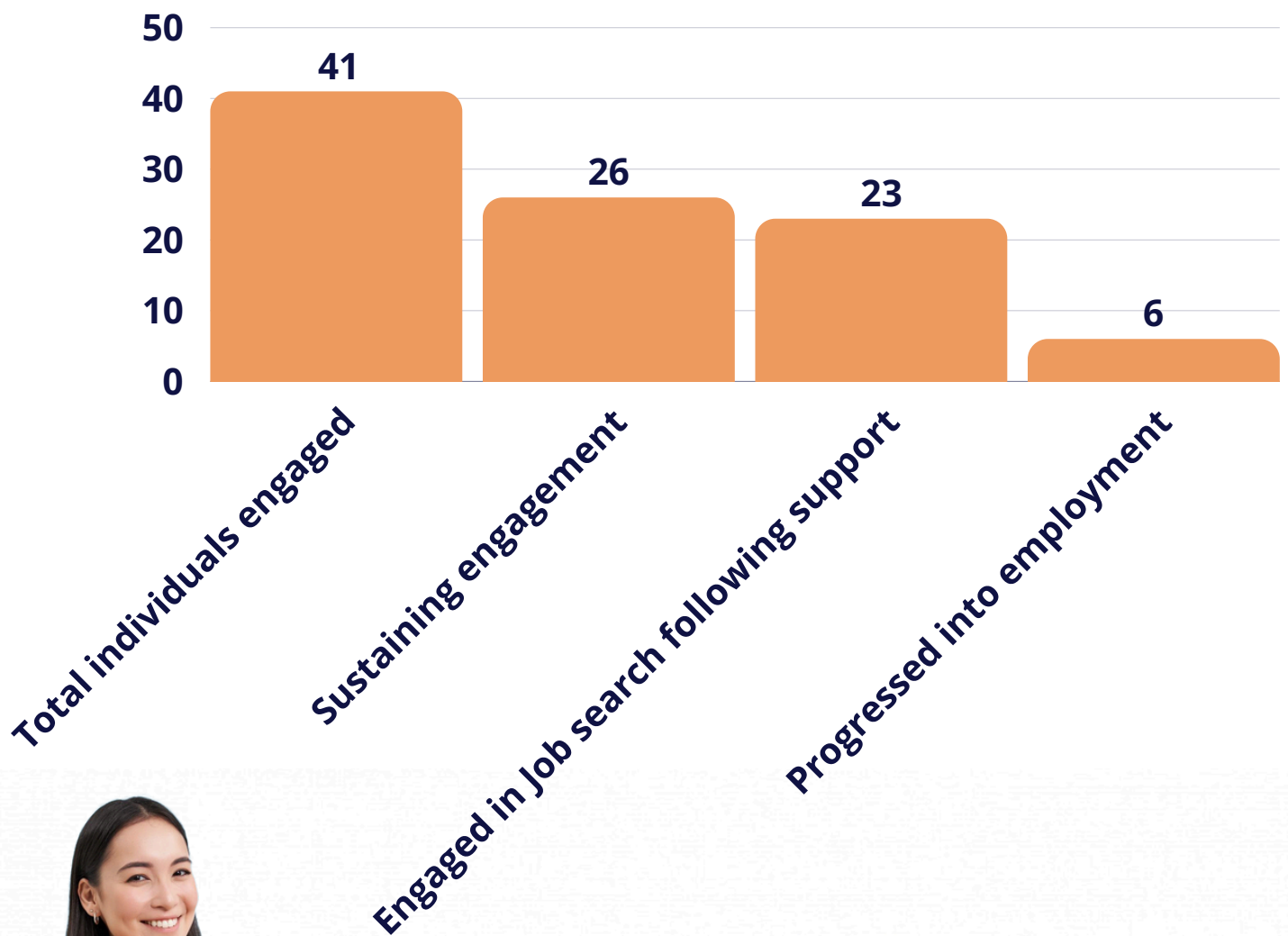
In total, 38 participants have made measurable progress toward the labour market, and all 41 have taken positive steps forward, demonstrating strong commitment and motivation to change their circumstances. These outcomes highlight the programme's effectiveness in empowering those furthest from employment to overcome barriers and move closer to long-term, sustainable opportunities.



Economically Inactive

The impact of the Cherwell No Limits programme is not only reflected in outcomes but in the consistency of participant engagement. We reached 103% of our target for engaging economically inactive individuals, showing strong outreach and connection with those often hardest to reach.

Encouragingly, a significant number remained engaged throughout their journey—many attending sessions regularly, accessing wider services, and building trusting relationships with triage workers. Outcomes show 60% progress into employment, 120% into education or training, and an impressive 230% of the job-searching target met. These figures highlight both immediate success and the longer-term commitment participants have made toward improving their futures, underscoring the strength of the programme's person-centred approach.



Challenges

Supporting economically inactive individuals presents a number of complex challenges, often requiring sustained and tailored engagement. Many participants face significant barriers, such as low confidence, limited digital literacy, and long-term disconnection from the labour market, all of which demand time-intensive, person-centred support.

A further challenge arose with the suspension of SIA (Security Industry Authority) courses, following the closure of the Afghanistan Embassy in September, which hindered participants who required police checks and progressing into employment within the security sector.

Despite these setbacks, the 'No Limits' programme continues to deliver meaningful impact across Cherwell by offering holistic, personalised support that empowers individuals to overcome obstacles and take positive steps toward sustainable employment. The programme's ongoing success reflects the resilience of both participants and staff, and underscores the importance of continued investment in long-term solutions that drive real change for those furthest from the labour market.



Community & Partnerships

8 organisations

collaborated with 'No Limits'

Oxford Wood Recycling

Restore

Abingdon & Witney College

NHS

Oxfordshire Youth

Aspire – METS programme

The Cornermen

Turning Point

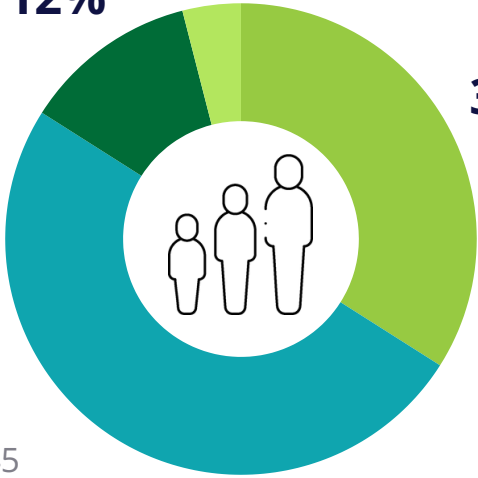
This strong multi-sector engagement has helped individuals develop workplace skills, improve confidence, and gain access to employment pathways.





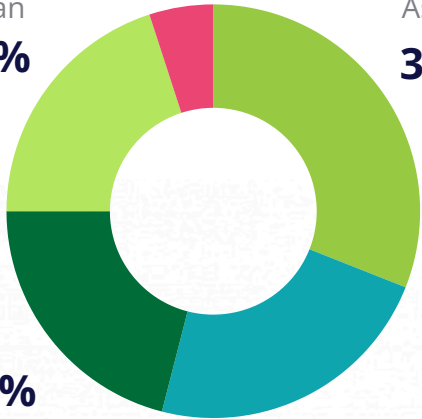
● Demographics & Community Support

Age breakdown

A portrait of a young man with dark hair, smiling broadly, wearing a bright red hooded sweatshirt over a white t-shirt. The background is plain white.

Refugee & Ethnicity

This breakdown highlights the diversity of participants engaged in the 'No Limits' programme.

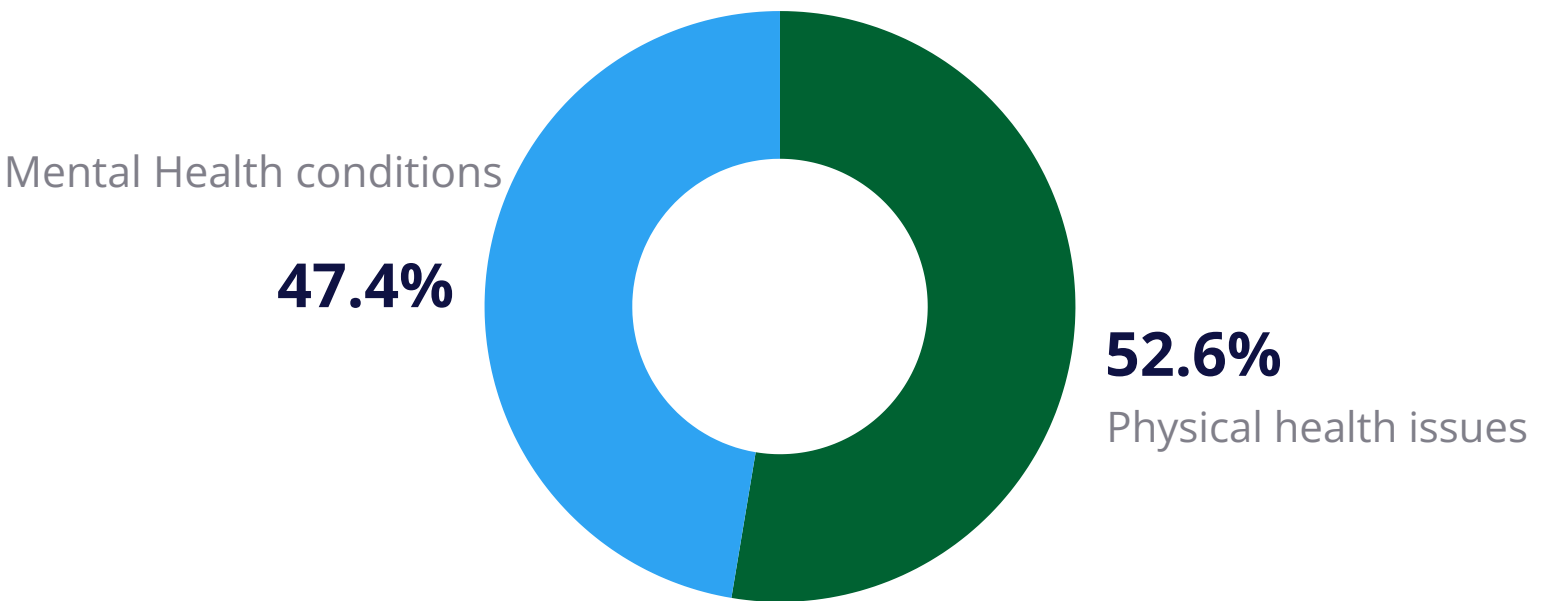


The presence of refugees **(20.3% in total)** highlights the need for **specialised support**, including **language assistance, employment guidance, and cultural integration efforts**. This diversity underscores the programme's role in **bridging employment gaps** and ensuring equitable opportunities for individuals from various backgrounds.



Disabilities

Disabilities Known



Travel and Device Distribution

Travel Assistance:

Provided to

9 individuals

Device Distribution:

A total of

37 devices were distributed, including



32 laptops



1 mobile phones



2 SIM cards



2 Wi-Fi dongles

ensuring participants had the necessary technology to access employment, training, and support services.



Quality Assurance & due diligence

Quality Assurance & Due Diligence



- All clients wishing to participate in the No Limits programme require a data collation form completed. This is to ensure they fit the eligibility criteria to engage with the programmes support and ensures they are consenting to our handling of their data and for it to be shared with funders where required.
- Staff are well briefed on the eligibility criteria for individuals wanting to engage in the No Limits programme. Clients should be 16+, unemployed, live in Oxfordshire (specifically within Cherwell). Anybody living within Oxfordshire but outside of these areas will be referred to an Aspire triage worker for Oxford City and West Oxfordshire.
- Risk assessments have been established, reviewed and monitored for any known or potential risks to delivery of the No Limits programme.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are closely adhered to and monitored. We hold regular meetings with our Safeguarding team to discuss any issues or concerns arise and can contact the team if anything urgent occurs as per our safeguarding policy.



Success stories

Case Study 1

Supporting Charlie's Journey to Confidence and Employment



“For the past **17 months**, Charlie has been struggling with his **mental health**, and as a family, we found it incredibly **difficult to access the support he needed.**”

“While he is now receiving help from CAMHS, we were also referred by the Oxfordshire county council EET team to SOFEA and the No Limits programme, where we were contacted by the Programme manager.

From the very beginning, the triage worker was incredible. She not only helped Charlie explore employment options but also supported me as a parent, helping me understand how his social anxiety might impact his job search and daily life. With her guidance, patience, and encouragement, Charlie was able to update his CV, discover new opportunities, and take steps to build his confidence.

One of the biggest milestones in Charlie's journey was completing a work experience afternoon at a local company in Kidlington—an achievement that would not have been possible without Taraji and the No Limits programme. Their compassionate, tailored approach made all the difference in helping Charlie take that first step into the workplace.

We are incredibly grateful to SOFEA and the No Limits programme for their support. Without them, Charlie wouldn't have had the confidence to pursue work experience and future opportunities. Their work is truly life-changing, and I would highly recommend them to any family in need of support.”

Case study 2

Transforming Futures Through No Limits – A Young Person's Journey from NEET to Success

Background:

John was a young person at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). He was neither in school nor employed and was struggling to find direction in his life. Without clear guidance or support, he felt stuck and unsure about his future.

The Turning Point:

John was introduced to the No Limits programme, where he met a Triage worker at The Banbury Larder. Through her support, he was guided step by step toward opportunities that aligned with his interests and goals.

Initially, the triage worker helped John craft a CV, providing him with the foundational tools needed to start exploring educational opportunities. Together, they reviewed potential courses, and John enrolled in a motor vehicle programme at a local college. With additional support from the programme, he received a laptop, enabling him to complete his coursework effectively.

Building Confidence and Skills:

John also began attending the No Limits job club, where he received tailored career support. This included mock interviews and advice on presenting himself confidently. The team encouraged him to explore his surroundings and actively engage during job interviews rather than standing in one place nervously.

These practical tips, combined with the encouragement he received, paid off. John successfully secured part-time work shortly after.

A New Beginning:

Three months into his new job, John's commitment and effort were recognised when he received an award for Best Customer Service Assistant. This achievement highlighted his ability to excel in a professional setting and reinforced the impact of the No Limits programme in transforming his life.

Reflections:

Reflecting on his journey, John shared:

"I did not have a job or school. Then I met Taraji, at the Banbury Larder, and she helped me with my CV, and we looked at courses I could do. I started college on a motor vehicle course and got help with a laptop. Then I started attending the job club as I wanted part-time work. They encouraged me, did mock interviews, and advised me to look around and not just stand in one place when I got there. Because of that, I got hired, and three months down the line, I received an award for Best Customer Service Assistant. Without this support, it may have been difficult for me."

Impact:

John's story exemplifies the power of the No Limits programme in supporting young people at risk of NEET to build confidence, gain skills, and achieve success. By offering personalised guidance and practical support, the programme empowers individuals to overcome challenges and reach their potential.

(Name changed for privacy)



County-Wide Programme Summary

No Limits Phase 3, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and commissioned by OxLEP Skills, was delivered between July 2024 and March 2025 across Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse, and West Oxfordshire. Delivery partners SOFEA and Aspire Oxford provided intensive, bespoke person-centred support to economically inactive residents facing complex and structural barriers to employment.

The overall county-wide programme **supported over 245 individuals**, helping them build confidence, access training, and take meaningful steps toward employment. Participants benefited from tailored one-to-one guidance, digital inclusion support, building awareness of Green skills courses and providing access to training—particularly in Green Skills and Construction pathways.

Building on the success of the No Limits programme since its launch in November 2022, we are now working successfully with councils across the county on a six-month extension, funded through the second round of UKSPF. Meanwhile, OxLEP Skills is seeking to expand the programme's reach and secure the delivery of the Department for Work and Pensions Connect 2 Work programme through Oxfordshire County Council.

The positive outcomes, strong engagement, and the learnings from No Limits have demonstrated a clear need and appetite for continued support. As a result, the programme is planned to evolve and develop over a three to four year period with a county-wide focus, ensuring sustained impact and broader access for individuals across Oxfordshire. This continuity reflects both the effectiveness of No Limits and the partnership's commitment to evolving and scaling successful initiatives.



Key Highlights of No Limits Programme County-Wide



53+

Individuals progressed into paid work



130+

Individuals became work ready



80+

Devices (laptops, phones, dongles) distributed



Dozens enrolled in vocational, ESOL, CSCS, and Green Skills courses



Strong outreach through local hubs, job clubs, youth programmes, and refugee support—without the job club, we would not have had the impact we made in Cherwell through the Banbury Larder, where local engagement and wraparound support played a vital role in connecting participants to meaningful opportunities.

Conclusion



The Cherwell No Limits programme has seen fantastic engagement and, as the data shows, is making a meaningful difference in the lives of economically inactive individuals across the district.

In Cherwell, the No Limits programme has delivered meaningful, person-centred support—empowering participants to overcome barriers and take steps toward education, training, and sustainable employment. Triage workers have not only helped individuals grow in confidence and skills, but also opened doors to Aspire's broader services, from wellbeing activities and budgeting workshops to digital skills courses and inclusive recruitment opportunities.

A key strength of the programme has been its community-rooted approach. The Banbury Larder played a vital role in this, acting as a welcoming and trusted space where individuals felt safe to engage, build relationships, and take their first steps toward change.

Together, this joined-up support has helped participants across Cherwell move toward greater independence, stability, and hope for the future—demonstrating the power of local collaboration and a holistic approach to tackling economic inactivity.

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→ oxlepskills.co.uk

→ www.aspireoxfordshire.org

→ www.sofea.uk.com