

# Social Impact Report 2014–15





# Welcome to Aspire's social impact report for 2014-15

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## Welcome

In this report we present some of the achievements of the hundreds of remarkable men and women we have had the privilege of supporting over the past year from across Oxfordshire.

As an employment, recovery & rehabilitation charity we are acutely aware of the commitment, determination and strength of character our trainees and job club clients demonstrate as they make the transition towards and into work. We are equally aware of the many challenges and difficulties that have shaped their lives before they arrive at our door, from homelessness to addiction to low confidence & self-esteem. This report is testimony to what can be achieved if you listen, trust and provide genuine work placement, support and training opportunities to people with multiple barriers to employment.

Aspire's social impact has resonated across our local community in Oxfordshire in 2014-15. It has been another remarkable year in which 98% of our trainees with offending histories did not re-offend and 92% of trainees with addiction histories maintained successful

recoveries whilst engaging with our programme. Over 150 trainees participated on our social enterprises to gain real work experience, with 28% moving into paid employment last year – compared to a typical success rate of just 17% for the Government's Work Programme. We also extended our community-based 'Job Club' service to offer professional employment support to over 210 residents in some of the most deprived areas in Oxford city, in The Leys, Wood Farm, Barton and Littlemore.

We're incredibly proud of the difference Aspire Oxford has made to the lives of our trainees and job club clients in their individual journeys in the past year. We hope that this report provides engaging and inspiring examples of how this can be achieved.

We look forward to supporting hundreds more men & women in 2015-16, including in our exciting partnership with the Oxfordshire drug & alcohol recovery service provider, Turning Point, and with the launch of our newest professional service, delivering community transport to elderly clients in Oxford city.



**Paul Roberts** Chief Executive Officer  
Employment & Partnerships  
**Ian Adshead** Chief Executive Officer  
Enterprises

About Aspire Oxford

Established in 2001, Aspire Oxford is an employment charity and social enterprise that creates real work placements, training and employment opportunities for people who face severe and multiple disadvantages such as homelessness, substance misuse and offending. We also provide a Job Club service for residents in some of the most deprived wards in Oxford city, including Wood Farm, Barton, Blackbird Leys and Littlemore.

We are dedicated to transforming the life chances of local men and women who have survived adversity. Aspire’s service users, our ‘trainees’, have an inspiring resilience, tenacity and determination to change. Harnessing this energy and enthusiasm makes Aspire a place of real opportunity and growth, enabling individuals to realise their rehabilitation and recovery goals.



Our Partners & Supporters

Aspire Oxford has strong relationships with a wide network of local partners, supporters and customers across the commercial, public and third sectors in Oxfordshire and the Thames Valley. These organisations are absolutely critical to our success; we could not achieve our outstanding social outcomes without their ongoing partnership and support, which remains at the heart of our approach to tackling complex social problems.

Our innovative approach to partnership working has been recognised nationally and regionally this year; we were finalists for the national Social Enterprise UK 2014 Awards and runners-up in the Thames Valley Business Magazine’s Charity of the Year Award and the OCVA Charity of the Year Award.





### Aspire’s social impact in 2014–15 in stories and statistics.

The following pages show our achievements over the last year. You can also read personal stories by Mark, Pat, Domingos and Archie, from page 8, to see some inspiring examples of the life changing impact of Aspire’s work.



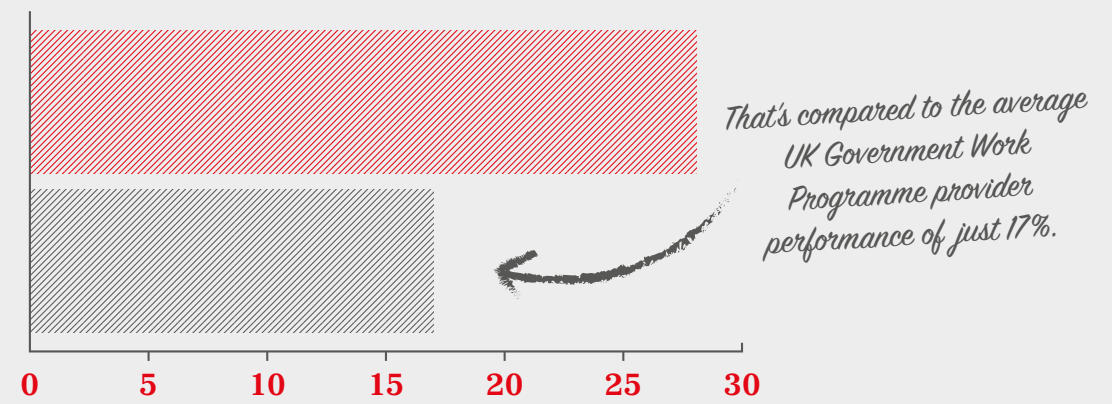


For every **£1** invested  
by Aspire funders, customers  
and donors we delivered  
**£5.50** of social benefit  
in 2014–15.

For the 2014-2015 financial year, using  
a 'Social Return on Investment' analysis  
prepared by Oxford University's *World  
Economic Forum Global Shapers' Group*,  
we estimate Aspire's total benefit to  
society at **£3.4m** – that's money saved  
for the public purse by preventing  
homelessness, re-offending, substance  
misuse and anti-social behaviour.

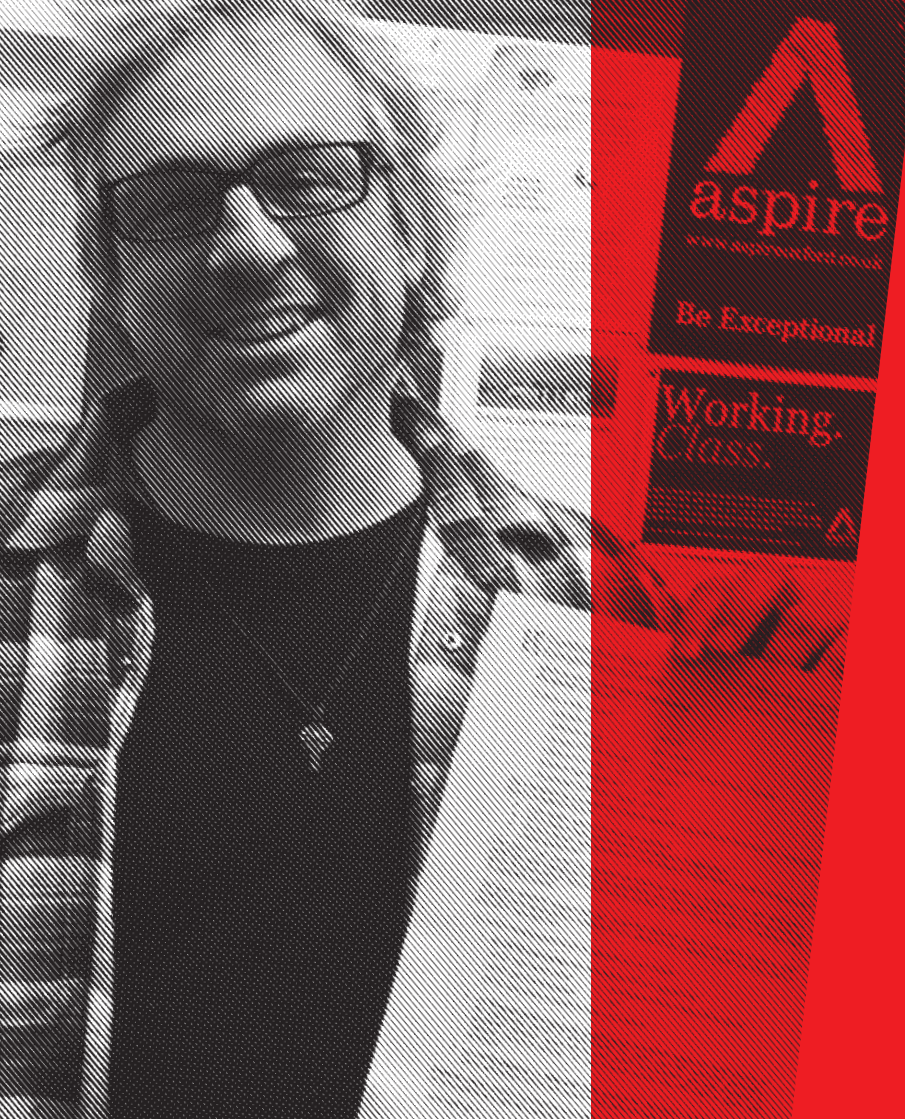


**28%** of Aspire trainees were  
supported into paid  
employment in 2014–15.



Aspire is *the* community-based provider of employment  
support for local people in Oxfordshire overcoming  
disadvantage to secure meaningful employment.





**Aspire believed in me and gave me the confidence to change my life; I am extremely grateful for all their kindness and support over the last year. Thank you.**

### **Mark's Story**

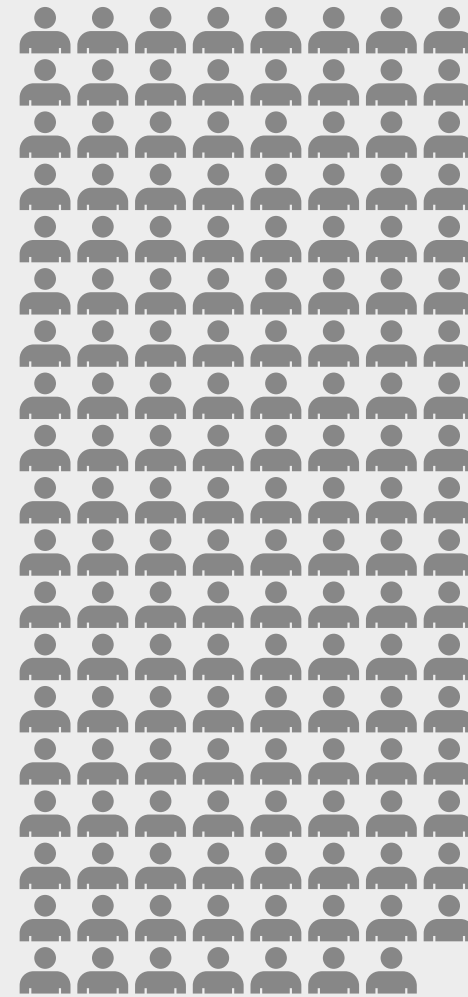
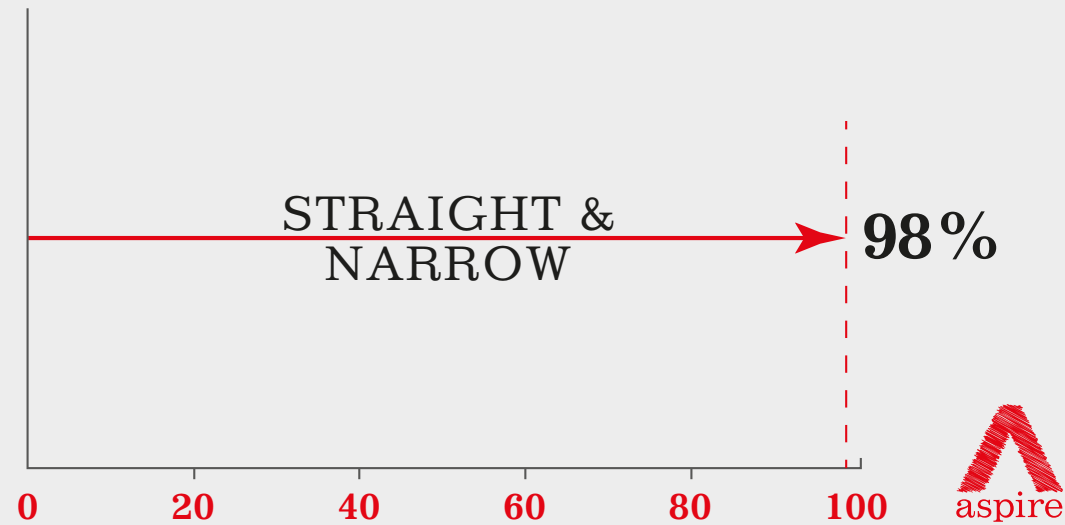
Before I started volunteering at Aspire I had been out of work for 9 years, due to being a single parent having sole responsibility for my son. During this time I became very isolated and depressed. This affected both my emotional and physical well-being and I found myself stuck in a rut that I just didn't know how to get out of.

I was then introduced to Aspire. The staff made me feel very welcome as they could sense that I was feeling extremely nervous and apprehensive. I was invited to start the following day. The following morning when I got up my first thought was, "No this isn't for me, nothing is going to change, I can't do this I'm not going to go". However a voice inside me said what did I have to lose, if you don't like it you don't need to go back, so I dragged myself out of bed and went along.

The rest is history; my first day went really well where I worked with some really nice people who made me feel very comfortable and at ease.

After volunteering for a length of time I approached Jamie, my Employment and Development Worker, and told him I was interested in gaining my dumper truck and ride-on roller licence, as I was interested in pursuing a career in construction. Jamie was very supportive and put in a funding application to enable this to happen. I fortunately passed and I am now in full-time employment in the construction industry.

**98 %** of Aspire trainees with an offending history did not re-offend in 2014–15.



In 2014–15,  
we supported

**151**

Aspire trainees.  
Who, on average,  
had been out of  
work for

**5.3**  
**years.**



**69%**  
had an  
addiction  
history.



**60%**  
had an  
offending  
history.



**55%**  
were  
receiving  
incapacity  
benefits.





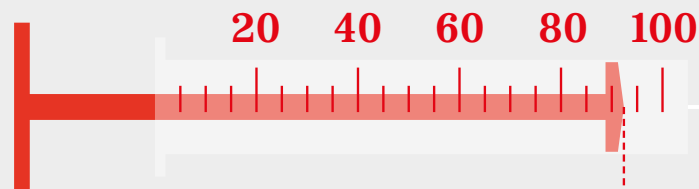


**I feel 100% better.  
I felt I had no future –  
the alternative was  
sitting at home staring  
at four walls getting  
bored. At Aspire I  
had friendly, supportive  
people around me,  
it gave me hope.**

### **Pat's Story**

Pat joined Aspire as a volunteer trainee in April 2013. Pat had just come out of prison and the probation service suggested she contact Aspire. She started volunteering on Aspire's textile and furniture recycling team, and in no time at all had completely re-vamped our set-up and shopfront. Pat progressed to responsibility for inducting new trainees into the recycling team.

After a few months Pat was looking for a new challenge. With the support of her Employment & Development Worker at Aspire, Mark, she was supported to volunteer as a driver for sister social enterprise, The Yellow Submarine Cafe. Soon afterwards a job opportunity came up at Yellow Submarine – Pat applied for the job and joined the team in April 2014. Pat has been a Team Leader at Yellow Submarine's Oxford cafe since June 2015.



**92%**

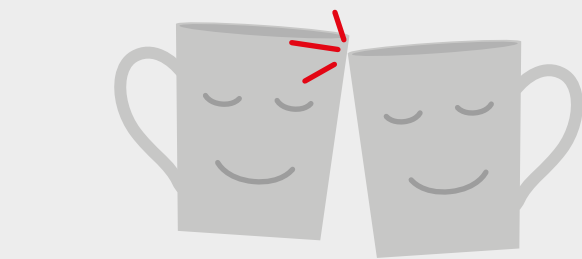
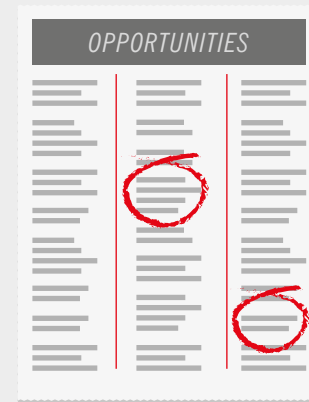
of Aspire trainees maintained  
their recovery from substance  
misuse in 2014–15.



By volunteering at Aspire in 2014–15, our trainees realised a step change in how they felt about themselves and their employment prospects:

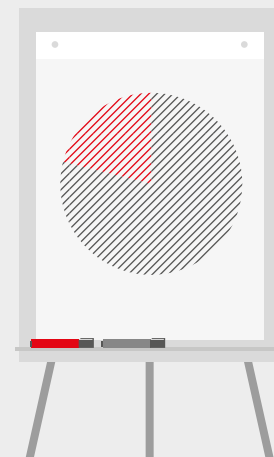
**71%**

felt more  
motivated  
to seek  
employment.



**64% & 85%**

felt less isolated      made friends.



**79%**

developed  
new  
employment  
skills.



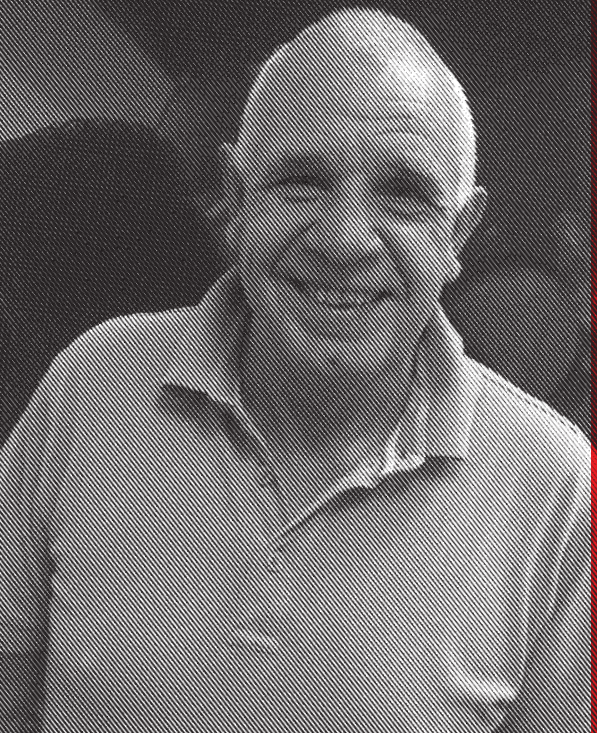
**71%**

felt less stressed.



Taken from a sample of 15% of Aspire trainees in 2014–15





**I came to Oxford in August 2014 after a short term in prison. I was living in a bail hostel. I was very depressed and on anti-depressants... then I was introduced to Jamie, an Employment & Development Worker from Aspire. That was the day my life would totally change.**

### Archie's Story

I came to Oxford in August 2014 after serving a short term in prison. I was living in a bail hostel; I was very depressed and was on anti-depressants. I had very little confidence and felt like no one would employ me. Then in October I was introduced to Jamie, an Employment & Development Worker from Aspire. That was the day my life would totally change. Jamie was the most amazing listener, took in all my problems and my emotions and when I'd finished (after a few tears!) said I was a good person who he could support to get back on track and into full-time employment. He and Aspire stood true to their word.

So what Aspire meant to me, is that they treat everybody with respect no matter who you are. When I started I was doing 2 days' work experience a week and then three. I worked with some fantastic people including some great Aspire Team Leaders for grounds maintenance and painting & decorating. No matter what the situation they were always laughing and smiling which increased my confidence and I so enjoyed the work.

My life started to improve dramatically from November and I was gaining more confidence by the day. In January 2015 Jamie secured me a paid part-time job delivering leaflets which I loved doing. By March I was off the anti-depressants and my life was entering a new phase. Jamie then said he thought I was ready to go back to work full-time and got me an interview at the restaurant Carluccio's. I still work there now.

Aspire totally changed my life and I will forever be in their debt for giving me the opportunity to make it happen. They are a fantastic, caring organisation and a huge inspiration to the people of Oxford. They will continue to give great support to people like myself. I would recommend anyone who was in my situation to give Aspire a try and I promise you won't look back, you will only move forward.





**I'm very happy with all the training I've done and all the help that I've got. It's important to have lots of skills to offer an employer.**

### **Domingos's Story**

Domingos is originally from Madeira, where he had worked in the construction industry, something he had done from a young age. He had left school with no qualifications. He has been in the UK since 2001, where he had done a range of low paid entry level work. His level of spoken English was low, he had few literacy skills. He currently has a job working 12½ hours a week as a cleaner. He had been an initial referral to Job Club, in August 2014, from the Welfare Reform Team, as he was subject to Welfare Reform changes and needed to increase his working hours.

### **Aims & Goals**

- To improve his English Language skills
- Develop confidence with spoken English
- To undertake learning activities to raise aspirations and confidence
- Devise, develop and deliver a training package for a future career which would develop his work skills
- Support Domingos into full time sustainable employment

### **What happened next?**

Domingos came to job club, in August 2014 where it was suggested that he go for an ESOL assessment at City of Oxford FE College, with a view to undertaking an ESOL course to improve and develop his spoken English. He was accepted onto an Entry Level 1 programme. However, as he was in employment, his course fees would have to be paid. Funding was obtained by job club through the Welfare Reform Team at Oxford City Council, and he started the course in October 2014.

Regular feedback through 1:1 sessions showed that he was settling into the course well. By January 2015, Domingos had gained in confidence with his speaking, so it was suggested at a Job Club 1:1 session, he embed that by coming as a trainee to Aspire, where he could develop additional work experience, improve his confidence with his spoken English skills, and undertake some training opportunities.

He started engaging with Aspire on the 10th February, and Jamie became his support worker. His first goals were to undertake a range of training opportunities and he completed courses in Grounds Care, Advanced Ride on lawn mower course, and Painting and Decorating .

We had regular updates on progression, Domingos continued to attend ESOL. Jamie and Domingos met weekly for feedback and support. In May, as a result of one of these meetings Domingos highlighted that he would like to increase his grounds maintenance skills with a view to obtaining future employment in this field. A higher level spraying course was identified as a development progression. This course was jointly funded by the Welfare Reform Team and Aspire. In order to pass this course and gain the qualification, Domingos needed Maths support. This was given to him by the Maths Champion at Aspire, who is one of our Work Place Learning Advocates. Domingos completed the course in June.

Capita, our employment links volunteers, have given advice and support to Domingos on his CV development, and interviewing skills. Domingos has attended 54 working sessions with us, a unique 100% attendance record. We are now looking and supporting him for full time employment in garden and grounds maintenance.

**Domingos is dependable, reliable, and self-assured. He works really well on his own and gets the job done. I can't find any fault with him.**

# 213

**local people  
were supported  
in our Job Clubs  
in 4 areas of Oxford  
City in 2014–15.**

# 49%

of whom were supported into local employment, training, education and volunteering opportunities.





## Aspire's social impact in 2014-15 in the words of our clients.

IAN

SINCE I'VE BEEN HERE I'VE BEEN HAPPY  
WITH MYSELF... GOING OUT AND DOING  
STUFF. IT GETS ME OUT OF BED EARLY...  
I'VE BEEN GETTING THE BUS ON MY OWN.  
I'M PROUD OF THAT. I'M NOT AS NERVOUS  
AS I USED TO BE.

DARREN

I'M GOING TO ENJOY MY  
EVENING NOW, KNOWING  
I CAN GET SOMEWHERE  
IN LIFE.

DAVID

ASPIRE IS TEN TIMES  
BETTER THAN OTHER  
PLACES. YOU DON'T GET  
TREATED LIKE A CHILD

MARIA

I GOT 100%! MY KIDS AREN'T  
GOING TO BELIEVE THIS WHEN  
I GET HOME AND TELL THEM

(ON COMPLETING HER LEVEL  
2 FOOD HEALTH HYGIENE)

SUE

WORKING WITH ASPIRE HAS  
HELPED ME TO BE LESS  
ISOLATED AND MORE  
CONFIDENT AROUND PEOPLE.

NICK

SOMEHOW AT SCHOOL IT NEVER  
WORKED. I NEVER READ MORE  
THAN A PARAGRAPH BEFORE  
I GOT LOST. IT'S GREAT BEING  
IN A GROUP LEARNING

CAROL

MY HUSBAND'S SO PLEASED  
I'VE STARTED HERE. HE'S  
NEVER SEEN SUCH A CHANGE  
IN ME.

DAVID

GETTING ON THE BUS GOING  
HOME AND YOU KNOW YOU'VE  
DONE A PROPER DAY'S WORK.  
THAT'S GOOD.



The Aspire team!



## Thank You

We are grateful to all of the charitable trusts, foundations, businesses and individuals who have chosen to support our work in 2014–15. We are proud to help others on your behalf.

## Grants and donations:

Mr. Andrew Brockie, Burford Garden Company & customers, Comic Relief, Employment for the Disabled, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire Community Foundation, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford Spires Rotary, Oxfordshire Drug and Alcohol Team, Oxpact, Police & Crime Commissioner–Thames Valley, Public Health England, Thames Valley Probation, The Funding Network Strategic Funding Group, W Lucy Fund

## Get in touch

Call us on **01865 204450**

Email us at **[info@aspireoxford.co.uk](mailto:info@aspireoxford.co.uk)**

Visit our website **[www.aspireoxford.co.uk](http://www.aspireoxford.co.uk)**



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[aspireoxford.co.uk/youtube](http://aspireoxford.co.uk/youtube)

## How You Can Help

By supporting Aspire you will be helping us to transform hundreds of lives across Oxfordshire. If you are passionate about addressing social change then there are numerous ways you can support us:

- Invite us to quote for a grounds or buildings maintenance, gardening, removals, textiles or furniture recycling service for your home, school, community group or business. No job too big or small.
- Make a donation to support our life changing work.
- Host an Aspire trainee on a work placement.
- Donate furniture, textiles or household items to us – we can collect.
- Invite us to give an inspirational presentation about Aspire's work at your workplace, club or school.
- Fundraiser for Aspire – we'll support you every step of the way!
- Host an Aspire textile donations bank at your school, college or community project.