

# 2022 - 24 Impact Report

## Social Contract Programme





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# Foreword



The Social Contract Programme, funded by the government's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) via Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and led by Enterprise Oxfordshire, is a £1.7M initiative addressing Covid-19 impacts by mitigating health and wellbeing challenges related to unemployment and barriers to employment, education, and training.

The programme has targeted people aged 16-24, minority ethnic communities, those farthest from the labour market, and over 50s. Through Apprenticeship Support for Employers, the 'No Limits' Programme, Community Employment Plans (CEPs), and the OxGROW Virtual Mentoring Platform, we have created pathways to sustainable employment and personal development.

The programme has been extended to address employment challenges during the Cost-of-Living Crisis, with funding shifting to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) awarded by the county's district councils. Partnerships with SOFEA and Aspire Oxford have been crucial in delivering the 'No Limits' initiative, providing tailored support to economically inactive individuals across Oxfordshire.

We collaborated with Connectr to develop OxGROW, an employability mentoring platform, enhancing support for individuals and businesses. Also collaboration with OCC's Education, Employment and Training Teams has

facilitated the redevelopment of the OXME site.

The Levy Optimisation Scheme has been key, this supports local businesses and fosters skills development. Large, local and national employers can pledge unused apprenticeship levy funds to help smaller businesses, charities, and social enterprises in Oxfordshire. The programme has generated over £5M in pledges, creating new apprenticeship positions and providing opportunities for small businesses to upskill their staff. Our Advisors have provided fully-funded, expert, and impartial support for employers. Our collaboration with the South Central Ambulance Service has facilitated a large number of apprenticeships effectively utilizing unused funds.

The programme's success reflects the dedication of our team, partners, and stakeholders. Together, we have significantly bridged employment gaps, equipped participants with essential skills, and fostered an inclusive and resilient community. 4

# Social Contract Programme

## Overall Impact up to December 2024



### Apprenticeship Levy Scheme

**£3.66M**

Levy Funds Pledged

**250**

New Apprenticeship Starts

**£5M+**

Social Value Impact Estimate

(based on proxy values for Oxfordshire  
from the Social Value Portal)



### Community Employment Plans

**47**

Community Employment Plans  
Supported

**69**

Apprenticeships  
Started



### OxGROW Mentoring Platform

**99**

Mentees

**23**

Mentors



### 'No Limits' Employability Programme

**600** Individuals  
Supported

**110** People Secured Employment

**262** Individuals Made  
Significant Progress  
Towards the Labour  
Market

# Apprenticeship Support for Employers

Enterprise Oxfordshire’s advisors have helped local businesses optimise the apprenticeship levy by providing tailored support and guidance. This includes workforce development planning, talent recruitment, and upskilling existing employees through apprenticeships.

Our advisors helped larger levy-paying businesses pledge unused levy funds to smaller Oxfordshire businesses in need of apprentices. The initiative expanded to include national businesses, eager to support Oxfordshire’s talent. Originally capped at 25%, the Government raised the pledge limit to 50% in April 2024. This approach has helped to ensure that more businesses can benefit from the apprenticeship levy, strengthening Oxfordshire's workforce.

### Apprenticeship Starts by District:

Cherwell:	69
Oxford City:	69
South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse:	72
West Oxfordshire:	36

*As at December 2024*

**Over £3.6 million**

Pledged to Oxfordshire

**£2.3 million**

Reinvested into local  
apprenticeships



The Social Contract Programme has secured £3.6 million in unused apprenticeship levy funds to support Oxfordshire's small businesses, charities, and social enterprises, enabling many to offer apprenticeships and training that would otherwise be out of reach.

# Apprenticeship Support for Employers

## Sector Breakdown



**20%**

Health & Social Care



**8.5%**

Early Years Education



**10%**

Construction & Built  
Environment



**4.5%**

Business &  
Administration

*The remainder of the 100% is other sectors. The sectors listed above are some of Oxfordshire's priority focus sectors as cited by the Oxfordshire LSIP.*

Enterprise Oxfordshire launched the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Grant Scheme, which ran from Summer 2023 to Spring 2024. It offered grants of £500 to £1,500, with up to £3,000 available in certain cases. The scheme aimed to mitigate barriers associated with delivering apprenticeships. Funding supported needs like workplace travel, specialised equipment, internet access and covering items such as work attire, travel passes, and laptops for apprentice studies. In total £102,250 in grants were offered which supported 107 apprentices.

## South Central Ambulance Service

- Supporting **12** associate ambulance practitioners.
- Supporting **52** apprentice paramedics (24 due to start in April). This has successfully brought in **£1,350.000** of funding
- **£720,000** pledged by Bayer, Legal & General and AstraZeneca
- **£270,000** pledged by GlaxoSmithKline

Enterprise Oxfordshire introduced a year-long Apprenticeship Completion Delivery Plan to support apprentices nearing completion of their apprenticeship. The initiative engaged with employers and training providers, identified challenges that apprentices were facing, offered tailored support and impartial assistance to help apprentices succeed. Support covered the entire journey, from induction to End Point Assessment.



# 'No Limits' Programme

The **'No Limits' programme** seeks to eliminate **barriers for Oxfordshire individuals** entering work, education, or training.

**'No Limits'** offers inclusive recruitment support for Oxfordshire residents **aged 16 and over**. The programme is being delivered by the local charities **SOFEA, Didcot,** and **Aspire Oxfordshire** and can provide:



## Travel bursaries

Travel bursaries for getting to interviews or for the first month of a job or apprenticeship, if this is a barrier

## Bespoke person-centred support

Up to 30 hours of bespoke person-centred support with finding employment, education, or training, this includes CV writing, application forms and preparation for interviews



## Electronic devices and data

Electronic devices and data to people experiencing digital poverty and informal digital training programmes



# 'No Limits' Programme as at December 2024



The **'No Limits'** programme made a remarkable impact across Oxfordshire, supporting almost **600** individuals

The initiative helped **110** people secure employment, with **262** individuals becoming work-ready or making significant progress towards the labour market



Digital devices, including laptops and tablets, were distributed to combat digital deprivation

## Individuals Supported:

- Engaged: **599**
- Into Employment: **110**
- Work Ready: **262**
- Progress Towards the Labour Market: **429**
- Positive Steps Towards the Labour Market: **469**

## Laptops & Tablets Distributed:

**538**  
devices in total

## Train the Trainer (IT Sessions):

**9**  
sessions delivered



Phones  
Distributed:

**61**



Wi-Fi  
Dongles:

**43**



Travel  
Bursaries:

**135**



Sim  
Cards:

**52**

# OxGROW Virtual Mentoring Platform

OxGROW is a virtual mentoring and learning platform, providing free advice and support with getting into work or changing career from experienced and knowledgeable professionals. The platform connects individuals aged 16 and above with professional mentors from different sectors in Oxfordshire. Mentors provide text-based online mentoring tailored to the mentees needs, offering insights into the local job market and working environments. Mentees can choose multiple or single mentors. Additionally, mentees can access learning modules on a variety of topics.

*"The videos were highly informative and educational"*

*"Information on mental health was highly informative"*

*"Interesting content - I like the idea of preparing stories"*



“

*"I'll be supportive, I'll share what's in my career toolbox with you and I hope that builds confidence to take the first steps towards your goals. Sometimes we all just need that cheerleader that supports us and nudges us to take action and that might be exactly what you find in an OxGROW mentor."*

**Kathryn Jackson,  
OxGROW Mentor**

”

**99**

Mentees

**23**

Mentors

As of December 2024

## Types of Mentoring:

Interview Advice

CV Enhancement

Confidence Building

Coaching on Wellbeing and Resilience

Sector Specific Knowledge Sharing

# Community Employment Plans

Large-scale strategic infrastructure projects in Oxfordshire are underway. Our aim is to maximise the benefits from the developments for local communities by improving access to jobs, training, and education through the development of Community Employment Plans (CEPs).

CEPs are employer-led initiatives which can form part of the Section 106 planning obligation. Each Oxfordshire Local Planning Authority has its own Local Plan. The goal is to assist major developers and employers in creating CEPs in collaboration with district Economic Development Leads.

## Engagement of 47 CEPs.

This includes CEPs that have been approved by district, advice & guidance given alongside regular steering group meetings for CEPs that are in progress.



**£102,722**  
in Charitable  
Donations

**1265.75**  
Volunteering  
Hours

**23**  
Site  
Visits

**11**  
Work  
Placements

**69**  
Apprenticeships  
Started



CEPs are often mandated during the construction of large-scale developments and strategic sites. The activities within a CEP seek to enhance community benefits and tackle industry challenges, focusing on recruitment, retention, and skill development.

Enterprise Oxfordshire has worked with a number of major employers to develop comprehensive CEPs. These CEPs aspire to support apprenticeship starts, work placements, careers events and employment experiences.

# Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards

The Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards, established in 2017, celebrate the achievements of apprentices and their contributions to Oxfordshire's employers, economy, and skills landscape. They recognise individuals who inspire others in their career journeys and acknowledge the training providers who support the apprentices. The awards celebrate the commitment of Oxfordshire employers to offering high-quality career activities and apprenticeship opportunities. Business-led and self-funded, the awards are sponsored by businesses and organisations that judge entries and present awards and trophies on the celebration evening.



**Each year, 4.8 out of 5 said the celebration evening is a positive way to raise awareness of the value of apprenticeships.**

**From 2022 to 2024, 161 entries were received from individual, current or former apprentices, representing 98 different employers and 56 training providers.**

**Over the past three years, 496 people have attended the celebration evenings held at Williams Racing Conference Centre.**

*"It was a fantastic event that showcased how apprenticeships improve outcomes for learners and employers. Well done all that were involved."*

**Guest (Training Provider)**

“

*"A short note to say how much I enjoyed Thursday evening and see the focus put into developing the next generation of Oxfordshire workforce. I was extremely impressed by the quality of apprentices coming through, all of whom were a credit to their employers. It was particularly pleasing to see a number of the apprentices take the lead in encouraging their employers to go further."*

**Mark Beard, High Sheriff of Oxfordshire**

”

# 'No Limits' Programme



## 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 Taraji at The Banbury Larder. John was guided toward opportunities that aligned with his interests and goals. Taraji 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. Through the programme, John received a laptop, enabling him to complete his coursework effectively.

### BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS:

John 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. The tips and 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 recognized 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.

### 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 in 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.

*You can read the full version of this case study on our website.*



# Community Employment Plans



## A work placement with purpose at St Mungo's

**St Mungo's** are a leading UK homelessness charity supporting over **3150** people every night. St Mungo's services in Oxford include outreach for people experiencing rough sleeping, with access to an Employment Support team. Martin joined their Employment Support programme in May 2023, having spent most of his career in catering and hospitality. Martin wanted a career change and he knew that his end goal was paid employment within the construction industry.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS:

Grace, an Employment Specialist at St. Mungo's and Martin decided that the first step would be for Martin to obtain a work experience placement within construction. Grace got in touch with the St. Mungo's Corporate Partnership team, who connected them with Danielle McCarthy, Social Value and Community Manager at The Hill Group. Hill is one of the construction partners working on-site delivering Oxford North, a new innovation district for the city. Oxford North has an ambitious CEP, supported by Enterprise Oxfordshire which sets out how the project will maximise the opportunities created for local people like Martin during the next 18 months of construction.

### SETTING UP THE WORK PLACEMENT:

Grace contacted Danielle with some context about the Employment Support programme at St. Mungo's and introduced Martin, as a client seeking a work placement within construction. Danielle advised that there were some opportunities within their Oxford North programme and that they could facilitate Martin. Danielle put together a programme placement schedule, covering different aspects of construction related work, showcasing different career pathways and opportunities.

### WORK PLACEMENT:

The placement included multiple site tours, a day with the Sustainability and Environmental team, dedicated time with the Quantity Surveyors, the Technical and Design team and the commercial teams, before ending with a CV workshop and coaching session. Following the placement, Martin decided that he wanted to focus on construction employment pathways within Technical and Design and complete additional work placements in this area. The Hill Group had really enjoyed working with Martin and they were happy to work with St. Mungo's Employment Support on work placements and paid roles again in the future.

### REFLECTING ON HIS JOURNEY, MARTIN SHARED:

*"I learned more than I thought I would and despite the placement being brief, I felt empowered to ask the team when I didn't understand something and felt the placement played well into my inquisitive nature. I felt that the placement gave me an opportunity to be part of a work based setting without the immediate pressure of paid work and I'm really grateful for the team who were really hospitable and friendly."*



# Apprenticeship Levy Scheme



## Apprenticeships to upskill: In Friendship – and for life

In Friendship Ltd are an organisation that pride themselves in 'delivering high quality, compassionate client-led home care services to older people living in Oxfordshire'. Based in Witney, the team is managed by directors, John and Taqwa Galpin.

**With the support of Enterprise Oxfordshire, In Friendship Home Care and Support Services were awarded £14,000 from the University of Oxford to support the full apprenticeship training costs of two Level 5 Leaders in Adult Care.**

### LEVY INFORMATION:

Enterprise Oxfordshire's Apprenticeship Levy Pledge Initiative sees apprenticeship levy-paying organisations (those with an annual pay bill of £3m+) with unused levy funds, able to transfer these to other organisations within the county for their own apprenticeship needs.

As part of Enterprise Oxfordshire's Social Contract Programme – funded by the government's Contain Outbreak Management Fund via Oxfordshire County Council and led by Enterprise Oxfordshire – a team of Oxfordshire Skills and Employability Advisors are in place to offer support and guidance to the county's businesses looking for apprenticeship support.

This pre-funded (at no cost to the employer) support includes helping employers to unlock their apprenticeship levy and enabling smaller organisations to access unused levy to start or develop their apprenticeship schemes. It also includes support for employers and training providers along the apprenticeship journey, with a strong focus on the timely completion of the apprenticeship.

### SUPPORT:

Skills and Employability Advisor, Leah Bryan, supported the team at In Friendship Ltd in finding a training provider, setting up their digital apprenticeship service account, matching to an apprenticeship levy transfer and connecting the digital accounts to the funding.

### JOHN GALPIN, MANAGING DIRECTOR AT IN FRIENDSHIP LTD, SHARED:

"Like many care providers, we knew we needed to boost our management team's knowledge of the care sector, to keep our service running smoothly and by the book. We got in touch with Enterprise Oxfordshire to see what help was out there for small businesses wanting to take on apprenticeships".

"The brilliant team at Enterprise Oxfordshire, especially Leah, went above and beyond to help us. She broke down exactly how small companies can make apprenticeships work and sorted out all the levy funding for us through their pledge initiative. It was honestly so simple – no complex paperwork or hoops to jump through. Leah didn't just help with the money side of things – she pointed us towards some fantastic training providers too. The whole process was a doddle, with hardly any extra work for us".

"Enterprise Oxfordshire's Skills and Employability Advisor, Andrea, has also been amazing at getting everything up and running, giving us loads of practical tips on fitting the training around our day-to-day work. Their support has made such a difference in helping us level up our team while keeping our care standards spot on."

*You can read the full version of this case study on our website.*





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## **Contact Us**



**0345 241 1196**



**County Hall, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1AY**



**Skills@EnterpriseOxfordshire.com**



**enterpriseoxfordshireskills.com**